

STRATEGIES FOR



READING AND ARGUING ABOUT LITERATURE

Meg Morgan | *Kim Stallings* | *Julie Townsend*

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Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Morgan, Meg.

Strategies for reading and arguing about literature / Meg Morgan, Kim Stallings,
Julie Townsend.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-13-093853-X

1. English language—Rhetoric—Problems, exercises, etc. 2. Criticism—Authorship—
Problems, exercises, etc. 3. Literature—History and criticism—Theory, etc. 4. Persuasion
(Rhetoric)—Problems, exercises, etc. 5. College readers. I. Stallings, Kim. II. Townsend,
Julie. III. Title.

PE1479.C7M67 2007

808'.0668—dc22

2005036546

Editorial Director: Leah Jewell

Acquisitions Editor: Vivian Gaicia

Editorial Assistant: Christina Volpe

Marketing Assistant: Vicki DeVita

Production Liaison: Fran Russello

Permissions Supervisor: Mary Dalton-Hoffman

Manufacturing Buyer: Christina Amato

Cover Design: Kiwi Design

Cover Image Credit: Mimi Jensen, "Slow Dance" copyright 2002, oil on canvas, Triptych, each 36×24,

Courtesy Hespe Gallery, San Francisco, CA

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Photo Researcher: Kathy Ringrose

Image Permission Coordinator: Cathy Mazzucca

Composition/Full-Service Project Management: Mike Remillard/Pine Tree Composition

Printer/Binder: RR Donnelley & Sons Company

Cover Printer: RR Donnelley & Sons Company

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book appear on pages 645–650.

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 0-13-093853-X

Preface



Strategies for Reading and Arguing About Literature is designed to bring together the often divergent studies of argumentation and literature. Argumentation has become an important part of most college and university English programs—especially second-semester freshman writing courses—but it is typically taught with a focus on social issues and real-world events. Our approach does something a little different. Understanding that literature is the traditional cornerstone of all English programs, we have created a textbook that teaches the art of academic argumentation through a focus on classic and contemporary literature.

Divided into five major sections, *Strategies for Reading and Arguing About Literature* accomplishes the following goals:

1. Students will learn, practice, and master:
 - critical reading strategies.
 - critical writing and research strategies.
 - the essentials of academic argumentation.
 - basic literary theory as it relates to the development of an argument.
2. Students will explore and appreciate a variety of literature ranging from the classical to the contemporary in a variety of genres.
3. Students will be exposed to critical analyses of literary works.

Part One is an introduction to argument and arguing about literature. Students will begin to think of literary texts as arguments and to talk about the function of argumentation in the academic community. They will investigate argument structure and strategies for creating arguments with a focus on the Toulmin philosophy of argumentation.

Part Two focuses on reading strategies. Students will develop a repertoire of critical reading tools to understand the surface meaning of a literary text, tools to explore and understand their own responses to a literary text, and tools to place any given text within appropriate contexts.

Part Three incorporates traditional literary theory as a tool for exploring literature and generating arguments about literature. We have developed an approach that first asks students to turn in toward a work of literature and explore meaning through the text alone. Then, students are asked to turn out from a work of literature and explore meaning through various critical lenses (literary theories).

Part Four guides students in the exploration of writing strategies: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and researching. We have also included an extensive section of MLA documentation instruction and examples.

Finally, Part Five is the anthology portion of our textbook and contains five thematic casebooks. Each casebook contains a balance of classical literature and contemporary literature, poetry, short stories, and plays. We have also included a more focused section at the end of each casebook to look closely at a body of related works. Titled “A Closer Look,” these mini-casebooks present an interview with an author, one or more literary works by that author, and a critical essay written about one of those literary pieces.

Within each of the main chapters, we have included a variety of practice exercises (some individual and some collaborative) designed for students to practice various critical thinking, reading, and writing strategies as they move through the textbook. Each chapter concludes with two larger writing assignment suggestions—typically essay assignments. Though we have provided some student models within the textbook, additional models for each practice and writing assignment may be found—along with instructional commentary—in the on-line Instructor’s Manual supplement.

We are always on the lookout for excellent student models, so we invite you and your students to submit essays to us for consideration. We also welcome your thoughts on various aspects of this textbook, your experiences using the book in your classroom, your reflections, and suggestions for future editions of the book (including literature selections).

We would like to thank the following reviewers: Denise Rogers, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Lucille M. Schultz, University of Cincinnati; Margaret Lindgren, University of Cincinnati; David D. Esselstrom, Azusa Pacific University; Matt Turner, Cy-Fair College; Francie Quaas-Berryman, Cerritos College; Carol Marion, Guilford Technical Community College; and Joanna Johnson, University of Texas-Arlington.

Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Meg Morgan
Kim Stallings
Julie Townsend

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PART ONE
**Introduction to Argument
and Arguing About Literature**



