

# READING CRITICALLY, WRITING WELL

## A Reader and Guide

THIRD EDITION

R. B. AXELROD CHARLES R. COOPER

USED

Segregation laws unjust because Blacks have no say in them

bam which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

A further distinction

Example

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the consequences. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustices, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Links his civil disobedience to past heroes audience will have to accept

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

Relates his position to religious participation

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's anti-religious laws.

Then greets directly to brothers

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux

King/Letter from Birmingham

Klux Klanner, but the white moderate (who) prefers a negative peace which is the tensest of peace to a positive peace which is the presence of justice. He constantly says, "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't see why your methods of direct action are so important." He is right. Only the concept of time and who constantly man's freedom (who) follows by "more convenient season." Shallow advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season. "Shallow advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season." Shallow advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season. "Shallow advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season." Shallow advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that in order to exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when it is in this purpose they become the dangerously structured (dam) that in the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary part of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. (Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of light and truth injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates to the light of human conscience and the light of national opinion before it can be cured.)

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But it is this illogical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning (time) in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have

Just this point be refused everything in time

the story raise the issue of jurors are preying on the story, or against, the story, it may belong in the story. An editor's decision about the story raise the issue of jurors are preying on the story, or against, the story, it may belong in the story.

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## *A Reader and Guide*

THIRD EDITION

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# PREFACE

Like previous editions, this third edition of *Reading Critically, Writing Well* is more than simply a collection of readings for a college writing course; our goal throughout continues to be to teach students practical strategies for critical reading, thereby enabling them to analyze thoughtfully the readings in this text and in their other college courses. We assume that college students should learn to think and read critically and that as they become better critical readers, they will also become more effective writers. To this instruction in reading, we add comprehensive guidance in writing, helping students to understand and manage the composing process—from invention through planning and drafting to revision.

This text attempts to bring critical reading and writing together in an ideal relationship. After their initial reading of each of the selections included here, students are encouraged to reread and annotate the essay and to write about their responses to its meaning. Then they return to the essay again to annotate, analyze, and write about one or more of its distinctive rhetorical features: here students are offered specific questions for analyzing the major nonfiction genres or kinds of discourse and criteria for evaluating them. Based on these analyses and evaluations, students learn to read each genre with a critical eye and, finally, to practice writing their own essays of that kind.

We believe that if students have specific strategies for reading and careful guidance with writing, they can study seriously and compose confidently the types of discourse written by academics and professionals. Instead of exercises in the conventional modes of writing, this text offers

real-world writing tasks; students read and write the kinds of discourse they will encounter during college and on the job. They practice the forms of critical analysis, inquiry, and knowledge-making central to research and learning in college. In this way, the text introduces them to writing and learning across the college curriculum.

## New to This Edition

This third edition of *Reading Critically, Writing Well* remains fundamentally the same book in its assumptions about students' learning and its attention to instruction in both reading and writing strategies. It is, nevertheless, a substantially revised book, as the following summary will suggest:

- Chapter 1 has been rewritten to get the course off to a quick start by introducing two basic reading strategies: *reading for meaning* and *reading like a writer*. These two strategies are carried through the entire book, providing the basis for each chapter introduction and for the apparatus following each reading.
- The catalog of critical reading strategies that previously opened the book has been moved to an appendix, which students can refer to easily.
- The openings of Chapters 2 through 9 and the apparatus following every reading selection have been redesigned and rewritten.
- Group-inquiry activities and a list of typical academic and workplace writing situations appropriate for each genre have been added to Chapters 2 through 9.
- Many of the Ideas for Your Own Writing that follow each reading selection have been expanded, offering students a wider array of specific essay topics.
- Chapters 2 through 9 each conclude with a summary checklist of the basic features of the genre to aid students in reading their own essays, and those by other writers, critically.
- Thirty-three of the fifty-two essays are new.

Most of these changes are discussed in greater detail below.

## Noteworthy Features

**Primary focus on fundamental critical reading strategies.** The opening chapter of *Reading Critically, Writing Well* introduces the concept of critical reading through the example of a sample essay that has been annotated twice—first to explore its meaning (reading for meaning), then to analyze its key rhetorical features (reading like a writer)—

followed in each case by a written exploration of the annotations. A second essay in Chapter 1 provides an opportunity for students to practice the same kinds of annotating and writing activities on their own. Chapter 1 in this edition represents a marked departure from that in previous editions, concentrating as it does on the fundamental critical reading strategies of annotating essays and examining their key rhetorical features. (The further critical reading strategies are now introduced as appropriate elsewhere in the book and described in detail in Appendix 1, *A Catalog of Critical Reading Strategies*.) This new Chapter 1 should provide a more manageable introduction to the concepts and practices that underlie the rest of the book.

**Organization based on eight basic types of discourse.** As in previous editions, Chapters 2 through 9 then focus on reading and writing particular types of discourse: four types of personal and explanatory discourse (autobiography, observation, reflection, and explanation of concepts) and four types of argumentative discourse (evaluation, analysis of causes or effects, proposal to solve a problem, and arguing a position on a controversial issue). These eight chapters provide students with comprehensive support for reaching the goals stated in our title: reading critically and writing well.

**Detailed chapter introductions that guide students in reading each type of discourse closely and critically.** Chapters 2 through 9 begin by introducing the rhetorical situation in which each type of discourse is most commonly produced and read. To illustrate the importance of annotating in reading critically, a brief annotated excerpt from one of the chapter's reading selections is presented. Students are then guided through their own detailed annotations and written analyses of a brief representative essay. These analyses, based on the primary goals of reading for meaning and reading like a writer outlined in Chapter 1, help students focus on particular ideas and issues raised in the essay and on basic rhetorical features and writing strategies, so they can learn to analyze, evaluate, and write the type of discourse under discussion.

New to these chapter introductions, in addition to the more detailed guidance in annotation and critical reading, are (1) an outline of three or four professional and academic **writing situations**, showing students how each particular genre is central to college writing assignments across the disciplines; and (2) a **group-inquiry exercise** that invites students to rehearse the assignment situation orally before they begin work in the chapter, with the goal of making the genre seem more understandable and approachable. These group-inquiry exercises also provide opportunities for collaborative learning, as can many of the Reading for Meaning and Reading Like a Writer activities.

***Provocative, illustrative readings.*** Next in Chapters 2 through 9, five or six readings (including one written by a student) illustrate the range of writing situations and approaches typical to that kind of discourse, each preceded by headnotes that discuss the author and the context in which the selection was written and followed by ideas for students' own writing. Well over half of these readings are new to the third edition, and our goal has been to choose new readings that—in terms of subject matter, rhetorical structure, and representativeness of discourse type—are interesting and provocative and at the same time benefit from close, critical analysis.

***Carefully focused apparatus that promotes critical reading and writing.*** The new apparatus following these readings reflects the more focused and streamlined goals of Chapter 1: instead of the usual list of questions, there are only two clearly defined tasks. Under Reading for Meaning, students are invited to reread, annotate, and write at least a page about the selection, using suggestions based on current research into how readers make meaning for themselves from texts: bringing prior knowledge to bear, starting with what one understands best and then proceeding to what one may not yet understand, reflecting on the experience of trying to find meaning, and responding to specific brief passages. Based on these suggestions, students decide for themselves how to engage the text through rereading, annotating, and writing. We know from class testing that such engagement prepares students for lively discussion; more important, students see more in every essay than is possible after reading it once and answering a few perfunctory questions.

Next, the Reading Like a Writer activity following each selection focuses on a single rhetorical feature or writing strategy that is different for each reading in the chapter. By focusing on a single rhetorical feature at a time, students are able to examine how and why writers construct their texts in particular ways. They see the role convention plays in writing and the many imaginative ways writers may use—and may also resist—convention. As with the Reading for Meaning activity, once students have reread and annotated the selection, they are asked to write about what they have learned.

In addition, following two selections in Chapters 2 through 9, a further critical strategy for reading for meaning or reading like a writer is added. Described in detail in Appendix 1, A Catalog of Critical Reading Strategies, each of these represents a particular approach to annotating and analyzing a text. Unlike previous editions, where students were introduced to all these reading strategies in Chapter 1, this edition gradually introduces students to these strategies as each is useful for analyzing a particular reading.

**Comprehensive guide to writing each type of discourse.** As in previous editions, Chapters 2 through 9 conclude with a brief but comprehensive guide to writing that helps students through each stage of the writing process for that particular genre—from finding a topic to revising for readability. These guides to writing are each followed by a new summary of basic features to help students revise their own work and to analyze and evaluate the work of other writers, professionals and peers alike.

**Complete catalog of critical reading strategies.** Appendix 1, A Catalog of Critical Reading Strategies, offers a variety of proven reading strategies including previewing, outlining and summarizing, exploring the significance of figurative language, looking for patterns of opposition, evaluating an argument, and comparing and contrasting related readings—along with three new strategies growing out of current reading research: contextualizing, questioning to understand and remember, and reflecting on challenges to your beliefs and values. An excerpt from the famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr., is annotated and analyzed according to these strategies, and the full text of the letter concludes the appendix to allow further reading and analysis.

**Brief guide to research and documentation.** A final appendix discusses library and field research. It includes MLA and APA guidelines for documenting sources, and it offers advice to help students integrate research materials into their own writing.

**Thorough instructor’s manual.** An *Instructor’s Resource Manual* outlines various course plans for using this text and offers suggestions for presenting each reading. It includes, as well, discussion of general teaching strategies that became central to our work as we taught previous editions and an annotated bibliography of recent research and theory on learning from text, sources that influenced our choice of critical reading strategies.

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*Rise B. Axelrod  
Charles R. Cooper*

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