

LITERATURE **AND** OURSELVES

A THEMATIC INTRODUCTION FOR READERS AND WRITERS

SECOND EDITION



GLORIA MASON HENDERSON • BILL DAY • SANDRA STEVENSON WALLER

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**A Thematic Introduction
for Readers and Writers**
Second Edition

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PREFACE

Literature and Ourselves, Second Edition, treats literature as a continually expanding commentary on people's infinitely varied lives, a commentary intimately related to the lives of the students who read it. The book has been designed to enable an instructor to use it in both introduction to literature and composition courses. *Literature and Ourselves* opens with an introduction that does the following:

- gives an overview of text-, author-, and reader-oriented approaches to literature
- discusses the elements of all four genres
- provides guidance on writing about literature and the research paper (including MLA documentation guidelines)

New to This Edition

- **More Writing Coverage.** Each thematic unit opens with an introduction, followed by a new feature which highlights writing ideas for that theme. This new "Writing About" feature discusses different approaches to writing essays and takes students through the process of how each student sample paper was developed. (Student sample papers end each theme.)
- **Reading and Writing Guides.** These guides give students convenient suggestions for reading and writing in each genre.
- **Casebooks.** There are now six casebooks. The popular casebooks on James Baldwin, Henrik Ibsen, Robert Frost, Alice Walker, and Flannery O'Connor have been kept, and a new casebook on Ursula LeGuin has been added. The casebooks give students contexts for writing short research papers about literature. Each casebook ends with a student essay.
- **Expanded Selections.** Fresh new selections have been added to all genres including thirty-two new poems; four new essays; six new stories; and one new play.
- **Critical Approaches.** A new appendix on critical approaches to literature gives students an accessible discussion of critical perspectives, including formalist, biographical, historical, psychological, archetypal, gender, and deconstructionist criticism.
- **Student Essays.** Nearly all the student essays are new to this edition.
- **Chronological Table of Contents.** A new table of contents organized chronologically has been added.

Themes were chosen to engage students in exploration of their own lives through literature. Each thematic section includes literature from all four genres—essays, fiction, poetry, and drama—and balances traditional with contemporary selections. Casebooks on selected authors provide a context for writing short research papers about literature and build toward the full-length research paper for instructors who cover the research paper in their second-semester composition courses. Additional writing suggestions for each section further emphasize the link between reading and writing about literature. An appendix briefly discusses some of the major approaches to literature. A glossary defines all literary terms mentioned in both the introductions and the questions.

The six thematic sections are arranged so that they progress outward from the self to concerns beyond the self. Since they also move from the concrete to the abstract, they become progressively more challenging. The sections are designed to form a coherent whole whose selections constitute a rich and varied commentary on the theme. Each section begins with a brief introduction and with a discussion of writing about that theme. Within thematic sections, selections are ordered by genre; within genres, they are ordered chronologically. An instructor may choose to concentrate on one or two themes or assign the entire book in a semester-long course in introduction to literature or in a two-semester composition course.

We think we have packed an extraordinary variety of works into a relatively small anthology. The traditional works allow teachers to assign what they are familiar and comfortable with, and the new works allow them to share with their students the joy of discovery. The selections also represent a variety of cultures, including works by Third World writers, several of whom (among them the African writers Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Bessie Head) write in English, and a larger percentage of selections by women and ethnic minorities than are available elsewhere. Our text contains an unusual number and variety of questions for discussion and suggestions for writing. Questions follow every work, and suggestions for writing follow most with some works having as many as six or seven of each. This feature evolved as we worked on the text and as we came to see that, at least in our departments, of all the pedagogical aids in textbooks, teachers use the questions most. The questions and suggestions encourage students to think critically not only about literature but also about their own experiences. Our approach, then, is inductive, encouraging students to learn and develop their own ideas as they read.

Unlike many freshman literature anthologies, which emphasize text over author and reader, our book includes many author-oriented and reader-oriented questions as well as text-oriented ones. We have encouraged students to see the works as commentaries on their own lives and to bring their own experience to bear on what they read and write. We have also encouraged them to analyze and evaluate their own experience based on what they read. We hope that, as a result, students will develop a life-long appreciation of literature as intimately connected to their lives.

Literature and Ourselves includes casebooks on six authors: James Baldwin, Henrik Ibsen, Robert Frost, Ursula K. LeGuin, Alice Walker, and Flannery O'Connor. Some of the casebooks contain two, three, or more works by an author, including the author's statements about writing; all include critical essays. These casebooks can be very useful for teaching research papers, as teachers can base controlled practice papers and/or finished research papers on one or more of them. The primary works as well as the critical essays in these casebooks have been carefully selected and excerpted so that students can readily see relationships between them and can compare differing critical approaches to literature. The suggestions for research and writing, some designed to be quite challenging for freshmen, invite students to see such relationships and draw conclusions leading to thesis statements. Such features encourage students to study one author in some depth.

Believing that students need to read excellent nonfiction as well as fiction, drama, and poetry, we have included essays. We feel that these essays not only are works of art but also can serve as models of good prose style. Since their statements of theme are often more explicit than those of other genres, they begin each thematic section and should initiate thoughtful exploration of each theme.

Available to adoptors is an Instructor's Manual (ISBN 0-673-97326-3) authored by text authors Gloria Henderson, Bill Day, and Sandra Waller.

Our preparation of this text would not have been possible without the invaluable help of a number of people. We are deeply indebted to Lisa Moore, our acquisitions editor, for having faith in us and for encouraging us as we revised *Literature and Ourselves*, for sharing her enthusiasm and her knowledge, and for accepting nothing but the best from us. Our Development Editor, Katharine Glynn, has been unfailingly helpful and cheerful in spite of our many telephone calls asking for suggestions and advice. Meghan Schumacher, our permissions editor, has also endured numerous calls as she efficiently made possible our inclusion of a wide variety of sources. Nadia Blahut, our project manager, was both patient and efficient.

We are also deeply indebted to many colleagues at Gordon College and DeKalb College. The administration at Gordon, Dr. Jerry Williamson and Dr. James O. Richards, supported us in our project and allowed us to use equipment and supplies to prepare the book. The knowledgeable and cooperative library staff at both Gordon and DeKalb rescued us numerous times by helping us to locate materials and making valuable suggestions. Our colleagues in the English Departments have also added suggestions about the contents of the text and about classroom techniques that resulted in stimulating discussions and well-written papers. At Gordon, Drs. Brett Cox, Susan Ellzey, Mary Alice Money, Michael Montgomery, Rick Thurman, and Rhonda Wilcox have been most generous both with their recommendations about new selections for the revision and with their suggestions about innovative and inspiring classroom teaching techniques to increase student enjoyment and understanding of literature and of

writing. Dr. Montgomery was especially helpful with his suggestions for the new appendix on Approaches to Literature. Dr. Mary Beth Keenum generously consented to translate French passages for us. At DeKalb, Tim Tarkington, Ellen Barker, Dr. Shubhra Nag and Shaumona Nag generously offered recommendations about a wide variety of literature, and Landon Coleman made valuable suggestions about drama. We are also indebted to Dr. Zacchaeus Oguntebi and Dr. Tutu Abatan for the translation of the last song in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. In addition, the DeKalb College Humanities Department was most generous in allowing the use of their workroom, and Tara Huey saved us many hours by copying materials. The Word Processing Department at Gordon cheerfully and efficiently helped with copying and mailing.

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Gloria Mason Henderson Bill Day Sandra Stevenson Waller

BRIEF CONTENTS

Detailed Contents iv
Chronological Contents xiv
Preface xix

INTRODUCTION 1

Literature 1
Essays 3
Fiction 7
Poetry 13
Drama 22
Writing 29
Documenting a Research Paper: MLA Style Sheet 37

FAMILY 47

Casebook on James Baldwin 229
Suggestions for Writing 266

MEN AND WOMEN 269

Casebook on Henrik Ibsen 377
Suggestions for Writing 453

HUMAN VULNERABILITY 455

Casebook on Robert Frost 686
Suggestions for Writing 717

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY 719

Casebook on Ursula K. LeGuin 875
Suggestions for Writing 901

ART AND LANGUAGE 903

Casebook on Alice Walker 1085
Suggestions for Writing 1126

QUEST 1129

Casebook on Flannery O'Connor 1321
Suggestions for Writing 1367

Appendix Critical Approaches to Literature 1368
Glossary of Literary Terms 1372
Acknowledgments 1379
Index 1388

DETAILED CONTENTS

Chronological Contents	xiv
Preface	xix

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE 1

Text-Oriented Approaches	1
Author-Oriented Approaches	2
Reader-Oriented Approaches	2

ESSAYS 3

Theme	4
Tone	4
Imagery	5
Diction	5
Syntax	6
A Guide to Reading and Analyzing Essays	7

FICTION 7

Point of View	8
Setting	9
Style	9
Character	10
Plot	11
Theme	12
A Guide to Reading and Writing About Short Stories	12

POETRY 13

Speaker and Situation	14
Theme	14
Tone	15
Diction	16
Syntax	17
Imagery	18
Sound	19
A Guide to Reading and Writing About Poems	21

DRAMA 22

- Performance Versus Reading: Stage Directions 23
 - Setting 24
 - Style 24
- Character 25
- Plot 26
- Theme 27
- A Guide to Reading and Writing About Plays 28

WRITING 29

- Description 30
- Exemplification and Enumeration 30
 - Analysis 30
 - Classification 31
- Comparison and Contrast 31
- Causal Analysis 31
- The Writing Process 32

DOCUMENTING A RESEARCH PAPER: MLA STYLE SHEET 37

- Documentation of Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries 37
 - Parenthetical Citations 38
 - Long Quotations and Poetry 40
 - Works Cited Page 41
 - Books 41
 - Periodicals 42
 - Electronic Sources 43
 - Other Sources 44
 - Works from One Book 44
 - Content Notes 45

FAMILY

- Writing About Family 48

ESSAYS 49

- James Agee, "Knoxville: Summer 1915" 49
- Jack Agueros, from "Halfway to Dick and Jane" 53
 - Joan Didion, "On Going Home" 56
 - Judith Ortiz Cofer, "American History" 59
- Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, "Chairman Mao's Good Little Boy" 66

FICTION 78

- Luke, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" 78
Frank O'Connor, "My Oedipus Complex" 79
Eudora Welty, "Why I Live at the P.O." 89
Carson McCullers, "A Domestic Dilemma" 99
Truman Capote, "A Christmas Memory" 107
Alice Munro, "Miles City, Montana" 117

POETRY 133

- William Butler Yeats, "A Prayer for My Daughter" 133
Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" 135
Mary TallMountain, "There Is No Word for Goodbye" 137
Maxine Kumin, "Nurture" 138
Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" 139
Luis Omar Salinas, "My Father Is a Simple Man" 142
Alicia Ostriker, "First Love" 144
Raymond Carver, "Photograph of My Father in His Twenty-second
Year" 145
Nikki Giovanni, "Nikki-Rosa" 146
Michael Ondaatje, "Light" 147
Rita Dove, "Daystar" 150
Li-Young Lee, "The Gift" 151
Rosa Maria Arenas, "Mother of the Long Good-bye" 153
Barbara Watkins, "Josefa Kankovska" 154
Virginia Cerenio, "[We who carry the endless seasons]" 155

DRAMA 156

- August Wilson, *Fences* 156
Harvey Fierstein, *On Tidy Endings* 209

**CASEBOOK
ON JAMES BALDWIN**

- James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" 229
Donald C. Murray, "James Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues': Complicated and
Simple" 253
James M. Reilly, "'Sonny's Blues': James Baldwin's Image of Black
Community" 258
Student Essay, "Passage into the Brotherhood of Man" by Amy Lynn
Birath 264
Suggestions for Writing 266

MEN AND WOMEN

Writing About Men and Women 270

ESSAYS 271

- Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women" 271
 Ellen Goodman, "When Grateful Begins to Grate" 276
 Gretel Ehrlich, "About Men" 278
 David Osborne, "Beyond the Cult of Fatherhood" 281
 Rose del Castillo Guilbault, "Americanization Is Tough on 'Macho'"
 290

FICTION 292

- Kate Chopin, "Désirée's Baby" 292
 "The Story of an Hour" 297
 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" 299
 Zora Neale Hurston, "The Gilded Six-Bits" 313
 Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" 322
 John Steinbeck, "The Chrysanthemums" 327
 Bessie Head, "Snapshots of a Wedding" 336
 Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl" 340

POETRY 342

- William Shakespeare, Sonnets 116, 130, and 138 342
 John Donne, "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning" 344
 Robert Herrick, "*Corinna's* going a Maying" 346
 Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" 348
 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnet 43 350
 Robert Browning, "Porphyria's Lover" 351
 "My Last Duchess" 352
 Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sonnet 42 354
 Dorothy Parker, "One Perfect Rose" 355
 Alan Dugan, "Love Song: I and Thou" 356
 Adrienne Rich, "Living in Sin" 357
 Sylvia Plath, "Metaphors" 358
 Janice Mirikitani, "Breaking Tradition" 359
 Rosemary Catacalos, "Taking the Air" 361
 Judith Ortiz Cofer, "Anniversary" 362

DRAMA 364

- Susan Glaspell, Trifles 364

CASEBOOK ON HENRIK IBSEN

- Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* 377
 From "On the Poet's Vision" 434
 From "To the Norwegian Women's Rights League" 435
 James Hurt, from *Catiline's Dream* 435
 Joan Templeton, "The *Doll's House* Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and
 Ibsen" 440
 Brian Johnston, "Three Stages of *A Doll House*" 442
 Student Essay, "Society, Not Feminism in *A Doll's House*" by
 Christopher Craven 450
 Suggestions for Writing 453

HUMAN VULNERABILITY

- Writing About Human Vulnerability 456

ESSAYS 457

- Annie Dillard, "Heaven and Earth in Jest" 457
 Sophronia Liu, "So Tsi-fai" 465
 Mark Mathabane, "The Road to Alexandra" 469

FICTION 478

- Katherine Anne Porter, "The Grave" 478
 William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" 483
 Arna Bontemps, "A Summer Tragedy" 491
 Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "Death Constant Beyond Love" 499
 Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
 506
 Amy Hempel, "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried" 519
 Madison Smartt Bell, "Customs of the Country" 526

POETRY 538

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" 538
 Emily Dickinson, "I heard a Fly buzz" 539
 "Because I could not stop for Death" 540
 "My life closed twice" 541
 I Never Lost as Much" 541
 "Much Madness Is Divinest Sense" 542
 Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Richard Cory" 542
 "Miniver Cheevey" 543
 "Mr. Flood's Party" 545

- Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask" 546
 John Crowe Ransom, "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter" 548
 "Janet Waking" 549
 Claude McKay, "If We Must Die" 550
 Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est" 551
 Countee Cullen, "Incident" 552
 Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" 553
 Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" 554
 Mary Oliver, "Vultures" 555
 "University Hospital, Boston" 556
 Angeles de Hoyos, "How to Eat Crow on a Cold Sunday Morning"
 557
 Sharon Olds, "On the Subway" 559
 Victor Hernandez Cruz, "Problems with Hurricanes" 560

DRAMA 562

- William Shakespeare, *Othello* 562

CASEBOOK ON ROBERT FROST

- Robert Frost, "Design" 686
 "Desert Places" 687
 "Acquainted with the Night" 687
 "Once By the Pacific" 688
 "Home Burial" 688
 "The Death of the Hired Man" 691
 "Provide, Provide" 696
 Roberts W. French, "Robert Frost and the Darkness of Nature" 697
 James L. Potter, "'My Kind of Fooling': the Deceptiveness of Robert
 Frost" 701
 Donald J. Greiner, "The Indispensable Robert Frost" 708
 Student Essay, "Darkness in Nature" by Jodie Campbell 715
 Suggestions for Writing 717

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Writing About Freedom and Responsibility 720

ESSAYS 721

- Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal" 721
 Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" 728
 Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" 732

- Bruce Catton, "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts" 748
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" 752
Maya Angelou, from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 765
Guan Keguang, "A Chinese Reporter on Cape Cod" 771

FICTION 774

- Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" 774
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "Harrison Bergeron" 784
Harlan Ellison, "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktock Man" 789
Toni Cade Bambara, "Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird" 800
Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby" 806

POETRY 814

- William Blake, "London" 814
William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us" 815
Randall Jarrell, "The Woman at the Washington Zoo" 817
Anne Sexton, "Ringing The Bells" 818
Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" 819
Mary Oliver, "John Chapman" 820
Alicia Ostriker, "Watching the Feeder" 821
Pat Mora, "Immigrants" 822
Joy Harjo, "The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor Window"
823
Dwight Okita, "In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of
Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers" 826

DRAMA 827

- Wole Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel* 827

**CASEBOOK
ON URSULA K. LEGUIN**

- Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" 875
"The Child and the Shadow" 880
"From a Public Dialogue Between Ursula LeGuin and Anne Mellor,
Professor of English, Stanford University, November 6, 1980." 890
Gérard Klein, "LeGuin's 'Aberrant' Opus: Escaping the Trap of
Discontent" 894
Student Essay, "The Key to Omelas: Freedom and Bondage," by Melanie
McClelland 897
Suggestions for Writing 901

ART AND LANGUAGE

Writing About Art and Language 904

ESSAYS 906

- William Faulkner, "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature" 906
- Chinua Achebe, "Africa and Her Writers" 907
- Anne Tyler, "Still Just Writing" 917
- Garrison Keillor, "Attitude" 926
- Barry Lopez, "Landscape and Narrative" 929

FICTION 935

- Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "The Portable Phonograph" 935
- Marguerite Yourcenar, "How Wang-Fo Was Saved" 941
- Woody Allen, "The Kugelmass Episode" 949
- Raymond Carver, "Cathedral" 958
- Margaret Atwood, "Loulou; or, the Domestic Life of the Language" 970

POETRY 983

- John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" 983
- "Ode on a Grecian Urn" 986
- Robert Browning, "Fra Lippo Lippi" 988
- Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky" 998
- A. E. Housman, "Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff" 999
- Marianne Moore, "Poetry" 1001
- Archibald MacLeish, "Ars Poetica" 1003
- Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B" 1004
- W. H. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts" 1005
- Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Constantly Risking Absurdity" 1007
- John Hollander, "Adam's Task" 1008
- Audre Lorde, "The Art of Response" 1009
- Ishmael Reed, "beware : do not read this poem" 1011
- Victor Hernández Cruz, "today is a day of great joy" 1012
- Ray Young Bear, "Wadasa Nakamoon, Vietnam Memorial" 1014
- Alberto Ríos, "The Vietnam Wall" 1015
- Li-Young Lee, "Persimmons" 1017

DRAMA 1020

- Jennifer Johnston, *Andante un Poco Mosso* 1020
- Tina Howe, *Painting Churches* 1036

CASEBOOK ON ALICE WALKER

- Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" 1085
 "Nineteen Fifty-five" 1092
 "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" 1103
Keith E. Byerman, "Women's Blues: Toni Cade Bambara and Alice Walker" 1111
Barbara Christian, "Alice Walker: The Black Woman as Wayward" 1112
Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Charlotte Pierce-Baker, "Patches: Quilts and Community in Alice Walker's 'Everyday Use.'" 1115
Student Essay, "What Is Art Without Heritage?" by Robin Brannon 1122
 Suggestions for Writing 1126

QUEST

- Writing About Quest 1130

ESSAYS 1131

- Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" 1131
Matthew, "The Sermon on the Mount" 1138
William Golding, "Thinking As a Hobby" 1141

FICTION 1148

- William Faulkner, "Barn Burning" 1148
Bernard Malamud, "Angel Levine" 1162
Arthur C. Clarke, "The Star" 1171
Philip Roth, "The Conversion of the Jews" 1175
Toni Cade Bambara, "Raymond's Run" 1187
Gish Jen, "The Water-Faucet Vision" 1194

POETRY 1202

- Psalm 8 1202
John Donne, "Batter My Heart" 1203
John Milton, Sonnet 16 1204
Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" 1205
William Blake, "The Lamb" 1206
 "The Tyger" 1206
William Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up" 1207