

Preface

“Only connect!” This injunction from E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* is widely quoted. Yet Forster’s character goes further: “Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer.”

A tall order, perhaps, yet this book faces the challenge by urging readers to make such connections. The structure, the apparatus, and the selections in *Connections* all lead students to seek relationships: among the processes of reading, writing, and thinking; among the ideas and emotions expressed by the writers; among the cultural contexts that are represented by the seventy-six diverse selections; and, most of all, between the students’ reading, writing, and thinking and the process of their own lives.

Connections does much more than simply provide a collection of readings that represent various cultural contexts. Part I comprises three chapters that demonstrate critical reading, thinking, and writing skills and suggest that these skills become particularly important when readers encounter unfamiliar circumstances and ideas. In addition, this introductory section asks students to think carefully about the definition of culture and about the concept of reading, writing, and thinking across cultures. Chapter 1 provides strategies for reading and thinking in cultural contexts. New to the third edition is a revised summary section, including a new reading on urban housing and new accompanying exercises. Chapter 2 offers an overview of issues and strategies related to the processes of writing. In the third edition, a section of guidelines for peer editors has been added. Chapter 3, which provides detailed introductions to the expressive, explanatory, and persuasive aims of writing, has been completely revised for the third edition. New sample papers demonstrate each of the aims, and all three papers address the topic of adoption, thus encouraging students to see how the same topic can be explored in different ways for different purposes and different audiences. All three chapters in part I include extensive use of examples of students’ writing, from journals and brief annotations of readings to drafts and final copies of papers.

The writing apparatus has been carefully planned to involve students in a variety of roles and rhetorical situations. Each selection is introduced by a brief note on the author and the circumstances of original publication, followed by a series of prereading prompts designed especially for journal writing, brief informal class writing, or discussion that will lead to thoughtful reading. Following each selection are a series of topics for writing and discussion as well as suggestions for research or for longer papers related to the reading. At the end of each thematic section, “Topics for Making Connections” invites students to stretch their responses beyond a single selection. Every writing suggestion encourages students to read closely, carefully, and with an open mind and seeks to engage students in meaningful writing that raises questions rather than simply answering them.

The readings are divided into nine thematic sections. New to the third edition are “Families,” “American Dreams and Conflicts,” “Popular Culture and Media Messages,” and “Technology and Ethics.” Fifty-one new selections appear in this edition. Preceding each thematic section, the photography sections have been expanded for the third edition, and writing topics related to the theme represented by the photographs have been added. The instructor’s guide includes detailed discussion of each selection as well as innovative and flexible suggestions for using the text with various semester or quarter schedules.

Part III, “A Guide to Finding and Using Information,” offers a concise overview of the process of research as well as detailed explanations of MLA and APA documentation. For the third edition, the student research papers, in MLA and APA format, have been extensively revised and annotated to make them more accessible and useful to students and instructors. In addition, the third edition has added a section on finding, using, and evaluating resources from electronic databases.

Throughout the book, abundant student responses—sample discussions, journal entries, summaries, and papers in various stages of the writing process—demonstrate possible ways of reading, writing, and thinking, both individually and collaboratively.

Selections have been carefully chosen to provide diversity in terms of both the voices and types of discourse represented. Readers will find an intriguing mix of letters, essays, newspaper columns, memoirs, speeches, short stories, and poems. Again, the emphasis is on connection; selections represent an extraordinarily wide range of cultural contexts. As one reviewer noted: “Rather than limiting the diversity and ethnic experiences to people of color or women, this text includes accounts of immigrants, first-generation sons and daughters, the educated, the uneducated, and the poor—voices that all contribute to an American melody.”

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