

# Preface

When it was first published in 1995, this book was unusual in its belief that students could use self-exploration as a means to develop a flexible academic style as well as meaningful analytical insights into such things as relationships, texts, concepts, and controversies. That belief has proven to be true. This new edition builds on the strengths and successes of the first edition.

The exploration that students are asked to perform is twofold: they explore their own assumptions, beliefs, life experiences, and worldview while, at the same time, analyzing topics beyond themselves (e.g., texts and controversies).

In the past, a basic assumption about many “expressive approaches to writing” has been that students will emote all over the page without paying enough attention to audience, organization, analysis, or style. Further, there has been the assumption that students are not prepared for examining their selves and that they therefore will simply retell events or state beliefs without making them meaningful to readers other than themselves.

The first edition of this book has proven those assumptions to be incorrect. This new edition provides even more tools to make students into successful writers.

## ***Purpose of the Text***

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This book is designed to be a primary text for first-year college composition courses. However, because the book is offered as an affordable option for students, teachers might use it to accompany their own course packets or other supplementary texts. Sections of the book might also be used for more advanced composition courses (e.g., courses in creative nonfiction or personal essay writing). Again, the downloadable format of the book gives teachers a great deal of flexibility since they may use its resources without worrying about students paying for an additional textbook.

## Organization of the Text

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This book offers students various lenses through which to see and understand not only themselves but also the world around them. Chapter 1 examines the concept of exploratory writing. Chapter 2 details rhetorical concepts and the writing process.

Chapters 3–10 give advice about how to explore a particular type of official topic. In Chapter 3, the topic is the writer; in Chapter 4, events; in Chapter 5, other people; in Chapter 6, relationships; in Chapter 7, ideas and concepts; in Chapter 8, beliefs; in Chapter 9, controversies; in Chapter 10, literary texts. Each of these chapters offers writer-based goals and reader-based goals. *Writer-based goals* suggest what the students should be trying to accomplish for themselves as writers and people; *reader-based goals* suggest what they should be trying to accomplish for their readers.

Chapter 11 gives advice about deepening and revising the content of essays, and Chapter 12 gives advice about revising style in those essays. Students should be encouraged to consult Chapters 11 and 12 whenever they to need to revise an essay.

## Pedagogical Features

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The text emphasizes the difference between a diary entry (written for oneself) and an actual exploratory essay (written for others); in the latter, there is always a topic (something external to the student, such as a text or controversy) and a sub-topic (the student writer's beliefs, assumptions, etc.). This distinction helps students focus on the fact that every essay has two topics to be pursued, not simply one. Also, the repeated emphasis on writing to and for an audience keeps student writers aware of the necessity of establishing the "global significance" of their essays. If they can't answer the "Why should readers read this essay?" question, then they know they have not succeeded.

Chapters 3–10 are followed by texts in a section entitled "Readings." Each text is preceded by a brief head note about the writer and an "Inward Exploration," a pre-reading writing task to prime the pump and to get students thinking about issues raised in that text (often these are good journal-writing assignments).

Each text is followed by "Outward Exploration: Suggestions for Discussion and Writing." These writing suggestions include topics that emphasize personal exploration, analysis and argument. Such assignments give the instructor great flexibility, because it is possible to use this book to stress whatever kind of academic writing is preferred or to give students a variety of emphases in their writing.

In addition, most of the texts are followed by “Rhetoric and Style,” a consideration of a particular stylistic or rhetorical device illustrated by that text. This section employs the rhetorical teaching technique of imitation—students are asked to use their own material and ideas to write a sentence that imitates the structure or tone or approach of the passage singled out for consideration. This technique has proven to be one of the most popular pedagogical features of the first edition.

## ***New to this Edition***

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To give students even more tools for analysis and argumentation, I have added a section on rhetoric. This section should deepen students’ insights into the craft of writing and give them a more sophisticated vocabulary for discussing the texts they read as well as making them more conscious of the rhetorical decision they make as writers. In addition, this edition highlights rhetoric’s strong emphasis on writing to readers—recognizing the expectations and existing knowledge-base of readers, providing context for readers, making the essays interesting and relevant to readers. The book also emphasizes logical and effective organization. Building on rhetorical concepts, this edition emphasizes students’ development of styles that feature sophisticated rhetorical devices and strategies, stylistic elements that will stand them in good stead in the academic and professional worlds.

Each chapter has new readings, many of them classics. The new readings help make this text offered as an affordable option since they avoid the issue of copyright.

I have added two Appendices. Appendix A (“Avoiding Plagiarism”) explains plagiarism and gives examples of proper and improper summarizing and paraphrasing. Appendix B (“Suggestions for Reading Packets”) recommends copyrighted texts that are readily available in college libraries, in many anthologies, in bookstores, and online. In order to facilitate their use, I have provided comparable “apparatus” sections for each of these texts—i.e., “Inward Exploration,” “Outward Explorations: Suggestions for Discussion and Writing,” and “Rhetoric and Style.”

## ***Acknowledgments***

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First, I would like to thank all the users of the first edition of this book. Their suggestions and dedication to the book have been very helpful in creating this new edition. I’m pleased to be able to provide an updated version.

Second, without question this text would be something totally different and vastly inferior had it not been for my many wonderful, insightful, and challenging students at MIT.

Third, I would like to thank Textbook Media and YOLO Learning Solutions for their vision and courage in striking out on a new path for education by making this textbook available as an affordable option for students and teachers alike. I am very excited to be part of this ground-breaking initiative.

Fourth, I would like to thank Ed Laube of Textbook Media for his vision, enthusiasm and willingness to make this book the first in a series of composition textbooks. Working with him has been a pleasure and an inspiration. And I want to thank Daphne Loecke of Laurel Arts and Victoria Putman of Putman Productions for their design work, which has made this text so appealing to the eye.

Fifth, I want to acknowledge the profound contribution made by my family—Elly and Liz, Marta and Ashton, and my parents. And, as always, my wife Ayni has been a never-ending source of inspiration and love through all my endeavors.

Most of all, my very special thanks belong to my daughter Marta. Without her encouragement, insights, sterling advice, phone calls, emails, and overall enthusiasm, this book would never have come to fruition. For her tireless efforts and love, this book is dedicated to her.