

PREFACE TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories, Canadian Edition, is based on the assumption that lucid writing follows lucid thinking, whereas poor writing is almost inevitably the product of foggy, irrational thought processes. As a result, our primary purpose in this book, as in *Reader's Choice*, Third Canadian Edition, is to help students think more clearly and logically—both in their minds and on paper.

Reading and writing are companion activities that involve students in the creation of thought and meaning—either as readers interpreting a text or as writers constructing one. Clear thinking, then, is the pivotal point that joins together these two efforts. Although studying the rhetorical strategies presented in *Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories* is certainly not the only way to approach writing, it is a productive means of helping students improve their abilities to think, read, and write on progressively more sophisticated levels.

The symbiosis we envision among thinking, reading, and writing is represented in this text by the following hierarchy of cognitive levels:

1. *Literal*, characterized by a basic understanding of words and their meanings;
2. *Interpretive*, consisting of a knowledge of linear connections between ideas and an ability to make valid inferences based on those ideas; and
3. *Critical*, the highest level, distinguished by the systematic investigation of complex ideas and by the analysis of their relationship to the world around us.

FEATURES

The readings in *Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories* will appeal to readers at a variety of levels. *Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories* is organized according to the belief that our mental abilities are generally sequential. In other words, students cannot read or write analytically before they are able to perform well on the literal and interpretive levels. Accordingly, the book progresses from selections that require predominantly literal skills—description, narration, and example—through readings involving more interpretation—process analysis, division/classification, comparison/contrast, and definition—to essays that demand a high degree of analytical thought—cause/effect and argumentation/persuasion. Depending on the calibre of your students and your prescribed curriculum, these rhetorical modes can, of course, be studied in any order.

In addition, the questions at the end of each selection are designed to help students move sequentially from various literal-level responses to interpretation and analysis. These questions deliberately examine

both the form and the content of the readings so that your students can cultivate a similar balance in their own writing.

***Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories* contains both fiction and non-fiction reading selections.** In addition to essays exemplifying the various rhetorical modes, the book contains ten short stories to broaden the range of genres with which students become familiar and to which they can apply their reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Because students often produce their best writing when they are personally involved in the topics of the pieces they read and in the human drama surrounding those essays, we introduce each selection with biographical information on the author and the original context of the reading. The biographies explain the real experiences from which an essay or a story emerged and help students focus on the purpose, audience, subject of the reading, and perspective on the topic.

The readings in *Reader's Choice: Essays and Stories* represent a broad range of topics. These subjects include national values, discrimination, ethnic identity, TV/media, sports, regional traditions, physical disabilities, mass hysteria, grieving, myths, and human relationships. The readings were selected on the basis of five important criteria: (1) high interest level, (2) effectiveness as models of writing, (3) moderate length, (4) readability, and (5) broad subject variety.

The readings represent writers from across Canada. Together the reading selections portray the universality of human experience as expressed through the viewpoints of men and women, many different ethnic and racial groups, and a variety of ages and social classes.

A website accompanies the book: www.pearsoned.ca/flachmann/ The accompanying website features a glossary of useful terms for students to use in conjunction with this book and includes links to websites relevant to each of the reading selections found in the book

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