ELIZABETH PENFIELD NANCY WICKER

The Writer's Roles

READINGS WITH RHETORIC



The Writer's Roles

READINGS WITH RHETORIC

Elizabeth Penfield University of New Orleans

Nancy Wicker United States Naval Academy

Scott, Foresman and Company Glenview, Illinois London, England Acknowledgments for literary selections appear on pp. 487-492, which are an extension of the copyright page.

An Instructor's Manual is available. It may be obtained through your local Scott, Foresman representative or by writing to the English Editor, College Division, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900 East Lake Avenue, Glenview, Illinois 60025.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Penfield, Elizabeth, 1939-The writer's roles.

Includes index.

1. College readers. 2. English language—Rhetoric.

I. Wicker, Nancy, 1949-II. Title.

PE1417.P434 1985 808'.042

ISBN 0-673-15859-4

84-14069

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PREFACE

The approach of this reader with thetoric is eclectic rather than exclusive. The book provides ample discussion of the traditional modes of narration, description, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, example, analogy, process analysis, and argument. But rather than emphasize these modes as aims in themselves, we have chosen to subordinate them to the more important concerns of rhetorical stance—occasion, audience, purpose, and voice.

Thus this book is first and foremost a text for writers. In each part and chapter, the introduction, the writing assignments, and the description of the writing process emphasize the techniques and methods that writers use. Each chapter's selected readings reinforce those techniques by exemplifying writers, both monliterary and literary, in their roles of observer, expositor, evaluator, persuader, and speaker. These authors and all the writers represented in the text are writing as professionals, but they are writing to a general, educated audience not to an audience of fellow experts. The writers represented are journalists, reviewers, literary critics, historians, scientists, technical writers, doctors, professors, and military officers.

THE WRITER'S ROLES



The Writer's Roles: Readings with Rhetoric, through explanation and illustration, emphasizes the process of writing, of taking account of one's self, one's world, audience, and purpose. In determining what to say, to whom, and how, a writer chooses a role or a rhetorical stance. Depending upon the relationship among author, subject, and audience, a writer's rhetorical stance relies primarily on observing, explaining, evaluating, or persuading, and in some cases on a combination of those skills. A good book, for instance, can move a writer to record observations in a journal, to write a report explaining the book's contents, to draft a review evaluating the book for a magazine or newspaper, or to persuade people to read the volume. For these reasons, we have divided the book into four roles of the writer—observer, expositor, evaluator, persuader; a fifth section focuses on written forms of spoken discourse, and a sixth includes the writer in multiple roles.

We have sequenced these roles from simplest to most complex, so that one builds upon the other. Though the roles overlap, all good writers choose among them, finding the ones best suited to their purpose, selecting the proper voice, audience, and subject. Thus, for example, observers focus more often on themselves and on their relationship to the world; in contrast, evaluators, though they use the techniques of observing and researching, focus on deriving judgments from carefully weighed information and articulated standards.

Each of the text's six parts is introduced by a discussion of the role under consideration, and each of the twelve chapters opens with a description of the specific rhetorical stance analyzed and concludes with a writing assignment and extended analysis of the writing process. Except for the journal entries in Part 1 and the anthology of readings in Part 6, each selection is introduced by a headnote and is followed first by questions on style and structure and then by ideas for a first draft. Traditional rhetorical terms are discussed in the text and further defined in the Glossary of Rhetorical Terms, where they are cross-referenced to the readings. A comprehensive Index emphasizes various writing techniques, keyed to passages in the text.

READINGS FROM A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES AND PROFESSIONS

The readings in *The Writer's Roles* are in cases interdisciplinary because we believe that understanding the essential rhetorical principles of each writer's role is basic to the later development of a writer in a given profession. Thus we include, for example, a historian writing about the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, a scientist discussing the proportion of size to weight, and a political analyst evaluating a recent presidential campaign. These authors, however, are writing to a general audience. So, too, the literary figures are chosen because they illustrate particular roles, not because they write literary masterpieces that present the central ideas of the humanities. No matter what the field or discipline, the readings have been selected because they show writers at work, instructing and entertaining, writing with personal and professional concerns for audiences with whom they want to share those same concerns.

THE WRITING PROCESS



After each reading selection, we suggest ideas for a first draft, an assignment that can be turned into a finished paper by turning to the Writing Process at the end of each chapter. There, we discuss how to derive ideas for writing, how to develop and organize those ideas, how to find a voice, how to revise, and how to link one role to another by considering additional contexts for writing. Thus all the assignments lead students through the overlapping stages of the writing process and encourage a variety of rhetorical choices.

INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING ASSIGNMENTS



In addition to analyzing how to write essays, the writing assignments explain how to carry out research, how to conduct interviews, how to deliver effective oral presentations, and how to work together on group projects. Framed for the world beyond the English classroom and frequently for the world beyond the university, the assignments include the traditional genres of the personal essay, the review, and the argumentative essay; at the same time, the text offers innovative assignments such as a history of a company or product, a scientific analysis of a natural disaster, and a written interview. Whether the form is a diary entry, an autobiography, an argument, an explanation, an

analysis, an advertisement, a speech, or a lecture, the writing assignments encourage students to see themselves not only as students writing but as writers writing.

THE WRITER



Upon occasion we read to be moved by the power of language and thought. Other times we read for information or for simple entertainment. This text is based on the belief that before most writers achieve the former, they must practice the latter. To write is to learn; to write effectively is to share that knowledge. Thus *The Writer's Roles* takes its name from its dual focus on the writer's rhetorical stance and on the writing process. It is a book of and about writing, composed for apprentice writers. The text will not necessarily make writing any less arduous, but it will make it more comprehensible, more accessible, more engaging, and more rewarding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their support and encouragement, we wish to thank our colleagues at the United States Naval Academy, particularly David O. Tomlinson and Laurence W. Mazzeno, and at the University of New Orleans, particularly Edward M. Socola and David Dillon. Special thanks, as always, go to Betty Wisdom, Harriett Prentiss, and our students, and for their keen editing and proofreading, our particular appreciation goes to Lydia Webster and Lillian R. Wicker. We are also grateful for the advice of the able reviewers of the manuscript: Marilyn Cooper, University of Southern California; Lezlie Laws Couch, University of Missouri—Columbia; Michael Feehan, University of Texas—Arlington; Donald Ross, University of Minnesota; Jack Selzer, Pennsylvania State University; and Stephen Zelnick, Temple University.

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