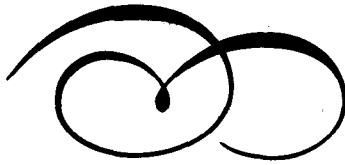


Imagining **WORLDS**

Marjorie Ford and Jon Ford



IMAGINING WORLDS



Marjorie Ford
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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COLLEGE OF ALAMEDA

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IMAGINING WORLDS

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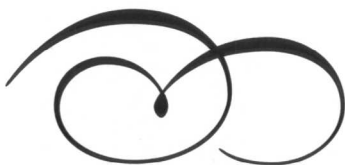
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About the Authors



MARJORIE FORD graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and is currently a lecturer in English at Stanford University. This is her fourth year as the editor of the composition program's newsletter, *Notes in the Margins*. Marjorie Ford has taught freshman composition at San Jose State University and at a number of the community colleges in the Bay Area. Along with Jon Ford, she has written *Dreams and Inward Journeys* (1990/1994), *Writing as Revelation* (1991), and *Coming From Home* (1993). In collaboration with Ann Watters, she has written *Writing for Change: A Community Reader* (1994) and *A Guide for Change: Resources for Implementing Community Service Writing* (1994).

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Imagining Worlds is designed for use in a second-semester, first-year composition course or in an introduction to literature course. As we chose the literature, helped our students to prepare the essays and short stories that serve as examples, and selected materials and wrote the apparatus for this text, our general goal was to produce a text that would engage the minds, hearts, and imagination of students and their teachers.

More specifically we believe that our presentation will encourage students to read more perceptively, think more critically, write more expressively and more intelligently, and see themselves as creative, imaginative human beings. We hope that students will learn to value and validate their feelings and ideas through understanding the works of other writers and through finding in writing itself an inner path toward self-understanding.

Imagining Worlds opens with two chapters on writing that explore reading, journal keeping, and writing as processes of discovery leading to the clarification and expression of ideas. In the student work included we show drafts to reinforce our belief that ideas are discovered as they are put into words and that drafts need to be revised repeatedly until clarity of expression is achieved.

After the two chapters on the writing process, we present chapters on the four genres of literature in the context of student casebooks, each of which illustrates one genre. The casebooks follow a similar pattern, with an introduction of the genre's form and then the presentation of student responses to a piece of literature from that genre. Some student responses are analytical or interpretive and text based, while other responses are creative. Each of the casebooks traces the student's process of finding a form of expression while working within traditional

and creative guidelines. Although you will certainly decide to adapt the text to support your own objectives for a literature and composition class, we place emphasis on creative responses to validate the crucial role of the students' imagination in writing about literature.

Six thematic chapters then follow. These thematic chapters were shaped to help students focus and intensify their interests in universal human issues and concerns. We begin with "Creativity," because students are continually working to solve the complex issues implied in the creative process, and because in the beginning of a writing and literature course it is important for students to start to think of themselves as creators and writers, in the context of other creators and writers.

The second chapter, "Initiation and Passages," includes a range of classic works of literature that speak of the growth that an individual undergoes in a time of change and adjustment. From the changes that a student undergoes in school, to the celebrations and transformations that love, marriage, and family life bring, to the inevitability of loss and death, this chapter encourages students to look within themselves in order to understand better the ways that they are maturing. In the third chapter, "Relationships," the selections explore basic human relationship issues—bonds among peers, commitments between lovers, conflicts among family members, changing expectations in modern marriages, adjustment to separations and loss. Studying, discussing, writing, and sharing essays about these selections will help students to understand the complex fabric of relationships that characterizes our fast-paced and rapidly changing world.

The selections in the fourth chapter, "Struggles," present a range of conflicts faced by men and women from different cultural and religious backgrounds; conflicts relating to gender, race, work, economics, war, and personal inner struggles. The writing assignments in this chapter encourage students not only to analyze and understand social and cultural conflicts but also to reflect on the impact that these issues have had on their own lives. Because each individual's physical and spiritual sense of well-being is entwined with the natural world, the selections in "Natural Worlds," the fifth chapter, will help students to reflect on the ways that the natural world shapes their spiritual and philosophical perspectives and to realize that our country faces many serious environmental problems: increasing urbanization, abuse of natural resources, unpredictable and devastating natural disasters, and the like.

The theme for the sixth chapter is "Hauntings and Reflections." From the Ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to the angels in Annie Dillard's "Field of Silence," this chapter explores the realms of the unknown, of life after death, of guilt, and of revenge. This final chapter also shares the wisdom of many writers whose reflections may help students to understand better their own lives and to accept the limitations of the human condition.

Each of the thematic chapters includes works representing the four genres: stories, poems, essays, and plays. This range will help students to reflect on the ideas presented in each chapter from a number of formal perspectives. Each thematic chapter also includes a folk tale and several journal entries, as these types

of writing help to engage students' imagination and feelings while giving them a sense of the mythical and personal origins of more sophisticated literary forms. The inclusion of journals kept by professional writers also demonstrates the integral role that journal keeping and prewriting play in a writer's creative process. The text's apparatus supports this concept as each selection begins with a pre-reading journal writing topic. Discussion questions and writing assignments, including prereading journals, expressive, analytical, interpretive, argumentative essays, and creative writing projects, as well as research assignments, follow each selection. At the end of each chapter comparative writing topics guide students toward a synthesis of the different perspectives and issues presented in the chapter selections. We believe that this range and mixture of types of assignments will encourage students to experiment with different forms of writing and help them to develop a sense of identity and voice as writers.

A wide range of ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and literary traditions is represented in *Imagining Worlds*—from contemporary to ancient, from American and Western European to African, Hispanic, and Asian. We hope students will learn from this diversity that, though the imagination may take many forms, there are also universal human concerns and patterns of development that connect us to one another.

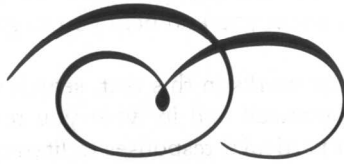
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Marjorie Ford
Jon Ford

Introduction: To the Student



Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited whereas imagination embraces the entire world.

Albert Einstein

I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. . . . I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

We do not know our own souls, let alone the souls of others. Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is a virgin forest in each; a snowfield where even the print of bird's feet is unknown. Here we go alone.

Virginia Woolf

Poets, philosophers, politicians, artists, and scientists value the power of the imagination. Imagination has helped to create great works of art, to produce dreams and visions that have led to revolutionary insights and have changed the course of history. Our imagination can guide us on our journey along the path of life, as we travel to new cultures and encounter people with values different from our own, form friendships, raise families, build careers, and work to improve the quality of life in our communities. Our imagination can give us the courage and resourcefulness to face the trials and challenges of sickness, natural disasters, and loss of loved ones. Our imagination can help us to discover truths about the heart and the human spirit. As we face the unknown, imagination al-

lows us to bring definition to solitude, what Virginia Woolf describes as “a snowfield where even the print of bird’s feet is unknown.”

Imagining Worlds presents the worlds created by writers who bring form to the journeys of their lives through words on paper, words that they shape into stories, essays, poems, or plays. As you read this text you will come to understand that imaginative literature asks you as a reader to collaborate, to complete and create meaning as you read. Your mind and imagination bring literature to life while encouraging reflection on your own identity and values. You may feel yourself changing and growing as you read, understanding and empathizing with the characters and the conflicts portrayed in literature. Like a telescope that allows astronomers to imagine life on stars in the galaxies, words as they are shaped into literature enlarge the mind and the spirit. Stories, poems, plays, and essays brought to life through a merging of your own imagination and the creativity of the writer can sustain you and help you to grow emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

As you think about the works in this text, search within yourself to decide what you value, both in yourself and in what you read. Try to find words of your own to express your particular responses to literary works. As you come to understand and appreciate the imagined worlds of others, your inner life will be enriched. To realize that words in the form of imaginative literature help each individual to clarify and to shape experience; to realize that words can help you to bear the pain of fear, anger, and loss; to realize that words as they articulate your joy also help you to extend and impassion the triumphs of being alive—this is the gift that *Imagining Worlds* offers to its readers.

One of our students expressed the fulfillment she found through writing and reading in the following journal entry:

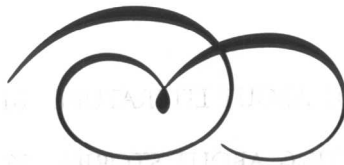
Through imagining the worlds of others I find it easier to draw upon my own world in my writing. I have found that my world is not much different from that of others. In coming to this realization, my writing has come to have more meaning to me. I feel more of a purpose to write, not just because it is a requirement. So much is locked inside me; fears and hope, love and hate. I have found that my writing has more personal meaning because I have opened my mind and reached into my soul. Many of the writers in this book have inspired me to do so. For the first time in my life writing has become fulfilling for me.

Literature is a bridge that allows people to connect and communicate with one another. By reading others’ works and sharing your writing with others, you will have the opportunity to become better acquainted with new people, many of whom will have grown up in different cultures. Just as your discussion of ideas about the meaning of a story, a poem, an image, a scene will be unpredictable, it will also be challenging—intellectually, culturally, and emotionally. In addition, working with a diversity of forms such as the short story, the journal,

and the poem will help you find more complex and creative ways of presenting ideas both in your own personal and creative writing and in the essays you write for your coursework. Many students have found that looking within themselves to find a form and a style expressive of their own voice and intentions has empowered them to develop confidence as writers. We hope that *Imagining Worlds* will help you to develop this same confidence in your mind, in your imagination, and in your ability to express what you believe in and value.

Marjorie Ford
Jon Ford

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