

SEE-  
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# G & ITING

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Introduction

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### Chapter 1

#### Verbal Texts

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# SEEING & WRITING

SEEIN  
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For Susanne and Marc

# Preface for Instructors

Effective writing is a product of clear thinking, and clear thinking begins with careful observation. Accurate and insightful observations about daily—and seemingly ordinary—experiences enable students to think and write confidently about important and complex aspects of American culture and their own lives. Learning to see well helps students to write well.

*Seeing & Writing* provides an unprecedented opportunity in first-year composition courses to help students improve their analytic and compositional skills by treating seriously the connection between the verbal and the visual in today's culture. It is the first composition reader to introduce the skills students need to read both kinds of texts and then to write effectively about them. Grounded in our decades of experience on both sides of the instructional desk, this book expresses our commitment to the pedagogical principle that instructors ought to start where students are able. And our experience suggests that undergraduates are thoroughly familiar—although often in a passive and uncritical way—with the myriad visual elements of contemporary American experience.

Whether they realize it or not, most students are well versed in the effects of visual texts, and many are at least acquainted with the basic workings of sophisticated visual processes such as those involved in advertising, film, and the Internet. Such materials offer opportunities for students to practice the verbal skills of critical analysis. As authors we believe that cultivating students' abilities to move fluently within and between the visual and verbal worlds will improve their analytical skills.

Consider, for example, the extent to which information technologies promote the visual in enabling people to communicate as well as to inform and entertain themselves. Increasingly, the sources as well as the processes used to envision, receive, and react to information depend on visual frames of reference. Moreover, the amount of information, its nature,

and the media and speed with which it is conveyed have intensified the pressures to respond promptly and decisively to the seemingly countless appeals to our attention made each day by individual and corporate interests. Rather than yielding to or trying to ignore these pressures, instructors should prepare students to respond to such demands by practicing the same analytic skills and applying the same rigorous intellectual standards to the visual as they do to the verbal dimensions of their lives. Practicing these skills will also enable students to articulate with greater confidence their own views of themselves and of their interactions with different subjects and contexts.

### **Seeing and Writing: Interrelations of the Visual and Verbal**

Each of the eight chapters in this book concentrates on a visible and focused aspect of contemporary American life. Each chapter presents a series of carefully chosen visual and verbal texts exploring such topics as observing the ordinary, coming to terms with a sense of place, capturing memorable moments, figuring the body, engendering difference, constructing race, reading icons, and writing in the age of the image. The chapters present a wide range of visual images (including advertisements, photographs, paintings, and comic art) and related nonfiction prose, short stories, and poems. We believe that undergraduates are sufficiently conversant with the subjects and strategies of these types of materials to want to write about them—and the questions and issues they prompt—in original, coherent, and convincing terms.

The contents of *Seeing & Writing* feature a wealth of material with an impressive track record for teaching writing effectively. We have placed these materials in unique instructional contexts by juxtaposing them with an array of new visual and verbal sources. The blend of both types of texts in each chapter balances attention to analytic readings with conversational and compositional prompts for students to express their responses to the material. Our own classroom experiences with these materials, subjects, and themes suggest that they provide engaging opportunities for practicing composition skills.



We have designed *Seeing & Writing* to help students improve their writing by sharpening their perception. This pedagogical principle informs the book's three goals: (1) to provide opportunities for composition students to think perceptively and critically about compelling visual and verbal aspects of American culture, (2) to help students write effectively about how they perceive themselves, especially in relation to the images and words that compete for their attention, and (3) to give instructors the flexibility to work with these materials in ways best suited to the interests and abilities of their students. The nature and range of visual and verbal selections reprinted here, the way the selections are organized, and the supporting materials in the instructor's manual make this collection unique and timely.

### **A Flexible Organization**

Each chapter opens with an illustration and a brief overview of the thematic scope of the chapter; this is followed by a reading and writing exercise that invites students to observe and draw reasonable, verifiable inferences from the visual material that opens the chapter. The exercise helps students relate their initial perceptions and interpretations of this material to their own life experiences and to the materials that follow in the chapter. Generally, we have designed each chapter to progress from the concrete to the abstract, from shorter to longer texts, and from a limited and readily accessible frame of reference to more wide-ranging and interconnected ones.

The overall organization of the book reflects a similar progression—from practicing the skills of observation and inference, to working with description and narration, and then to applying rhetorical forms such as exposition and argumentation. Yet because each chapter is self-contained and begins with an exercise in observation and inference, instructors can sequence subjects and themes to best address their own instructional needs as well as the interests and background of their students.

### **Additional Features**

We have interspersed throughout each chapter several instructionally self-contained images that extend the scope of a given topic or theme. These

photographs, cartoons, advertisements, and other visual artifacts will stimulate discussion and prompt further thinking and writing.

*Seeing & Writing* includes additional features in each chapter:

**Chapter dividers:** Striking photographs preceding each chapter serve as visual introductions to the subject under consideration. Commissioned especially for *Seeing & Writing*, these photographs not only function as engaging chapter dividers but also represent one artist's interpretation of the eight thematic units of the book.

**Paired visual and verbal texts:** Each chapter includes visual and verbal texts that are linked. In some instances the image and the verbal text address the same topic or theme; in others one text has inspired the other. By juxtaposing two texts we invite students to explore the similarities and differences between communicating an idea visually and verbally.

**Portfolios:** This feature presents several examples of the work of a selected visual artist. The intent is to illustrate that most artists, like most writers, have an individual style and focus of vision. Each portfolio of images is accompanied by a brief biographical headnote about the artist as well as insights into his or her thematic and stylistic vision. "Seeing" and "Writing" questions conclude each portfolio, encouraging students to think and write productively about the study of multiple images by a single artist.

**Retrospects:** These "visual timelines" demonstrate in graphic terms the fact that cultural artifacts—such as advertisements, everyday objects, portraits, and cover art for popular magazines—are products of specific historical moments. The graphic selections constitute a comparative and historical lens through which to re-examine a particular aspect of the subject or issue being studied in the chapter. It's important for students to notice that the things people take for granted haven't always been presented in the same way. For example, in the chapter on gender stereotypes we offer a series of changing images of women in the military over several decades, and in the chapter on icons we reprint the changing images projected in the advertising and on the packaging for Betty Crocker products. We let the images speak for themselves, providing simply the title and date of each one.

**Looking Closer:** The terms of this feature reflect the focus of our pedagogical interests: to help students improve their writing by showing them how to take a second, more careful and detailed look at certain aspects of American culture that may be familiar to them already. In the chapter on icons, for example, students examine their assumptions about and attitudes toward one of the most commonplace yet highly charged images in American life: the flag. “Looking Closer” invites students to do more than recognize something out of the ordinary in the ordinary. In effect, it reinforces the pedagogical aims highlighted in the title *Seeing & Writing*. It invites students to analyze images and words related to a theme without our editorial comments and guidance. It also engages them in a reflective “double take” as they re-examine the familiar from a fresh angle of vision and with a more inquiring and analytical eye. Within the context of composition, a double take consists of a purposeful delayed reaction—an intentional rereading (that is, reviewing a visual or verbal text from a different perspective) and a deliberate revising (that is, thoughtful rewriting and careful editing), especially when the text is one’s own prose.

**Re: Searching the Web and Talking Pictures:** We encourage students to use the World Wide Web—and to analyze its effectiveness—as a research tool to explore further visual and verbal resources related to the subjects and issues presented in each chapter. A boxed exercise, “Re: Searching the Web” appears in every chapter; its name summarizes its purpose. The instructions and questions that appear here encourage students to learn to use the web as a research tool by directing them to web sites where they can find additional images and prose material about the subject or issue being studied. This exercise also invites students to analyze the ways in which information is presented on the web and evaluate the reliability of that information.

We have included an additional boxed exercise in each chapter—“Talking Pictures”—to sharpen students’ awareness of the roles and effects of television shows and movies on American culture.

### Supportive and Inconspicuous Apparatus

We have deliberately kept to a minimum the amount of apparatus that introduces and follows each selection. For each one, brief biographical headnotes

provide background information about the writer or artist and his or her creative goals and practices. Focused discussion questions and writing exercises follow each selection under the headings “Seeing” and “Writing.”

“Seeing” questions engage students in focused and sustained ways with the subject of each selection, the compositional strategies used, and the overall organization of the selection and its interconnections with other texts in the book. “Writing” exercises often invite the student to write about the subject in a personal experience essay, an expository/analytic essay, or an argumentative essay. (We also occasionally include the opportunity for students to write a poem or story about the subject.) These writing exercises are linked to class discussion and in-class writing.

### **A Note about the Design**

The design of *Seeing & Writing* creates an attractive and engaging environment in which students can reflect on—and see reflections of—contemporary American culture. The double purpose of the design reinforces our goals: to prompt further inquiry into the similarities and differences between the attractions and effects of images and verbal texts, and to encourage conversation about the ways in which such texts can be more productively connected. By integrating visual and verbal texts, juxtaposing them, and giving both equal positional importance on a page, the book’s design facilitates that discussion while also reflecting the complex nature of the multimedia in which we all function.

### **Teaching *Seeing & Writing***

A comprehensive instructor’s manual—*Teaching SEEING & WRITING*—offers suggestions on how to teach the material in *Seeing & Writing*, paying respectful attention to different institutional settings and instructional purposes. Pages from *Seeing & Writing* are reproduced in the manual in thumbnail style. This compendium of teaching resources includes generous attention to such useful elements as:

**Generating Class Discussion and In-Class Writing:** A thorough assessment of how to work imaginatively and productively with the text in class to stimulate discussion and in-class writing, which may motivate students to write

engaging, coherent, and convincing essays about the text and the issues and themes it articulates.

**Additional Writing Topics:** A group of additional topics for each selection that includes informal and personal writing, descriptive and narrative essays, expository and argumentative papers, and research assignments.

**Connections with Other Texts:** For each selection, suggestions for additional connections within the chapter and within the book, along with suggestions about how to encourage students to discover these interconnections on their own, thicken the range of thematic and stylistic interconnections in *Seeing & Writing*.

**Suggestions for Further Reading, Thinking, and Writing:** A compendium of supplemental material designed for classroom use—including print, video, audio, and digital sources—along with recommendations on how to use them to reinforce your instructional goals.

Additionally, **Seeing & Writing Online**, a book-related web site at <[www.bedfordstmartins.com/seeingwriting](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/seeingwriting)>, includes guided exercises on reading visual images and web-based research activities; annotated research links about the artists, writers, and thematic and compositional issues in the book; and doorways to visual resources, virtual museums, and much more.

### Acknowledgments

Two converging stories account for the origins of *Seeing & Writing*. The genesis of what is in several respects an unprecedented book for the teaching of writing can be traced to innumerable conversations Don McQuade has had over the past twenty years with Charles H. Christensen, an extraordinary patron and developer of teachable ideas. Throughout this long collaboration and friendship, Chuck Christensen and Don McQuade have talked about creating a book that draws on undergraduates' familiarity with the visual dimensions of American culture to develop their skills as effective readers, thinkers, and writers.

There is a more recent impetus for launching what has been a memorable two-year adventure in both *creating* this unique instructional tool and

*re-creating* a father-daughter relationship. *Seeing & Writing* first took shape during an extended series of family dinner conversations over the course of a few evenings in late December 1996. The participants in that conversation included Don and Susanne McQuade and their two children, Christine and Marc. Christine had returned home for the holidays from New York City, where she had completed the fall season dancing with the STREB modern dance company. Marc was home for the winter holidays from the University of California, Berkeley, where he had finished his first semester.

Marc started the conversation—and what ultimately became the book—by talking about the writing course he had just completed, a course on writing about art. Marc carried from that class to the dinner table a nagging question: Which has a more powerful impact on people—an image or a word? Here's what he wrote about the family conversation that night:

I was annoyed because in my History of Art class people were equating images with a single word, and I thought that was a false comparison. I compared images not with a single word but rather with a paragraph or some longer text. I believe an image is a composition of a visual vocabulary. An image has a range of meaning similar to a paragraph. . . . We were discussing the idea of an image replacing text or whether images or words were more efficient at conveying an idea.

Marc's classroom experience with and thoughts on the relationship between word and image within academic settings were—and continue to be—at the center of both the impetus for and the successful development of the book.

Having studied American popular culture as a history major and served as a writing tutor at Berkeley's Student Learning Center, Christine was eager to investigate and re-envision the teaching of writing in the visual age. Her ideas about relating the visual and verbal immediately drew her father's attention and encouragement. What began as an engaging conversation soon developed into a collaborative effort to create a book designed to improve the analytical and compositional skills of students by having them see, read, think, and write about the verbal and visual dimensions of American culture.

Don and Christine's work began together spontaneously and grew organically. In this sense there is another, more personal dimension to the story

about *Seeing & Writing*. The working relationship that evolved between Christine and her father became a process of negotiating differences: in location, gender, age, perspective, and family role.

Christine and Don—and their editor, Alanya Harter—rarely saw eye-to-eye on *Seeing & Writing*. That is to say, only rarely were they in the same place at the same time to work on the book. The logistical difficulties of living and working on different coasts with a three-hour difference were frequently compounded by Christine’s touring schedule with the dance company, which traveled not only back and forth across the United States but also to Australia, France, Switzerland, and England. E-mail helped bridge these distances but couldn’t address the urgent need to exchange images quickly between distant parts of the world. Marc engineered a partial solution to the problem by designing and building a very effective and attractive web site where the family members posted images for discussion and possible inclusion in the book.

Crowded schedules as well as physical distance—and the mediating presence of e-mail and a web site—only occasionally encumbered the work. And the fact that each member of the team approached the interrelations of the verbal and the visual from different compositional perspectives—those of professional literary study and professional dance—positioned them in a “neutral” space where they could recognize their differences as well as listen to and learn from each other. The contrasting disciplinary frames of reference were further enhanced by different gender and generational perspectives as well as by their familial relationship.

We’d like to emphasize that the relationship we have developed through our collaborative work has been immeasurably enriched by the differences between us, our world views, and the ways in which we approach learning, doing, thinking, and writing. We have grown closer to each other through an increasing awareness of—and mutual respect for—just how risky teaching and dancing can be.

Begun in conversation, *Seeing & Writing* has grown and developed through a series of conversations with each other, friends, colleagues, and the professional staff at Bedford/St. Martin’s. Behind this collaborative effort stands a large number of friends and colleagues who graciously allowed us into their already crowded lives to seek advice, encouragement, and assistance.

For helping us by asking important questions and offering generous advice, we would like to add a special note of thanks to Austin Bunn, Eileen O'Malley Callahan of the University of California, Berkeley, Beth Chimera, Mia Chung, Lee Dembart, Kathy Gin, Justin Greene, Eli Kaufman, Laura Lanzerotti, Greg Mullins of Evergreen College, Anjum Salam, Shayna Samuels, Matthew Stromberg, and Elizabeth Streb and the dancers of STREB. Sandra and Yuen Gin provided us an inspiring place to work. With a rare blend of intelligence, imagination, and energy, Lee Dembart, Greg Mullins, and Barbara Roether assisted us in doing biographical research on the writers and artists and in drafting headnotes.

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Anne Kress and Suellyn Winkle, both of Santa Fe Community College, skillfully prepared *Teaching SEEING & WRITING*.

It quickly became clear that *Seeing & Writing* would be a book that needed a particularly sophisticated designer's eye. Michael Rock and Katie Andresen of 2x4 have been invaluable in helping us not only to expand our imaginations of how this book could look and function but also to sharpen our own abilities to think visually. They have turned a collection of chaotic materials into an elegant and useful instructional tool. We are delighted that Richard Caldicott accepted our invitation to prepare eight distinctive and memorable photographs for *Seeing & Writing* to precede the chapters. Commis-



sioned specifically for this book, these photographs provide an eminently teachable series of artistic views of contemporary American culture. We are grateful to Esin Goknar for opening the door to new sources of photography and other visual media.

We'd like to extend special thanks to the kind people of Bedford/St. Martin's. Alice Vigliani copyedited the manuscript with truly outstanding skill and judgment as well as with great sensitivity and respect for our instructional purposes. Sandy Schecter, assisted by Eva Pettersson, managed the complex project of securing permissions to reprint the visual and verbal materials presented in the book, and Ellen Thibault and Amy Thomas deftly assisted us with research and manuscript preparation. Terry Govan imaginatively designed a first-rate advertising program for the book. Marcia Cohen and Erica Appel helped us figure out the logistics of such a complicated production process; and Michael Weber took up where they left off, guiding the manuscript through a maze of production problems with an admirable blend of energy, intelligence, and patience. We continue to be indebted to Joan Feinberg, a perceptive, encouraging, and compelling voice of reason and sound judgment. Her vision of the book's potential and her critique of earlier drafts stand as models of intellectual and professional integrity. Chuck Christensen continually offered wise and energizing support as well as the kind of encouragement and confidence that made each sentence easier for us to write.

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Finally, we would like to acknowledge Susanne and Marc McQuade. This project would never have been possible without their encouragement, patience, and most important, their inspiring intellectual curiosity. "Merci vu mou!"

*Donald McQuade and Christine McQuade*