

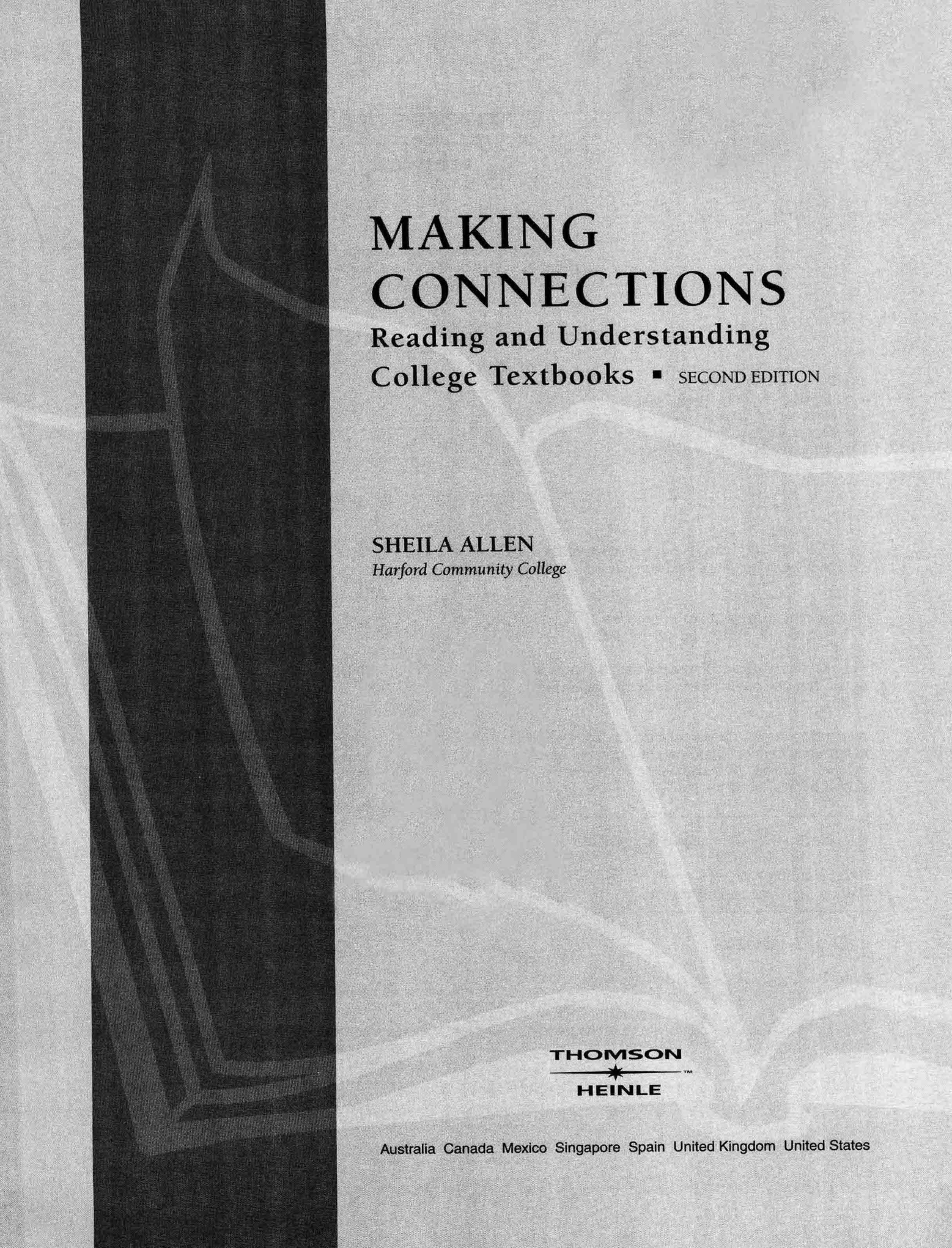


MAKING CONNECTIONS

**Reading and
Understanding
College Textbooks**

SECOND EDITION

SHEILA ALLEN



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Reading and Understanding
College Textbooks ■ SECOND EDITION

SHEILA ALLEN
Harford Community College

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PREFACE

The idea for this reading textbook came about as a result of suggestions from college students in a reading course. These students wanted a reading course and a textbook that helped them with the other courses they were taking. Some of these students were concurrently taking college-level courses. They wanted to know how to apply reading skills in these courses to make their reading and studying easier.

Making Connections: Reading and Understanding College Textbooks teaches the basic reading skills necessary for college students to read content-area textbooks successfully. However, it also takes students one step beyond learning those skills by giving them practice in applying those skills in four content-area chapters. Students practice reading, understanding, and studying chapters from college textbooks on nutrition, American history, business and psychology. Then, they are tested in those content areas to obtain a realistic evaluation of how they will do in college-level courses. All parts of this textbook work together to provide students with the skills and practice necessary to succeed in college.

ORGANIZATION

This textbook is divided into three parts. Part One teaches the basic reading skills and provides practice exercises from college-level textbooks for each skill. Part Two, containing content-area chapters, provides information about and practice with applying the reading skills. Part Three provides reading selections related to the topics in Part Two for students to practice skills that they would use in their out-of-class reading assignments in college-level courses.

Part One begins with a unit on the student's role as a learner; in the previous edition, this unit was placed before the discipline textbook chapters in Part Two. This information is provided so that the student knows what is expected in any college-level course and has some knowledge of how to deal with college-level coursework. Part One then continues with the skills. The first skill, vocabulary, teaches students how to use information provided in the textbook to determine the meanings of words. Comprehension skills, which include main idea, paragraph organization, and graphics, are then covered. Finally, critical thinking skills are presented. This last set of skills includes making inferences, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and interpreting test questions. All practice exercises in this part are excerpted from the content-area chapters in Part Two with the exception of some lower-readability practice exercises for main idea and organizational patterns, which are new to this edition. Additionally, a new article is used to model summarizing, and journal prompts have been added in each chapter to help students practice metacognition.

Part Two, containing the content-area chapters, is the unique section of this textbook. Using all of the skills in Part One, students learn how to take notes, mark and annotate, and outline. Then they are introduced to different methods of studying and preparing for a discipline test. Finally, the students take tests covering each of the content-area chapters and have the opportunity to analyze their tests to determine which study/reading methods worked best for them and what they can do to improve their work. The test questions come from the study guide or test bank of each textbook and hence were written by teachers in the field of study. Changes in the second edition include the following: the introduction of concept mapping, introductory material on reading a particular discipline as a learner in that discipline, a new order of discipline textbook chapters and methods of note taking, longer practice tests divided into sections so that students are able to periodically check comprehension, and related to this part in the appendix, information on reading English 101 essays with three sample essays from English 101 readers.

Part Three, presenting the journal articles, may be used by the instructor in a variety of ways. "Practice with Periodicals" exercises and "Journal Entry" suggestions can be found in each of the skills chapters in Part One to provide added reinforcement. "Making Connections" sections in the discipline chapters in Part Two refer students to the articles and suggest they read them for background knowledge. Finally, each of the articles in Part Three is followed by questions and can be used to provide students with practice reading for research. Two new articles have been included in this edition, one in history and one in business.

Finally, the instructor's manual now includes longer discipline tests, pre-view quizzes for each discipline chapter, suggested course schedules, notes for conversion to overhead transparencies, and revised skills tests.

TEACHING SEQUENCE

Instructors can begin a course by teaching the basic reading skills during the first third of the semester. The articles in Part Three may be used at this time to begin reinforcement of skills, or an instructor may decide to wait until some or all of the skills have been taught before assigning a selection. Students should have progressed at least through Chapter 2 before a summary

of a selection is required. However, the other writing exercises may be assigned any time during the course.

The second part of the textbook should take the major portion of the semester. Practice and success with each of the study/reading techniques (note taking, marking and annotating, and outlining) are important to the success of the student in later classes. Individual conferences, to provide feedback on each of the techniques to the students, are recommended. Conferences can be completed during class time when students are completing an assignment or outside of class during a lab time.

Another sequence for teaching the course would be to teach the first three chapters of skills and then move the students to the first discipline chapter where they would apply these skills using the first type of note taking. After completion of the discipline chapter, students would be directed back to the next two skills chapters before going to the next discipline chapter. Then, students would complete the last two skills chapters before working on the third discipline chapter. Finally, students would determine their best method of reading/studying and complete the final discipline chapter.

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My thanks also go to instructors who have used the first edition of *Making Connections* with their students and were kind enough to contact me with suggestions and/or take the time to respond to questionnaires from my publisher. These people include instructors from Midland Community College in South Carolina, particularly Elissa P. Nash, who shared her course structure and tests. Special thanks also go to Cheryl Simnitt and Carol Wills of San Mateo College in California. Cheryl shared numerous materials that she uses in the course, including overhead transparencies and unit assignment charts. Carol and I communicated by e-mail, phone, and fax; she shared her ideas for revisions in the second edition, particularly information on creating concept maps.

Thanks to my family, my husband Bob, and my children Dan and Claire, who continue to bear with me as I continue to write. Also, acknowledgment to my brothers, Len and Mark Romutis, whom I promised to recognize in this edition.

Finally, thanks go to the staff of Harcourt College Publishers, including Steve Dalphin, senior acquisitions editor; Jill Johnson, development editor; and Elaine Hellmund, project manager. I would also like to thank Michael Bass and Diane Ratto for their excellent work on the production of this book.

NOTE TO THE INSTRUCTOR

The idea for this textbook came from two areas. The first was accountability. The effectiveness of my reading course was being determined by how well students were doing in courses after they successfully completed the reading course. Talking to students and instructors and just understanding students, I knew that many other factors other than how well students read determine students' success in a course. But I also knew that I had to do more than just teach and practice reading skills with the students. Many of them saw my course as something they had to take and pass in order to get into college-level courses but that had no connection to those college-level courses. I wanted them to understand the connection and find the reading course useful.

That takes me to the second area that helped me come up with the idea for this textbook—the students. My old reading course was skill based. Students learned and practiced skills such as finding the main idea, making inferences, distinguishing fact from opinion, and determining important details; the last unit of the semester was on outlining and note taking. Each semester I would receive student evaluations exclaiming that students wished that the last unit could have come earlier in the semester to help them with other courses they were taking. And even after explaining to subsequent classes that this unit had to come at the end because students needed to know the “skills” in order to do the outlining and note taking, students still didn't understand why they couldn't do what they wanted and needed earlier in the course. I decided that they were right, and if I had them for only fourteen or fifteen weeks, I needed to do what they wanted and needed. I needed to cut down the number of skills that they were learning and spend more time practicing application of those skills.

This textbook is set up in three parts. The first part is skills; all of the skills have practice exercises using passages from the discipline chapters in

Part Two or from textbook chapters on similar topics. I suggest that you spend no more than one class on each of the skills. The important part of this textbook is Part Two. Students need to apply and practice what they'll need to be doing after they leave the reading course. I have found that students can know all the skills and do well in Part One and still do terribly on the discipline tests in Part Two. It's not just knowing how to find main ideas and important details; it's also knowing what to do with those after you've found them. Part Two of this textbook will help students learn to study/read.

Part Three provides journal articles on different reading levels to give students practice reading that type of material. When students take a course, the textbook is not the only material that they will be required to read. They will often be required to find journal articles and report on those. Use these articles as you wish; they may be used to provide background knowledge for the discipline chapters, to help students become interested in the topics, or to help them better understand the discipline chapters. Using paragraphs from the selections, you can have them practice the skills or write summaries. Use the "Practice with Periodicals" exercises in Part One and include discussion of the articles in "Making Connections" in Part Two. Talk to some of your faculty colleagues and ask them what type of outside reading is required in discipline courses. Have students practice what they will be doing when they exit your course.

The important thing is to have students experience success in the discipline chapter tests because of the work they have accomplished. It is important to ensure that they are taking the correct notes, so be sure to spend some time conferring with them to check notes, markings and annotations, and outlines. After each discipline test, have them analyze the test questions and determine why they marked an answer wrong. Students should look for patterns and work on weaknesses as well as build on strengths.

My goal with this textbook is to help students learn how to read a college textbook and know what to do to help themselves be successful in college-level courses.

NOTE TO THE STUDENT

READING JOURNALS: AN ASSIGNMENT

This reading textbook is about how to read a college-level textbook successfully and what to do with the information that you have acquired from that textbook to be successful in a college course. You will learn how to use the reading skills in the first part of this book with the textbook chapters in the second part, and then you will learn different strategies to help you do well on discipline tests.

A large part of success as a reader is dependent on what you think as you read. It is extremely important that you become aware of what you think as you read. Being aware of what you think is called *metacognition*. Metacognition is important in all types of reading, whether it be reading for enjoyment or reading for some type of information. Have you ever read part of a book only to look up and ask yourself, “What did I just read?” While reading, have you ever found yourself daydreaming about something that has happened or will happen? This happens to all readers whether they are good or poor readers. The difference is that good readers will be aware of this daydreaming much sooner than poor readers because they are aware of their thoughts.

The best way to increase metacognitive abilities is to practice. The best way to practice is with a journal. Writing about what you are thinking will make your thoughts visible and allow you to determine how you need to change that thinking. Use the journal prompts in each of the skills chapters in Part One to help you practice metacognition.

Do not write a book report or summary of what you have read. Stop reading and write whenever you realize you are thinking about something other than the words. Think about what goes on in your head as you watch a movie; reading should provoke similar thoughts. Thinking about what

someone or something looks like can be one of the thoughts that you have. Other thoughts may include why the author used a particular word or phrase, what may happen later in the selection, and how the article or chapter may end. You may also be thinking about what has happened and what is happening. Sometimes, you may not understand a word, a sentence, or a paragraph. You may find yourself confused and rereading or reading beyond the confusing material to help you understand. These are the things that you need to record. You can write about facts that are important and about what thoughts they may trigger. When reading about history, you may be visualizing the people and/or battles. In science and nutrition, you may be visualizing a protein. In business you may be comparing what you read with your own experiences at work. In psychology, you may be thinking about how the personality theories compare to each other, with your own theories, or with your friends' personalities. The important thing is to be aware of what you are thinking.

Don't be afraid to write that you found yourself thinking of something other than the text. The more you think about your thinking, the less you will find your mind wandering to topics other than the text.

Read some of the following journal entries from students like you. Then, use the information in this note as well as the journal entry ideas in chapters one through seven to guide your thinking as you write journals. Remember to always be aware of what is going on in your mind as you read.

Journal

In the beginning of the chapter "The Student's Role as Learner," the author talks about SQ3R and when it is useful. While reading about SQ3R I remembered that I had heard this before from a different teacher. One point that came across as I read is that I should make connections to my own life. I should also think about what I am thinking as I read. In the next section about textbook difficulty, I agree that people will have more interest in reading about a topic they know about. I didn't know the brain gets bored because it needs information at a fast pace. I sometimes get bored when I read. I liked how the author gave the idea of reading notes out loud. I think I may try that.

Journal #8

As I was reading and underscoring this chapter on the Civil War, I remembered one time when my sister, her friend, and I visited a Civil War battlefield. I remember thinking how it was too peaceful and beautiful there for it ever to have been the site of so much chaos and death - so much ugliness. Park rangers told us the soldiers cut down a lot of the trees so enemy soldiers couldn't sneak up on them as easily. The soldiers built battlements down near the Cumberland River. Many of the clearings along the river the day we visited looked like great spots for a picnic. I think wars are bad even if they are fought for a good cause.

Journal

While I was reading "Blood Lipids Reconsidered" all of the abbreviations got on my nerves. I think the author should have written them out. It took me a while to figure out what each of them meant (LDL, HDL, CHD, etc) I think it's great that different drugs are coming out to help lower LDL and cholesterol. But I think people should do it naturally. All drugs have side effects and I don't think people should take them unless they have to. I look at the body as a chain and drugs may fix one part of the chain but they could also break other parts of the chain. Sometimes these side effects can hurt you even more than if you hadn't taken drugs.

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