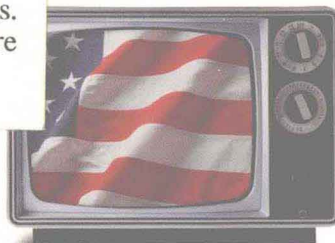


# AMERICAN CULTURE and the MEDIA

Reading. Writing, Thinking

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CASSEBAUM / HASKELL

# American Culture and the Media

READING, WRITING, THINKING

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# American Culture and the Media

READING, WRITING, THINKING



As part of Houghton Mifflin's ongoing commitment to the environment, this text has been printed on recycled paper.

# Preface

*American Culture and the Media* is based on our belief that reading and writing skills are best taught together and in the context of high-interest subject matter. In Section I, the mass media—TV, movies, magazines, radio, newspapers—and contemporary culture form a familiar and reassuring, yet rich and complex, subject for exploration and analysis. Section II, the rhetoric and brief handbook, gives advice and information for students to use as they work on their papers.

## Organization

After an introductory chapter that shows culture and the mass media as shaping forces in our lives, each of the remaining seven chapters in Section I addresses a particular aspect of American culture in conjunction with its media representations: violence, gender roles, work, poverty and wealth, the environment, sports, and diversity.

Each chapter is organized to model a variety of ways to analyze any subject. Chapters open with two “Key Questions” followed by quotations about the topic. Then the student is invited to respond, in writing or orally, to questions under three headings: “Starting Out: Finding Out What You Already Know”; “Learning More Through Observation: Taking a Look Around You and Talking to People”; and “Questioning: Deciding What Else You Would Like to Know.” The reading selections following have diverse authors and viewpoints and are accompanied by questions designed to help reading comprehension, to connect reading to a “writing skill” lesson, and to help the student make connections between the ideas in different articles. Each chapter closes with four “Writing Assignments” suggestions for longer papers, with commentary that can help students develop a heuristic for any writing assignment.

Section II, “Working on Your Paper: A Guide to Writing” offers a rhetoric focused on helping students with invention, research, drafting, revising, and editing. It includes a brief trouble-shooting handbook on the most common punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors as well as some basic instruction on library research and documentation methods. Your students should be able to move easily between the two sections of the book, using the *Guide to Writing* as they work on their own writing assignments—either in class or on their own. Cross-references from Section I to Section II are designed to encourage this movement.

## Key Features of this Text

### Section I: Reading and Writing about American Culture and the Media

- Fifty thematically unified high-interest readings in Section I.
- Questions, quotations, and introductions at the start of each chapter to focus and stimulate thinking.

- Invention exercises built into topic chapters to prepare students for writing assignments.
- Pre- and post-reading questions designed to stimulate thinking and help comprehension.
- “Connecting” questions after each reading to help students relate ideas in different articles.
- A brief section after each reading connects writing and reading by emphasizing one writing skill to be learned from each reading.
- Assignments for longer papers in each chapter.

## Section II: Working on Your Paper: A Guide to Writing

- An accessible, encouraging style, designed with students’ writing anxieties and attitudes in mind.
- A full chapter on analytical thinking, emphasizing media analysis, explains to students the methods of analysis we too often assume they know.
- A chapter on “Making the Most of Your Reading” outlines and models for students the main steps of active reading.
- Examples of student writing are used throughout the *Guide to Writing*.
- A handbook focused only on the most common student errors accompanied by clear explanations.
- A final chapter to help students with overall evaluation of their writing.

## Ancillaries

- Instructor’s Manual with summaries of each reading selection, commentary on each reading, and teaching suggestions for both the reader and the rhetoric.
- The Dictionary deal. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* may be shrinkwrapped with the text at a substantial savings.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the Research and Development Committee of Elon College, which awarded us released time from teaching to work on this book. Among our many remaining debts of gratitude to our colleagues at Elon and other colleges, we owe most to Linda Martindale, who was generous with her time and ingenious in her ability to get our manuscripts ready for deadlines. We would also like to thank Ellen Darion, our editor at Houghton Mifflin. Her advice, enthusiasm, and support were invaluable. Finally, we thank our families—John, Willy and Vega Herold; and Bill, Brendan, and Henry Gargan—for living with us through this lengthy enterprise.

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## SECTION I

# Reading and Writing about American Culture and the Media

## Introduction

We've organized all chapters around two subjects you already know a lot about—American culture and the mass media—because *knowing* a lot about a subject will help you to *write* better about it. All of us know about American culture, because we have lived in it. And most of us have logged a good number of hours tuned into mass media like television or radio, or reading magazines and watching movies. The readings of this text will help you to step back and analyze what we see, hear, and read and to ask questions such as what is the role of the mass media in our culture? Is television news fair or accurate? Is American culture violent in the way television suggests it is? How do magazine advertisements affect our stereotypes of people? These are some of the questions that this book will raise.

And raising questions is the main intention of this book. It invites you to ask, and answer, questions about American culture and the media. It offers readings with competing opinions and ideas for you to consider, but not to accept as final answers. And chapters end with suggested paper topics so you can develop your own ideas in writing for others to consider.

In Section I, each chapter is set up to help you investigate a topic and prepare for the writing you are going to do on it. Use the opening features of each chapter to get yourself thinking and questioning. Chapters start with two key questions on the main topic. These are followed by questions in the sections “Starting Out” and “Learning More Through Observation” that will help you explore in detail, in writing or discussion, what you already know and what you might discover about the topic—whether it's work, diversity, gender roles, sports, poverty, violence, or the environment. Readings follow to give other people's ideas on the issues each chapter raises. Questions and comments with each reading selection will help you to read closely and think about your own reaction to what you've read, as well as how a particular essay connects to other readings. You'll also get the chance to learn about writing from your reading by focusing on specific strategies writers use in each essay. At the end of each chapter are four possible assignments to respond to, with suggestions to help you get started on your thinking about each topic, to find a focus among your ideas, to organize them, and to tailor your paper to a particular audience. We think that by the end of each chapter you will find that there is a lot you want to write about, and the problem may be making a choice among several possibilities. As you work on these assignments—and other writing projects—you should consult Section II, *Working on Your Papers: A Guide to Writing*, which begins on p. 299.

# Chapter 1

## Shaping Forces: Culture and Mass Media

### KEY QUESTIONS

How has American culture shaped you to be the person you are?

How much impact do the mass media have on us and our culture?

.....  
*Sometimes people call me an idealist. Well, that is the way I know I am an American. America is the only idealistic nation in the world.*

—WOODROW WILSON

*Being an American means never having to say you're sorry.*

—KURT VONNEGUT

*O brave new world,  
That has such people in it!*

—FROM WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *The Tempest*

*When will America be America again?*

—LANGSTON HUGHES

*The press is so powerful in its image-making role, it can make a criminal look like he's the victim and make the victim look like he's the criminal. If you aren't careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.*

—MALCOLM X

*Ours is the first society in history of which it can be said that life has moved inside the media.*

—JERRY MANDER