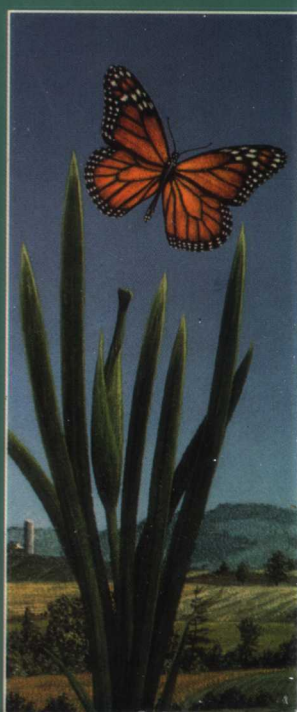


TRANSITIONS

Lives in America

Irina L. Raicu • Gregory Grewell



Transitions

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Lives in America

Irina L. Raicu • Gregory Grewell

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY



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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

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Our main goal in creating *Transitions: Lives in America* is to provide instructors with a reader that will offer accessible, thought-provoking selections while creating a flow, a continuum, in the term-long interaction that a composition course represents. Because we are asking the students to write essays that weave various points together into a unified whole, we feel that a composition textbook should model this skill.

To this end, we have paid particular attention to the organization of the text. The themes of the first five sections (“Growing Up,” “Entering the Gender Arena,” “Love and Other Metaphors,” “Work Is a Four-Letter Word,” and “The Evolving Environment”) appear in the order in which those issues tend to become prominent in most of our lives. Within each chapter, the readings generally follow a chronological order—not necessarily based on the time when the selections were written but on the development of ideas related to the chapter’s theme.

In addition, special selections appear between chapters: Each one of these is itself a transition, dealing both with the theme of the preceding chapter and with the theme developed in the chapter that follows. However, since all of the themes are deeply interconnected, an instructor could choose to present the chapters in a different order yet still find readings that can act as transitions between themes; the Instructor’s Manual that accompanies this text includes our suggestions for such alternate transitions. The effect created by the use of transitional selections is one of a unified exploration rather than one of a disconnected, haphazard leap from one subject to another.

Throughout the text, we offer selections that will enlarge the students’ field of vision while encouraging critical thinking, and we include sections of brief but thorough advice on writing that the students can turn to outside of class.

The Readings

- *Transitions: Lives in America* contains more than eighty readings grouped thematically into six sections: “Growing Up,” “Entering the Gender Arena,” “The Metaphor of Love,” “Work Is a Four-Letter Word,”

- “The Evolving Environment,” and “Issues in American Culture.” Each section contains nine to eleven readings that provide a broad range of perspectives on each theme (the last section, with twenty-three selections, is the exception). At the same time, the book includes an alternate table of contents that lists the readings by their primary rhetorical mode.
- **The selections exemplify a variety of genres:** Although most of the readings are essays, some are poems, short stories, and newspaper articles; the book also includes several brief selections from the Bible, as well as an interview, a fable, and a letter.
 - **The writers included represent diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds:** Included are such frequently anthologized authors as Martin Luther King, Jr., Maxine Hong Kingston, and Gloria Naylor, as well as powerful voices that don’t often appear in composition textbooks: Martin Espada, Arturo Islas, Becky Birtha, Robert F. Jones. The readings also reflect a balance of both male and female authors.
 - **The selections reflect the approaches of a variety of disciplines:** Among the authors are professors of political science, history, and religious studies, as well as psychologists and biologists.
 - **Each section in the reader includes at least one student essay (the last chapter includes two):** Among them are Pei Kwan’s “Chink-Minded” (Section 1), Kristina Milam’s “Do I?” (Section 3), and Darron Reese’s “Get Off My Jock: A Definition of What It Means to Be a Student Athlete” (Section 6).
 - **Although most of the selections included are contemporary, several of the readings in each section provide historical perspective on the theme discussed:** Examples include a selection from the Song of Songs, a letter expressing some of Benjamin Franklin’s views on immigration, and an 1852 editorial about the Woman’s Rights Convention.
 - **Each section contains both short and long readings,** allowing the instructor the flexibility to assign several of them together or to work with the brief ones exclusively in class (using them, for example, as prompts for in-class essays). Aside from the poems, a number of the prose selections included are only one to two pages long.
 - **Several humorous selections lighten the tone while still encouraging critical thinking:** Some examples are Dave Barry’s piece about men and relationships and P. J. O’Rourke’s article taking issue with environmentalism.

The Pedagogy

- **Thorough advice on writing essays:** Each section ends with a brief yet thorough discussion of either a particular stage of the writing process

or a particular type of essay. These discussions build on each other—from advice on choosing a topic and prewriting to coverage of drafting, revising, and incorporating outside sources. The last segment discusses the writing of research papers, in the context of the section’s broader coverage of argumentative essays.

- **Focus on specific language issues:** Each section begins with a brief segment that looks at issues such as descriptive language, loaded words, clichés, and figures of speech.
- **Questions that help the students understand and challenge both content and rhetorical devices:** Each reading is followed by five to twelve questions (depending on the length and complexity of the piece) that invite the students to focus on key issues raised by the text.
- **“Connections” questions that can also function as writing assignments:** Each selection is followed by one to four broad questions or assignments that further encourage critical thinking by asking the students to draw connections between various readings from this text, comparing and contrasting both content and writing techniques.
- **Topics for writing:** Each section is followed by ten to twelve suggestions for writing, related either to the section’s theme or to the essay-writing advice presented in that section (Section 6, which is about twice as long as the other sections, is followed by twenty writing topics).
- **Biographical headnotes:** Each reading is preceded by a brief biographical note about its author, offering the students a contextual sketch for the text.
- **“Warm-up” sections:** Each selection is introduced by a question or assignment designed to engage the students’ preexisting knowledge and opinions about the topic of the selection they are about to read.

The Illustrations

- **Section-opening photographs or graphs** visually comment on the sections’ themes, allowing students to hone an additional type of literacy.

The Instructor’s Manual

The Instructor’s Manual offers brief overviews that answer the questions posed in each selection, advice about some of the issues that the students are likely to be grappling with after reading the text, and suggestions for **collaborative projects** that will encourage cooperation and enhance the students’ involvement with the material discussed.

The Instructor's Manual also includes **suggestions for alternative ways of grouping the readings**, including alternative transitional selections (for instructors who would like to approach the sections in a different order than the one presented in the text or who will need to skip some sections altogether). In addition, the manual contains a list of **suggested movies** that relate to topics raised by the reading selections; instructors can choose to show some of these videos in the classroom or encourage the students to watch them on their own.

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TO THE STUDENT

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As you are reading this, you are a person in transition. We all are, always—although we often aren't aware of it. You might have just made the transition from being a high school student to being a college student; from being an adolescent to being, legally, an adult; or, as so many of us do today, from being a full-time mother or member of the workforce to being a student again, sharpening your skills for a new job.

This book aims to help you make another transition: from whatever level of writing skill you have today to a level where you are more aware, more confident, and more effective as a writer.

To this end, we've included in the text advice about various aspects of writing, as well as a collection of essays, short stories, and poems, written by both professional and nonprofessional authors, including students. The readings are meant to serve both as models and as sources for ideas for your own writing; while all of them possess some qualities worth emulating, they are also all meant to be targets for your critique, in terms of both content and style.

We have titled this text *Transitions* in part to draw your attention to one of the most important elements of good writing (and the one most overlooked by beginning writers): the words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that serve as bridges, explaining the connection between a point discussed and the point that follows it. Without transitions, a composition reads like a list of points; with them, it flows as a whole.

Because this flow, this feeling of dealing with a unified whole, is generally preferable to disjointedness, we've also tried to organize the readings in this text along a clear continuum. The themes of the first five sections ("Growing Up," "Entering the Gender Area," "Love and Other Metaphors," "Work Is a Four-Letter Word," and "The Evolving Environment") appear in the order in which those issues tend to become prominent in our lives. Within each section, the readings generally follow a chronological order—not necessarily based on the time when the selections were written but on the development of ideas related to the section's theme.

Special selections appear between sections: Each one of these is itself a transition, dealing both with the theme on the preceding section and with the theme developed in the section that follows. Since all of the themes are deeply interconnected, however, your instructor may choose to present the sections in a different order and find other selections that can act as transitions between themes. In addition, some of the questions that follow each reading encourage you to consider the connections between it and other pieces included in the book. The effect created is that of a unified exploration—rather than disconnected, haphazard leaps from one subject to another.

Finally, the last section of the text brings together various issues that have shaped and continue to shape the identity of our particular society. Aside from its Native American population, whose members have been forced to go through drastic but unique transitions, the American people is comprised of those or the descendants of those who made a great (voluntary or involuntary) transition from one country and culture to another. Like any one of us, American society is always in transition. Through its history, it has so far become more socially egalitarian, more multiracial, more wealthy as a whole; some would also argue that it has become more materialistic, more unequal in economic terms, more splintered into special-interest groups, more crime-ridden.

It's important to remember that we as individuals are not just strands in our society's fabric but also active participants in some or all of its changes. As we evolve from one stage of our lives into another, we can also make the transition from being what the outside world tells us we *should* be to being the people who we *want* to be; from being powerless to being—in part through our ability to express ourselves in writing—powerful.

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