



THE NORTON SAMPLER

THOMAS COOLEY

FOURTH EDITION

THE NORTON SAMPLER

Short Essays for
Composition

Fourth Edition

THOMAS COOLEY

The Ohio State University

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION



In this fourth edition of the *Sampler*, nineteen of the selections are new, and they represent a wide range of voices. Along with more works by women and minorities and more student essays, however, I have tried to keep the selections, or at least authors, that readers of earlier editions found indispensable. Thus Joan Didion and Garrison Keillor, for example, are still here, though represented this time by essays explicitly about writing. Loren Eiseley has given way to Richard Rodriguez, but "The Angry Winter" can still be found in the expanded Essays for Further Reading, now subtitled "Combining the Modes."

I have kept Annie Dillard's remarks on "Transfiguration" at the front of the book, and many of the comments in "Writers on the Writing Process" will also be familiar. These are the sections at the end of each chapter in which professional and beginning writers explain how particular pieces in the collection were composed and, in general, how and why they write. Among the new voices in these sections are my own and those of Debi Davis, winner of the *Norton Textra* writing contest, and Beverly Dipo, a professional nurse. For this new edition, Russell Baker has also generously supplied part of the typescript of "A Nice Place to Visit."

It was Edgar Allan Poe who said that a long poem does not exist. As editor of these readings for composition, I have kept in mind the

unity of effect that Poe taught us to value. Most of the essays in this collection, therefore, are only two to four pages long, and even the longest can be easily read at a single sitting.

It is misleading to talk about unity, however, when one is dealing with a fragment. How do we tell our students about beginnings, middles, and ends or about an author's shapely rhetoric when the shape is actually an editor's? (I have found that even "classics" such as Alexander Petrunkevitch's "The Spider and the Wasp" are routinely reprinted with amputations.) It is the rhetoric of the short piece that our students are learning in beginning composition classes, and such pieces have their own unique rules of order. Thus I have taken pains to gather *complete* essays, or, in a few cases (indicated in the headnotes), *complete* chapters of books.

The organization of the *Sampler* remains essentially the same as before, though it represents but one way of proceeding, hardly the only way. The introductory chapter exposes the student to the writing process as a whole. The rest of the book is organized by the traditional modes of discourse. Narration comes first because these are personal narratives and many teachers like to begin a course by having students write about their own experience.

The next six chapters, the bulk of the book, illustrate strategies of exposition and can be taken up in any order, though here the plan has been to build from the simple (as I perceive it) to the more complex. For example: Chapter 5 ("Essays That Define") presents extended definitions that draw upon the techniques of classification and analysis discussed earlier.

Description is treated in a single chapter (Chapter 8) because this mode is seldom isolated from the others in practice; the teacher who requires more examples will find them throughout the collection. Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to persuasion and argumentation, and they observe the classical division of persuasion into *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* (although I have not burdened the student with these terms). Some teachers will want to start here.

The questions after each selection are intended to help students understand what they are reading and especially to aid them in analyzing standard rhetorical strategies and techniques. The comparative questions—which invite students to make connections between essays—are an innovation; and so is the inclusion of student essays in full parity with those of the professionals. The "Essays for Further Reading" are more complicated, and generally longer, than the rest; but they too have been selected from a wide range of subjects.

Many people have had a hand in this fourth edition of the *Sampler*, and the editor wishes to thank them warmly here: Barry Wade, Libby Miles, Julia Reidhead, Diane O'Connor, Hugh O'Neill, Johanna Vondeling, and Susan Brekka—all of W. W. Norton; in a class by herself: Barbara Cooley; at Ohio State: Lee K. Abbott, William Allen, Richard D. Altick, Daniel Barnes, Toni Bates, Morris Beja, Ellen Carter, David Citino, Rebecca Cline, Edward P. J. Corbett, Suellyn Duffey, John B. Gabel, Kim Gainer, Sara Garnes, Andrea Lunsford, Kitty Locker, Richard T. Martin, Terence Odlin, Frank O'Hare, Faye Puro, Dennis Quon, Barbara Rigney, Michael Rupright, Arnold Shapiro, Frances Shapiro, Amy Shuman, Clifford Vaida, Eric Walborn, Charles Wheeler, and Christian Zacher.

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"And that is why I believe those hollow crisps on the bathroom floor are moths. I think I know moths, and fragments of moths, and chips and tatters of utterly empty moths, in any state. How many of you, I asked the people in my class, which of you want to give your lives and be writers?"

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Joyce Maynard, FOUR GENERATIONS 35

"Every one of those mothers loves and needs her daughter more than her daughter will love or need her some day, and we are, each of us, the only person on earth who is quite so consumingly interested in our child."

Mary E. Mebane, THE BACK OF THE BUS 42

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Richard Rodriguez, NONE OF THIS IS FAIR 52

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Susan Allen Toth, CINEMATYPES 75

"Aaron takes me only to art films. . . . Pete takes me only to movies that he thinks have redeeming social value. . . . Sam likes movies that are entertaining."

Isaac Asimov, WHAT DO YOU CALL A PLATYPUS? 81

"All the mammals are divided into two subclasses. In one of these subclasses ('Prototheria' or 'first-beasts') are the duckbill and five species of the spiny anteater. In the other ('Theria' or just 'beasts') are all the other 4,231 known living species of mammals."

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William Allen, HOW TO SET A WORLD RECORD 120

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Garrison Keillor, HOW TO WRITE A LETTER 128

"Don't worry about form. It's not a term paper. When you come to the end of one episode, just start a new paragraph. You can go from a few lines about the sad state of pro football to the fight with your mother to your fond memories of Mexico to your cat's urinary-tract infection to a few thoughts on personal indebtedness and on to the kitchen sink and what's in it."

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Henry Louis Gates, Jr., A GIANT STEP 154

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"That's okay: literature is built of words, and when a literary 'structure' breaks down nobody really gets hurt. It worries me, however,

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"Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes's classic example of unprotected speech—falsely shouting 'Fire!' in a crowded theater—has been invoked so often, by so many people, in such diverse contexts, that it has become part of our national folk language."

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Martha Mednick and Nancy Felipe Russo,
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Kori Quintana,
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"During my research on the effects of radiation on human genes, I noticed that there were several references to studies of Mormons in Utah. My curiosity piqued, I studied on. Apparently, the atmospheric bomb tests of the 1950s over Nevada were performed only when winds were blowing away from Las Vegas toward Utah."

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