THIRD EDITION

CRITICAL THINKING READING AND WRITING

A Brief Guide to Argument

Sylvan Barnet • Hugo Bedau

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Preface

This book is a text about critical thinking and argumentation—a book about getting ideas, using sources, evaluating kinds of evidence, and organizing material. It also incudes about fifty readings, with a strong emphasis on contemporary arguments. In a moment we will be a little more specific about what sorts of readings we include, but first we want to mention our chief assumptions about the aims of a course that might use *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: A Brief Guide to Argument.*

Probably most students and instructors would agree that, *as critical readers,* students should be able to

- summarize accurately an argument they have read;
- locate the thesis of an argument;
- locate the assumptions, stated and unstated;
- analyze and evaluate the strength of the evidence and the soundness of the reasoning offered in support of the thesis;
- analyze, evaluate, and account for discrepancies among various readings on a topic (for example, explain why certain facts are used or not used, why two sources might interpret the same facts differently).

Probably, too, students and instructors would agree that, *as thoughtful writers,* students should be able to

- imagine an audience, and write effectively for it (by such means as using the appropriate tone and providing the appropriate amount of detail);
- present information in an orderly and coherent way;
- be aware of own assumptions;
- incorporate sources into their own writing, not simply by quoting extensively or by paraphrasing, but also by having digested materials so that they can present it in their own words;
- properly document all borrowings—not merely quotations and paraphrases but also borrowed ideas;
- do all these things in the course of developing a thoughtful argument of their own.

Parts One and Two Part One (Chapters 1–3) and Part Two (Chapters 4–6) taken together offer a short course in methods of thinking about arguments and in methods of writing arguments. By "thinking" we mean serious analytic thought, including analysis of one's own assumptions (Chapter 1); by "writing" we mean the use of effective, respectable techniques, not gimmicks such as the notorious note a politician scribbled in the margin of the text of his speech: "Argument weak; shout here." For a delightfully wry account of the use of gimmicks, we recommend that you consult "The Art of Controversy," in *The Will to Live,* by the nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer reminds his reader that a Greek or Latin quotation (however irrelevant) can be impressive to the uninformed, and that one can knock down almost any argument by loftily saying, "That's all very well in theory, but it won't do in practice."

We offer lots of advice about setting forth an argument, but we do not offer instruction in one-upmanship. Rather, we discuss responsible ways of arguing persuasively. We know, however, that before one can write a persuasive argument one must clarify one's own ideas—and that includes arguing with oneself—to find out what one really thinks about a problem. Therefore we devote Chapter 1 to critical thinking, Chapters 2 and 3 to critical reading, and Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to critical writing. These chapters are not all lecturing. Parts One and Two together contain thirty-five readings (three are by students) for analysis and discussion. Moreover, each of the three chapters in Part One contains a casebook, a group of closely related readings. For instance, the casebook in Chapter 1 consists of a newspaper editorial on divorce, followed by five letters that were written in response to the editorial.

All of the essays in the book are accompanied by questions. This is not surprising, given the emphasis we place on asking oneself questions to get ideas for writing. Among the chief questions that writers should ask, we suggest, are such matters as "What is *X*?" and "What is the value of *X*?" (pp. 3–9). By asking such questions—for instance (to look only at these two types of questions), "Is the fetus a person?" or "Is Arthur Miller a better playwright than Tennessee Williams?"—a writer probably will find ideas coming, at least after a few moments of head-scratching. The device of developing an argument by identifying issues is, of course, nothing new; indeed, it goes back to an ancient method of argument used by classical rhetoricians, who proceeded by identifying a *stasis* (an issue) and then asked questions about it: Did *X* do such-and-such? If so, was the action bad? If bad, how bad? (Finding an issue or *stasis*—a position where one stands—by asking questions is discussed in Chapter 5.)

In keeping with our emphasis on writing as well as reading, we raise issues not only of what can roughly be called the "content" of the essays but also of what can (equally roughly) be called the "style"—that is, the ways in which the arguments are set forth. Content and style, of course,

cannot finally be kept apart. As Cardinal Newman said, "Thought and meaning are inseparable from each other.... *Style is thinking out into language.*" In our questions we sometimes ask the student to evaluate the effectiveness of the opening paragraph, or to explain a shift in tone from one paragraph to the next, or to characterize the persona of the author as revealed in the whole essay. In short, the book is not designed as an introduction to some powerful ideas (though in fact it is that, too); it is designed as an aid to writing thoughtful, effective arguments on important political, social, scientific, ethical, and religious issues.

The essays reprinted in this book also illustrate different styles of argument that arise, at least in part, from the different disciplinary backgrounds of the various authors. Essays by journalists, lawyers, judges, social scientists, policy analysts, philosophers, critics, activists, and other writers—including undergraduates—will be found in these pages. The authors develop and present their views in arguments that have distinctive features reflecting their special training and concerns. The differences in argumentative styles found in these essays foreshadow the differences students will encounter in the readings assigned in many of their other courses. (Part Three, which offers a philosopher's view, a logician's view, a psychologist's view, a lawyer's view, and a literary critic's view, also reveals differences in argumentative styles.)

Parts One and Two, then, are a preliminary (but we hope substantial) discussion of such topics as *identifying assumptions, getting ideas by means of invention strategies, using sources, evaluating kinds of evidence,* and *organizing material,* as well as an introduction to some ways of thinking.

Part Three "Further Views on Argument" consists of Chapters 7–11. The first of these, Chapter 7, "A Philosopher's View: The Toulmin Model," is a summary of the philosopher Stephen Toulmin's method for analyzing arguments. This summary will assist those who wish to apply Toulmin's methods to the readings in our book. The next chapter, "A Logician's View," offering a more rigorous analysis of deduction, induction, and fallacies than is usually found in composition courses, reexamines from a logician's point of view material already treated briefly in Chapter 3. Chapter 9, with an essay by psychotherapist Carl R. Rogers, complements the discussion of audience, organization, and tone in Chapter 5. Chapter 10, "A Lawyer's View: Steps toward Civic Literacy," introduces students to some basic legal concepts, such as the distinction between civil and criminal cases, and then gives majority and minority decisions in three cases: searching students for drugs, burning the flag, protesting the draft. We accompany these decisions with questions that invite the student to participate in these exercises in democracy. The last chapter in Part Three, "A Literary Critic's View: Arguing about Literature," should help students to see what sorts of things literary critics argue about and *how* they argue. Students can apply what they learn not only to the literary readings that appear in the chapter (poems by Robert Frost and

Andrew Marvell, stories by Kate Chopin and Jean Rhys, and a casebook concerning the national anthem) but also to other literature they may encounter in the course.

WHAT'S NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

In the first edition of this book we quoted Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill. Burke said, "He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper." Mill said, "He who knows only his own side of the cause knows little." We can regret the aggressive language in Burke and the sexist language in Burke and Mill, but these two quotations continue to reflect the view of argument that underlies this text. When one writes an argument, one is not setting out to trounce an opponent, and that is partly why such terms as *marshaling evidence, attacking an opponent,* and *defending a thesis* are misleading. True, in television talk shows we see people who have made up their minds and who are concerned only with pushing their own view and brushing aside all other views. But in writing an essay one is engaging in a serious effort to know what one's own ideas are and, having found them, to contribute to a multisided conversation. We learn by listening to others and also by listening to ourselves; we draft a response to something we have read, and in the very act of drafting we may find—if we think critically about the words we are putting down on paper—we are changing (perhaps slightly, perhaps radically) our own position. Even if we do not drastically change our view, the reader at the very least comes to understand why we hold the view we do.

In preparing the third edition we were greatly aided by suggestions from instructors who were using the second edition. In line with their recommendations, in Part One, "Critical Thinking and Reading," we have added checklists to each of the three chapters (checklists for critical thinking, for examining assumptions, for getting started, for examining statistical evidence, and for analyzing an argument), and we have also added casebooks (on divorce, free speech, and bilingual education) to each chapter.

We have also added checklists to Part Two, "Critical Writing," and in the chapter on the research paper we now include advice on using electronic sources. (A new appendix provides a list of World Wide Web sources for the current issues in this book.) We have somewhat heightened the reader's awareness of classical rhetoric by including discussion of topics such as *ethos, logos, pathos, stasis,* and, for that matter, *topos.*

In Part Three, we have increased the number of literary selections in "A Literary Critic's View," and in an effort to increase civic literacy, we have added "A Lawyer's View," with three legal cases (majority and minority opinions). We think that our prefatory material in "A Lawyer's View" concerning such matters as facts and the law and the balancing of interests will help students think not only about the legal cases included

in Chapter 10 and in other chapters but also about cases they read in the daily newspaper.

We close with a "Casebook on the State and the Individual," with readings from Sophocles, Plato, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Note: For instructors who require a text with a large number of essays, a longer edition of this book, *Current Issues and Enduring Questions,* Fifth Edition, is also available. The longer version contains Parts One, Two, and Three (Chapters 1–11) of the present book as well as its own anthology of nearly eighty additional readings.

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Part One

CRITICAL THINKING AND READING