

Crossing Cultures

Readings for Composition



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THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE

The preparation of the third edition of our reader *Crossing Cultures* has made us, its editors, realize how far, and how fast, the world has advanced in its need for cross-cultural understanding. In the early 1980s, when we prepared the first edition, it still seemed necessary to justify the development of an anthology on such a theme. In the 1990s, entering freshmen can reasonably be expected to be aware of the significance to themselves of foreign places a student in the 1980s was unlikely to have heard of. They know that Peruvian farmers support “the habit” of Americans, that sweatshops in Singapore imply a loss of jobs in the United States, and that a “peace dividend” in the American budget may depend on what happens in places like Lithuania. Above all, the threat to the environment makes us conscious, more than the threat of war ever did, of the need to interact on a world scale—in fact, of the virtual impossibility not to interact.

Using Cross-Cultural Themes

The success of this book has established the fact that cross-cultural subjects, broadly construed, work well in a composition course. They have a strong impact on students: They challenge accepted beliefs by asking students to consider the lives, ideas, aspirations—and prejudices—of people who are very different from them. At the same time, reading, and having one’s classmates read, selections related to one’s own culture are likely to heighten self-assurance and stimulate ethnic or racial pride. Of course, *Crossing Cultures* addresses itself to a wider audience than that. It is safe to say that virtually all students will, in their lives and careers, encounter ethnic diversity. In a multiethnic society like that of the United States, they can expect to work with people of diverse backgrounds. Increasingly they are also likely to come in contact with other cultures by working abroad for a time, or with people who come from other parts of the world. For that reason, *Crossing Cultures* includes selections that address themselves to American issues as well as global ones.

Moving to a Global Perspective

The nine parts into which the selections have been organized represent topics that seem to us important to cross-cultural understanding. At the same time we wanted to provide a systematic progression from the more familiar to the more distant. In the earlier parts, therefore, the concentration is on intra-American issues. From these the selections gradually move to global subjects.

Crossing Cultures as a Composition Text

Content that is thematically interesting and challenging is not enough, however, for a reader in composition. To be useful in the fullest sense, such a text has to go beyond ideas to meet the rhetorical requirements. *Crossing Cultures* is designed to meet these requirements. The selections represent the major patterns of organization; they vary widely in length and difficulty; some may be useful as models, others as challenges for argumentation.

It is in this last respect that the third edition has been strengthened in particular. More than before, selections can be used in conjunction for the development of argument. To give one example: We have retained, from the second edition, the essays by Richard Rodriguez and James Fallows that argue their differing views of bilingual education. To these we have added an essay by a major African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, that brings yet another point of view to bear on that subject and at the same time raises an issue that may put yet another piece, "World Language: English," in a new and different light.

As noted previously, the nine parts of the book move thematically from the more to the less familiar, the simpler to the more complex. The same holds for the rhetorical aspect: Each of the earlier parts moves from narration to exposition; in the later parts the personal narratives diminish, and expository and argumentative selections increase both in number and intricacy.

Each selection, except for the poems, is followed by a set of exercises. "Words to Know" singles out words and terms with which students may not be familiar. "Some of the Issues" aids students in a careful reading of the selection. "The Way We Are Told" leads them to an examination of the author's strategies. Each exercise section concludes with "Some Subjects for Essays." Asterisks indicate questions or topics that combine more than one selection or relate to the part-opening photograph.

New in the Third Edition

Thirty percent of the selections are new to this edition. Among the writers included are Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood, the latter also adding a country (Canada) not previously represented. More selections than previously cross the Pacific Ocean rather than the Atlantic. The increased interest in the "Pacific Rim," particularly China and Japan, led to the inclusion of several new selections. Three new pieces are by very young writers still in college or recently out of it. Two poems and one piece of fiction have been added. A wide range of personal narratives remains one of the strengths of the book.

Headnotes have been expanded, when it seemed appropriate, to include information on the country, the culture, or the history that forms the background of the selection. For the first time, photographs precede each of the nine parts and are tied into one or more selections through the exercises.

Acknowledgments

As was the case with the second edition, reviewers of the book have given much helpful advice on the choice of selections as well as other features. In particular we thank: Steve Adams, University of Minnesota — Duluth; Nancy K. Barry, University of Iowa; Vilma Chemers, California State University — Long Beach; T. Obinkaram Echewa, West Chester University; Susan Feinberg, Illinois Institute of Technology; R. Janie Isackson, DePaul University; Susan Dean Jacobs, DePaul University; Michelle M. Tokarczyk, Goucher College; Joan R. Vandergriff, University of Missouri — Kansas City; Victor Villanueva, Northern Arizona University; Winifred J. Wood, Wellesley College; and Mitsuye Yamada, Cypress College.

We give particular thanks to our editor at Macmillan, Barbara Heinssen. Her constant willingness to give time and thought to this edition has led to several changes that we believe improve the book. Peter A. Knapp, the assistant editor, has been very resourceful in helping us to solve a number of problems. Eric Newman has been an exemplary production supervisor, and Chris Migdol found us a group of remarkable photographs.

CONTENTS

PART ONE **Growing Up** 1

Maya Angelou **Graduation** 3

"Days before, we had made a sign for the store, and as we turned out the lights Momma hung the cardboard over the doorknob. It read clearly: CLOSED. GRADUATION."

Maxine Hong Kingston **Girlhood Among Ghosts** 15

"When I went to kindergarten and had to speak English for the first time, I became silent."

Elizabeth Wong **The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl** 21

"My brother and I had to go to Chinese school. No amount of kicking, screaming, or pleading could dissuade my mother, who was solidly determined to have us learn the language of our heritage."

Jack Agueros **Halfway to Dick and Jane: A Puerto Rican Pilgrimage** 25

"When you got to the top of the hill, something strange happened: America began, because from the hill south was where the 'Americans' lived. Dick and Jane were not dead; they were alive and well in a better neighborhood."

Maria L. Muñiz **Back, but Not Home** 39

"I want to return because the journey back will also mean a journey within. Only then will I see the missing piece."

Countee Cullen **Incident** 43

"Now I was eight and very small."

PART TWO **Heritage** 45

Harry Mark Petrakis **Barba Nikos** 47

"One of our untamed games was to seek out the owner of a pushcart or a store, unmistakably an immigrant, and bedevil him with a chorus of insults and jeers. To prove allegiance to the gang it was necessary to reserve our fiercest malevolence for a storekeeper or peddler belonging to our own ethnic background."

- Lillian Smith **When I Was a Child** 54
 "Though you ate with your nurse when you were little, it was bad to eat with any colored person after that. It was bad just as other things were bad that your mother had told you."
- John Tarkov **Fitting In** 62
 "Every father has a vision of what he'd like his son to be. Every son has a vision in kind of his father."
- Toni Morrison **A Slow Walk of Trees** 67
 "His name was John Solomon Willis, and when at age 5 he heard from the old folks that 'the Emancipation Proclamation was coming,' he crawled under the bed."
- Michael Novak **In Ethnic America** 73
 "We did not feel this country belonged to us. We felt fierce pride in it, more loyalty than anyone could know. But we felt blocked at very turn."
- Arthur L. Campa **Anglo vs. Chicano: Why?** 81
 "A century of association has inevitably acculturated both Hispanos and Anglo-Americans to some extent, but there still persist a number of culture traits that neither group has relinquished altogether."
- Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton **American Individualism** 87
 "Both the cowboy and the hard-boiled detective tell us something important about American individualism."
- Nikki Giovanni **They Clapped** 92
 "... they finally realized they are strangers all over."

PART THREE Families

95

- Jane Howard **Families** 97
 "Good families are much to all their members, but everything to none."
- Alfred Kazin **The Kitchen** 103
 "All my memories of that kitchen are dominated by the nearness of my mother sitting all day long at her sewing machine, by the clacking of the treadle against the linoleum floor, by the patient twist of her right shoulder as she automatically pushed at the wheel with one hand."

- Carolina Maria de Jesus **Diary** 108
 “. . . I went to Senhor Manuel, carrying some cans to sell.
 Everything that I find in the garbage I sell. He gave me
 13 cruzeiros. I kept thinking that I had to buy bread,
 soap, and milk for Vera Eunice. The 13 cruzeiros
 wouldn't make it.”

- Arlene Skolnick **The Paradox of Perfection** 112
 “The image of the perfect, happy family makes ordinary
 families seem like failures.”

- Theodore Roethke **My Papa's Waltz** 121
 “You . . . waltzed me off to bed/Still clinging to your shirt.”

PART FOUR **Identities** 123

- Marcus Mabry **Living in Two Worlds** 125
 “In mid-December I was at Stanford, among the palm trees
 and weighty chores of academe. . . . Once I got home to
 New Jersey, reality returned.”

- Norman Podhoretz **The Brutal Bargain** 129
 “One of the longest journeys in the world is the journey
 from Brooklyn to Manhattan.”

- Malcolm X **Hair** 139
 “I took the little list of ingredients . . . to a grocery
 store, where I got a can of Red Devil lye, two eggs, and
 two medium-sized white potatoes.”

- Jack G. Shaheen **The Media's Image of Arabs** 143
 “With my children, I have watched animated heroes
 Heckle and Jeckle pull the rug from under ‘Ali Boo-Boo,
 the Desert Rat,’ and Laverne and Shirley stop ‘Sheik
 Ha-Mean-le’ from conquering ‘the U.S. and the world.’”

- Grace Paley **The Loudest Voice** 147
 “We learned ‘Holy Night’ without an error. ‘How
 wonderful!’ said Miss Glacé, the student teacher. ‘To
 think that some of you don’t even speak the language!’”

- Gwendolyn Brooks **We Real Cool** 155
 “*The Pool Players/Seven at the Golden Shovel.*”

PART FIVE **Encounters** 157

- Piri Thomas **Alien Turf** 159
 “This crap kept up for a month. They tried to shake me
 up. Every time they threw something at me, it was just to
 see me jump.”

- Brent Staples **Night Walker** 172
 "My first victim was a woman—white, well dressed, probably in her early twenties."
- Walter White **I Learn What I Am** 177
 "In the flickering light the mob swayed, paused, and began to flow toward us. In that instant there opened up within me a great awareness; I knew then who I was. I was a Negro."
- Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston **Arrival at Manzanar** 184
 "Mama took out another dinner plate and hurled it at the floor, then another and another, never moving, never opening her mouth, just quivering and glaring at the retreating dealer, with tears streaming down her cheeks."
- Jonathan Schell **The Village of Ben Suc** 191
 "'You know, that's the first time I've ever seen a dead guy, and I don't feel bad. I just don't, that's all.'"
- Michael Dorris **For the Indians, No Thanksgiving** 199
 "Only good Indians are admitted into this tableau, of course: those who accept the manifest destiny of a European presence and are prepared to adopt English dining customs and, by inference, English everything else."
- Robert Claiborne **A Wasp Stings Back** 203
 "As a Wasp, the mildest thing I can say about the stereotype emerging from the current wave of anti-Wasp chic is that I don't recognize myself."
- Dwight Okita **In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers** 208
 "My best friend is a white girl named Denise—we look at boys together."

PART SIX **New Worlds**

211

- Michel Guillaume St. Jean de Crèvecoeur **What Is an American?** 213
 "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great change in the world."
- Alistair Cooke **The Huddled Masses** 219
 "The first thing they heard over the general bedlam were the clarion voices of inspectors bellowing out numbers in Italian, German, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, and Yiddish."

- Mark Salzman **Teacher Mark** 229
 ““Chinese parents love their children, but they also think that children are like furniture. They own you, and you must make them comfortable until they decide to let you go.””
- Laura Bohannon **Shakespeare in the Bush** 238
 “They threatened to tell me no more stories until I told them one of mine . . . Realizing that here was my chance to prove *Hamlet* universally intelligible, I agreed.”
- George Orwell **Shooting an Elephant** 250
 “In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me.”
- John David Morley **Living in a Japanese Home** 258
 “The most striking feature of the Japanese house was lack of privacy; the lack of individual, inviolable space.”
- Joseph Bruchac **Ellis Island** 265
 “Like millions of others, I too come to this island, / nine decades the answerer / of dreams.”

PART SEVEN **Customs** 269

- Clyde Kluckhohn **Customs** 271
 “A humble cooking pot is as much a cultural product as is a Beethoven sonata.”
- Leonore Tiefer **The Kiss** 276
 “When the Thonga first saw Europeans kissing they laughed, remarking, ‘Look at them—they eat each other’s saliva and dirt.’”
- Yi-Fu Tuan **American Space, Chinese Place** 280
 “The American is not rooted in his place, however lovely: his eyes are drawn by the expanding space to a point on the horizon, which is his future.”
- Conrad Phillip Kottak **Swimming in Cross-Cultural Currents** 283
 “Some Americans think that blacks and whites excel in particular sports because of biological or physiological differences, but Brazil, which has proportionately as many blacks as the United States, demonstrates that sports abilities reflect culture rather than biology.”

Horace Miner **Body Ritual Among the Nacirema** 294

"The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have supernatural influence on all social relationships.

Ashley Montagu **American Men Don't Cry** 301

"American men don't cry, because it is considered unmasculine to do so. Only sissies cry. Crying is a 'weakness' characteristic of the female, and no American male wants to be identified with anything in the least weak or feminine."

Ian Buruma **Conformity and Individuality in Japan** 304

"Talent, being highly individualistic and thus socially troublesome, is not always highly regarded in Japan."

Donna Woolfolk Cross **Sin, Suffer and Repent** 312

"Under the surface of romantic complications, soap operas sell a vision of morality and American family life."

Michael J. Arlen **Ring Around the Collar!** 321

"We are going to repeat and repeat and repeat, these commercials say, and we are going to grate on your nerves—and you are going to remember us."

PART EIGHT **Reflections**

327

Margaret Atwood **Canadians: What Do They Want?** 329

"It's hard to explain to Americans what it feels like to be a Canadian."

Vine Deloria, Jr. **Custer Died for Your Sins** 335

"The American public feels most comfortable with the mythical Indians of stereotype-land who were always THERE. These Indians are fierce, they wear feathers and grunt."

Adam Smith **The Japanese Model** 339

"What are the Japanese doing right? And how have they done it on a crowded group of islands, without enough coal and oil, without significant natural resources, without adequate farmland?"

Michael Harrington **The Invisible Poor** 344

"The very development of the American city has removed poverty from the living, emotional experience of millions upon millions of middle-class Americans."

- Ivan Illich **Effects of Development** 349
 "Once the Third World has become a mass market for the goods, products, and processes which are designed by the rich for themselves, the discrepancy between demand for these Western artifacts and the supply will increase indefinitely."
- Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes **Life on the Global Assembly Line** 356
 "Multinational corporations and Third World governments alike consider assembly-line work—whether the product is Barbie dolls or missile parts—to be 'women's work.'"
- Jonathan Swift **A Modest Proposal** 367
 "... a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth . . ."

PART NINE **Communicating** 377

- Gloria Naylor **The Meaning of a Word** 379
 "I was later to go home and ask the inevitable question that every black parent must face—'Mommy, what does 'nigger' mean?'"
- William Hines **Hello, Judy. I'm Dr. Smith** 384
 "It's high time for some consciousness-raising in the medical profession."
- Robin Lakoff **You Are What You Say** 388
 "If we refuse to talk 'like a lady,' we are ridiculed and criticized as being unfeminine."
- Myrna Knepler **Sold at Fine Stores Everywhere, Naturellement** 396
 "Madison Avenue, when constructing ads for high-priced non-necessary items, may use French phrases to suggest to readers that they are identified as super-sophisticated, subtly sexy, and privy to the secrets of old world charm and tradition."
- Edward T. Hall **Private Space** 402
 "Germans sense their own space as an extension of their ego. One sees a clue to this feeling in the term 'Lebensraum,' which is impossible to translate because it summarizes so much."
- Peter Farb **How to Talk About the World** 408
 "Anyone who visits an exotic culture quickly learns that the people are linguistically deaf to categories he considers obvious."

Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil **World
Language: English** 413

“English at the end of the twentieth century is more widely scattered, more widely spoken and written, than any other language has ever been.”

Richard Rodriguez **Public and Private Language** 422

“Without question, it would have pleased me to hear my teachers address me in Spanish . . . But I would have delayed—for how long postponed?—having to learn the language of public society.”

James Fallows **Bilingual Education** 434

“Bilingual education is inflammatory in large part because of what it symbolizes, not because of the nuts and bolts of its daily operation.”

Ngugi wa Thiong'o **The Politics of Language** 445

“And then I went to school, a colonial school, and this harmony was broken. The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture.”

Author/Title Index

463

RHETORICAL CONTENTS

Description (Selections that contain substantial descriptive passages)

Jack Agueros, <i>Halfway to Dick and Jane: A Puerto Rican Pilgrimage</i>	25
Alfred Kazin, <i>The Kitchen</i>	103
Norman Podhoretz, <i>The Brutal Bargain</i>	129
Walter White, <i>I Learn What I Am</i>	177
Jonathan Schell, <i>The Village of Ben Suc</i>	191
Alistair Cooke, <i>The Huddled Masses</i>	219
George Orwell, <i>Shooting an Elephant</i>	250
John David Morley, <i>Living in a Japanese Home</i>	258
Yi-Fu Tuan, <i>American Space, Chinese Place</i>	280
Richard Rodriguez, <i>Public and Private Language</i>	422

Narration (Personal)

Maya Angelou, <i>Graduation</i>	3
Maxine Hong Kingston, <i>Girlhood Among Ghosts</i>	15
Elizabeth Wong, <i>The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl</i>	21
Jack Agueros, <i>Halfway to Dick and Jane: A Puerto Rican Pilgrimage</i>	25
Maria L. Muñiz, <i>Back, but Not Home</i>	39
Lillian Smith, <i>When I Was a Child</i>	54
John Tarkov, <i>Fitting In</i>	62
Toni Morrison, <i>A Slow Walk of Trees</i>	67
Carolina Maria de Jesus, <i>Diary</i>	108
Marcus Mabry, <i>Living in Two Worlds</i>	125
Norman Podhoretz, <i>The Brutal Bargain</i>	129
Malcolm X, <i>Hate</i>	139
Piri Thomas, <i>Alten Turf</i>	159
Brent Staples, <i>Night Walker</i>	172
Walter White, <i>I Learn What I Am</i>	177
Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, <i>Arrival at Manzanar</i>	184
Mark Salzman, <i>Teacher Mark</i>	229
George Orwell, <i>Shooting an Elephant</i>	250
Richard Rodriguez, <i>Public and Private Language</i>	422

Narration (Observation and reporting)

- Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc* 191
 Alistair Cooke, *The Huddled Masses* 219
 Laura Bohannon, *Shakespeare in the Bush* 238
 Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, *Life on the Global Assembly Line* 356
 James Fallows, *Bilingual Education* 434

Definition

- Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *American Individualism* 87
 Jane Howard, *Families* 97
 Robert Claiborne, *A Wasp Stings Back* 203
 Michel Guillaume St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *What Is an American?* 213
 Clyde Kluckhohn, *Customs* 271
 Horace Miner, *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema* 294
 Michael J. Arlen, *Ring Around the Collar!* 321
 Gloria Naylor, *The Meaning of a Word* 379
 Robin Lakoff, *You Are What You Say* 388

Classification and Division

- Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *American Individualism* 87
 Jane Howard, *Families* 97
 Leonore Tiefer, *The Kiss* 276
 Ian Buruma, *Conformity and Individuality in Japan* 304
 Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, *Life on the Global Assembly Line* 356
 Peter Farb, *How to Talk About the World* 408
 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The Politics of Language* 445

Comparison and Contrast

- Toni Morrison, *A Slow Walk of Trees* 67
 Arthur L. Campa, *Anglo vs. Chicano: Why?* 81
 Nikki Giovanni, *They Clapped* 92
 Marcus Mabry, *Living in Two Worlds* 125
 Michael Dorris, *For the Indians, No Thanksgiving* 199
 Michel Guillaume St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *What Is an American?* 213
 Mark Salzman, *Teacher Mark* 229

Laura Bohannon, <i>Shakespeare in the Bush</i>	238
John David Morley, <i>Living in a Japanese Home</i>	258
Yi-Fu Tuan, <i>American Space, Chinese Place</i>	280
Conrad Phillip Kottak, <i>Swimming in Cross-Cultural Currents</i>	283
Margaret Arwood, <i>Canadians: What Do They Want?</i>	329
Adam Smith, <i>The Japanese Model</i>	339
Myrna Knepler, <i>Sold at Fine Stores Everywhere, Naturellement</i>	396
Edward T. Hall, <i>Private Space</i>	402

Cause and Effect

Countee Cullen, <i>Incident</i>	43
Arlene Skolnick, <i>The Paradox of Perfection</i>	112
Norman Podhoretz, <i>The Brutal Bargain</i>	129
Jack G. Shaheen, <i>The Media's Image of Arabs</i>	143
Walter White, <i>I Learn What I Am</i>	177
George Orwell, <i>Shooting an Elephant</i>	250
Yi-Fu Tuan, <i>American Space, Chinese Place</i>	280
Conrad Phillip Kottak, <i>Swimming in Cross-Cultural Currents</i>	283
Ashley Montagu, <i>American Men Don't Cry</i>	301
Donna Woolfolk Cross, <i>Sin, Suffer and Repent</i>	312
Michael J. Arlen, <i>Ring Around the Collar!</i>	321
Michael Harrington, <i>The Invisible Poor</i>	344
Ivan Illich, <i>Effects of Development</i>	349
Jonathan Swift, <i>A Modest Proposal</i>	367
William Hines, <i>Hello, Judy. I'm Dr. Smith</i>	384
Richard Rodriguez, <i>Public and Private Language</i>	422
Ngugi wa Thiong'o, <i>The Politics of Language</i>	445

Argument and Persuasion

Maya Angelou, <i>Graduation</i>	3
Lillian Smith, <i>When I Was a Child</i>	54
Michael Novak, <i>In Ethnic America</i>	73
Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, <i>American Individualism</i>	87
Norman Podhoretz, <i>The Brutal Bargain</i>	129
Malcolm X, <i>Hair</i>	139
Jack G. Shaheen, <i>The Media's Image of Arabs</i>	143
Robert Claiborne, <i>A Wasp Stings Back</i>	203
George Orwell, <i>Shooting an Elephant</i>	250