

THE
Little
Norton
Reader

.....
50 ESSAYS
FROM THE FIRST
50 YEARS
.....

Melissa A.
Goldthwaite

2016
MLA
UPDATE

IT MAY BE SMALL IN SIZE, but *The Little Norton Reader* covers a lot of ground. It begins with an 1840 journal entry by Ralph Waldo Emerson; includes classic essays by writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Joan Didion, and George Orwell; and ends with a 2014 blog post by Dennis Baron. It includes essays that explore identity, food, sports, technology, gender, communication, and more. It also features exemplary essays by four student writers, providing models for the kind of writing students are often assigned. Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *The Norton Reader*, this new book is an opportunity to see how the essay has developed over time, to engage with the ideas of a diverse group of writers—and to be inspired to respond with writing of your own.

THE
Little Norton Reader

50 ESSAYS FROM THE FIRST 50 YEARS



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Melissa A. Goldthwaite

Saint Joseph's University



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IN MEMORY OF
ARTHUR EASTMAN (1918-1997)
AND LINDA PETERSON (1948-2015)

Preface



The Little Norton Reader began as a book to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of *The Norton Reader*. No other composition reader has lived such a long life, so it's a moment to celebrate! But as I began to study the many editions of the *Reader* and noted how much they revealed about the essay as a genre, the book quickly became something more than just commemorative:

It's organized chronologically to showcase how the essay and the issues that matter to students have both changed and remained the same over time. Opening with a journal entry by Ralph Waldo Emerson praising the language of "truckmen and teamsters" and concluding with a blog post by Dennis Baron about how Facebook offers a choice of fifty-eight genders but only "the same three tired pronouns," this collection explores the power of language and writing not only to express identity but also to change hearts and minds. It includes some writing by students, acknowledging that excellent writing is often done by students. And it's a "little" Norton Reader, something instructors have asked for, offered at the low price students want and need.

The pleasures of putting together a collection that celebrates fifty years of *The Norton Reader* are many: to reflect on which essays have lasted and why, to imagine the new voices that will shape composition readers in the next fifty years, to discover essays in older editions that will speak to students today, and to consider how both the essay and the teaching of writing have developed over time. And one more thing, of course: to create a much smaller book while still maintaining the breadth and depth for which *The Norton Reader* is known.

In “The Essay Canon,” Lynn Z. Bloom argues that “No matter where an essay first appeared—in the *New Yorker* or a little magazine or on a newspaper’s op-ed page—if it is to survive in the hearts and minds” of American readers “it must be reprinted time and again” in a composition reader (401). For Bloom, the criterion for whether an essay should be canonized was not how many times it had been cited by other academics, but how often it had been anthologized in composition readers. Bloom identifies a canon of 174 authors—and notes that twenty-five of them were anthologized for the first time in *The Norton Reader*. Many of the authors introduced in those early editions remain in the book today, even as it continues to introduce excellent new writing to new generations of teachers and students.

Bloom goes on to discuss the pedagogical, academic, and financial concerns that affect whether an essay is anthologized and can become “a candidate for canonicity”—explaining that the essay must first “satisfy the anthologist’s criteria for teachability; then it must balance intellectually, politically, and rhetorically with the rest of the book; it must contribute aesthetically; and its permission-to-reprint must be affordable” (413). All these elements have influenced which essays have come and gone from *The Norton Reader* over the years—and have shaped this fiftieth anniversary edition as well.

The selections included in *The Little Norton Reader* celebrate the “staying power” of many beloved essays. At the same time, they show the diversity of authors and topics taught in writing classes over time. Thirteen of Bloom’s “canonical” authors appear in this short collection, including eight of the top ten—Joan Didion, Martin Luther King Jr., George Orwell, Lewis Thomas, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, E. B. White, and Virginia Woolf—as well as many newer authors and essays that instructors have identified as favorites (Sherman Alexie’s “Superman and Me,” Alison Bechdel’s “Fun Home,” and Joey Franklin’s “Working at Wendy’s,” for example). Close study of past editions also prompted the inclusion of several readings rarely if ever anthologized in another composition reader—Gertrude Stein’s “Poetry and Grammar,” Verta-

mae Smart-Grosvenor's "The Kitchen Crisis," and D. Keith Mano's "How to Keep from Getting Mugged."

When I began reading early editions of *The Norton Reader*, I expected the essays to be fairly traditional and to demonstrate the clarity and correctness valued by writing teachers. But what I found surprised me: *The Norton Reader* wasn't nearly as traditional as I thought it had been.

Consider, for example, Gertrude Stein's essay "Poetry and Grammar." One of only ten pieces by female authors included in the first edition, her essay contained sentences such as this one: "Beside being able to be mistaken and to make mistakes verbs can change to look like themselves or to look like something else, they are, so to speak on the move and adverbs move with them and each of them find themselves not at all annoying but very often very much mistaken." I understood why the editors included it; indeed other selections in the book suggested they valued both poetry and grammar. But here was a writer who *broke* many rules of grammar. Still, the editors took this essay and its style seriously: one study question asked how "Miss Stein's prose style" differed from more conventional styles—and prompted students to consider what might be lost if her writing were more conventional. In fact, Stein's use of repetition and lack of standard punctuation create a memorable rhythm—and her less-than-grammatical sentences help students reflect on when and for what purpose it is appropriate to break traditional rules of grammar and punctuation. These questions are as relevant today as they were fifty years ago.

If I was surprised to find Gertrude Stein in the first edition, I was astonished to see Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor in the 1973 edition—and to see that her last name wasn't included; she was just "Verta Mae," one of the first African American women to appear in *The Norton Reader*. She capitalizes none of her sentences, indents none of her paragraphs, and—like Stein—pushes against conventions of grammar and punctuation. In terms of content, she critiques instant food, tying its invention to race and even slavery, writing that "white folks . . . had to invent instant food because the servant problem got so bad that their women had to get in the kitchen herself with her own two little lily

white hands. it is no accident that in the old old south where they had slaves that they was eating fried chicken, coated with batter, biscuits so light they could have flown across the mason dixon line if they had wanted to.” Like Stein, Smart-Grosvenor pays attention to rhythm, encouraging readers to “rap” her essay.

Then there’s D. Keith Mano’s essay, which first appeared in *Playboy*. If you could imagine a comic book bubble over my head when I made that discovery, it wouldn’t even contain words—just the punctuation missing from Stein’s essay: !?!?! In this humorous how-to piece, Mano uses short, direct sentences—“Sing aloud. Mutter a lot. Preach Jesus.”—and slang, telling readers to “walk gas-fast” and “book it, baby.” Students may not recognize all of Mano’s slang, but his play with language and attention to sound will be familiar to anyone who attends poetry slams or other oral performances. As with Stein and Smart-Grosvenor, Mano’s arguments and use of style give contemporary readers and writers much to think about and learn from.

Other essays will prompt students to reflect on the ways technology shapes reading, writing, and other forms of communication. Nicholas Carr’s article on whether *Google* is making us stupid; Judith Newman’s personal narrative about Siri; and Dennis Baron’s blog entry on *Facebook*, gender, and pronouns all demonstrate the purposes—and peculiarities—of different genres of communication. Students can benefit from making connections among earlier and more contemporary genres of writing—to compare the conventions of email and *Facebook* with those of Garrison Keillor’s letters and postcards, for example, or to consider whether sites like *Tumblr*, *Pinterest*, or *Instagram* share any similarities with the notebooks Joan Didion describes. Reading the older and newer essays together will help students move beyond questions about whether technology makes us smart or stupid—and to think about how it affects the ways we communicate and live.

With its chronological organization, *The Little Norton Reader* invites teachers and students to examine the ways nonfiction prose, especially the essay, has developed over time. The book begins with journal entries

from Emerson and Thoreau, two of the earliest American essayists; continues with well-known essays by Orwell, White, Woolf, and many others; and ends with a relatively new genre that has become a kind of public journal: a blog post. From Emerson's journal on the power of language, even usage that's "clean contrary to our grammar rules," to Baron's blog post on gender and pronouns and the continued power of the "grammar gods," it's clear that language and identity are connected—even if the questions and concerns about both change with time.

This short collection can also be used to teach a range of nonfiction genres—arguments, cultural analyses, how-to essays, journals, letters, literacy narratives, lyric essays, memoirs, op-eds, profiles, reflections, and more. The Index of Genres lists the readings that demonstrate commonly assigned genres; this will, I hope, prompt readers to reflect on the advantages and purposes of various genres. Journals and letters, for instance, may exhibit a writer's interests and concerns and provide a space for developing those concerns with a defined audience in mind. Memoirs, literacy narratives, lyric essays, and reflections allow writers to expand their audience as they share significant experiences that influence identity, beliefs, and political actions. Op-eds and other kinds of arguments help writers persuade readers to take action or make a change. Each of these genres encourages—and helps—writers to develop their craft and ideas—and to share their thoughts, experiences, and positions with others.

The Little Norton Reader can also be used for courses that focus on particular themes and issues. The Index of Themes will help instructors choose readings on topics and issues that interest students. A course might be organized, for instance, by units on food, class, home and family, and nature and the environment. Another course might be organized around race and ethnicity, language and communication, media and technology, and gender. The themes offered in this index allow for myriad combinations that help readers make connections among different time periods, social contexts, and topics.

In addition to a range of genres and themes, this book includes essays that demonstrate different modes of development. The Index of Rhetorical

Modes categorizes essays that use nine common methods: description, comparison and contrast, and so on. Some essays appear in more than one category, of course, showing students that writers often use more than one rhetorical mode when developing an essay. For example, in “The Clan of One-Breasted Women,” Terry Tempest Williams combines narration and argument; in “On Dumpster Diving,” Lars Eighner combines definition and classification; and nearly all narratives also include description. From the descriptive memoirs of Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, and Dylan Thomas to Alison Bechdel’s graphic memoir, students can see how sensory details, once expressed in words alone, may now be conveyed in images.

The Norton Reader has always focused on excellent writing, and *The Little Norton Reader* acknowledges that excellent writing is often done by student authors. An album of four student essays includes exemplary writing in frequently assigned genres: a rhetorical analysis, an argument, a personal narrative, and a profile. Two of the essays were runners-up for the Norton Writer’s Prize, an annual contest for which teachers can nominate their students’ writing. The rhetorical analysis, written by one of my students, is about Terry Tempest Williams’s “The Clan of One-Breasted Women,” a reading included in the book. I hope these essays will inspire students to seek a broader audience for their writing; to revise and submit their best work to contests, newspapers, and literary magazines; or even to create their own blogs.

May this mix of old and new—canonical essays by well-known writers to award-winning student writing, journals to blogs, a memoir about holidays to an analysis of hunger, an argument about guns to a mixed-genre piece on wild tongues—provide inspiration for thoughtful, lively discussion and models for writing worth reading and celebrating. Here’s to another fifty years.

WORK CITED

Bloom, Lynn Z. “The Essay Canon.” *College English*, vol. 61, no. 4, March 1999, pp. 401-30.

Highlights of *The Little Norton Reader*

- **Fifty excellent essays by a variety of authors:** classic (Zora Neale Hurston, George Orwell), contemporary (Nicholas Carr, Alison Bechdel), favorites from the past (Gertrude Stein, Aldo Leopold), and new favorites (Lynda Barry, Judith Newman)—all chosen for writing that inspires students to think, respond, and write.
- **Four exemplary essays written by students**, including a rhetorical analysis, an argument, a personal essay, and a profile.
- **A flexible organization that supports a number of different teaching approaches**, with indexes that organize the essays by genre, rhetorical mode, and theme.
- **User-friendly apparatus:** headnotes provide context about the authors and essays, and study questions focus on key aspects of the readings and prompt written response.
- **A small trim size**—small enough that students will bring the book with them to class.
- **A low price**—and because the readings all come from *The Norton Reader*, the book that's introduced millions of students to the essay as a genre, *The Little Norton Reader* offers the unusual combination of high quality and a low price.

Acknowledgments

In autumn of 2012, Howard Dinin and I were browsing the shelves of a bookstore in Philadelphia. Just after we left the store, he handed me a bag with a thick book inside, a gift: a copy of the first edition of *The Norton Reader*. After looking at the cover art (an image of Yale's Beinecke Library), I turned to the copyright page: 1965. I quickly calculated the publication date for the fourteenth edition and realized its release would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the book.

I'm grateful to Howard not only for the gift of that first edition, which led to this celebratory collection, but for the many ways he supports my work. No matter where we are—Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, or Provence—he makes sure I have an internet connection, a scanner, and a space to work. He provides sustenance and conversation. He also subscribes to numerous journals and magazines, some of which I've drawn from in making nominations for *The Norton Reader*. As I finished the work on *The Little Norton Reader*, he made daily trips to our favorite French bakery so I could start each day of writing with a *chausson aux pommes*.

An excellent editor is also a collaborator, and Marilyn Moller has collaborated with me on every part of this book: the initial idea, proposal, contents, headnotes, questions, indexes, and more. From face-to-face meetings in New York and Tampa to phone calls and emails at all times of the day and night, she has worked with me to shape this collection. I'm grateful for her hard work, expertise, and friendship.

I'm also grateful to Ariella Foss and Claire Wallace, who tracked down every edition of *The Norton Reader* for me; they both helped with the research and attention to details that made this book possible. Ariella, the house editor for the fourteenth edition of *The Norton Reader*, has gone above and beyond in ways too numerous to mention. I owe thanks to many others who contributed to this book: Megan

Jackson and Margaret Gorenstein secured permissions; Susanna Moller provided the beautiful art that helped shape Carin Berger's fanciful cover design and Pamela Schnitter's charming interior design—in close collaboration with Rubina Yeh and Debra Morton Hoyt, our most creative design directors. Thanks also to photo editors Stephanie Romeo and Fay Torresyap—and especially to our outstanding project editors, Shuli Traub and Katie Callahan, and our excellent production supervisor, Ashley Horna.

When I told my friend Libby Jones that I was an editor for *The Norton Reader*, her face brightened as she told me about her first time teaching composition—and how she used the first edition of the *Reader*. She remembered so many details and conveyed such enthusiasm. I'm delighted she was willing to write about that experience.

I'd like to acknowledge all the editors of *The Norton Reader*, past and present, who have made that book what it is today: something worth celebrating. Although I never met Art Eastman, the original general editor, I've come to admire him by reading his work and learning more about how he led a team of editors for nearly three decades.

My respect and gratitude go especially to Linda Peterson. I have admired her leadership and intelligence for many years. She was, for me, the model general editor, keeping the editorial team on task, providing guidance, and doing a great deal of work behind the scenes. When I started my work as general editor of the fourteenth edition, she provided advice and folders full of information (including her review of the seventh edition, reports, and correspondence) that gave me a deeper understanding of the history of *The Norton Reader*. I didn't anticipate that she would not live to see the published *Little Norton Reader* or the fourteenth edition of the book she shaped in so many ways.

I thank Joan Hartman and the later editors who built expertly on the foundation established by Art Eastman, Caesar Blake, Hubert

English Jr., Alan Howes, Robert Lenaghan, Leo McNamara, and James Rosier. Even before she joined the team as an editor, Joan was instrumental in increasing the number and range of essays by women and writers of color; she also encouraged a strong focus on student writing.

I'm also grateful to the current editorial team: John Brereton, Joe Bizup, and Anne Fernald, who—with different interests and areas of expertise—continue to find excellent nonfiction worth reading and teaching.

Finally, to the authors whose work is included, to the instructors who've taught with *The Norton Reader*, and to the students who read and write and re-read and revise—thank you. Your work makes mine possible.

Melissa A. Goldthwaite

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JOAN DIDION *On Keeping a Notebook* (1966) 105

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"We need to write, otherwise nobody will know who we are."

JUDITH ORTIZ COFER More Room (1990) 259

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CHANG-RAE LEE *Coming Home Again* (1995) 301

"[My mother] was the house accountant, the maid, the launderer, the disciplinarian, the driver, the secretary, and, of course, the cook. She was also my first basketball coach."

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DAVID HALBERSTAM *Jordan's Moment* (1998) 328

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STEPHEN KING *On Writing* (2000) 343

"Once you know what the story is and get it right—as right as you can, anyway—it belongs to anyone who wants to read it."

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE *Consider the Lobster* (2004) 348

"[S]tanding by the bubbling tanks outside the World's Largest Lobster Cooker, watching the fresh-caught lobsters pile over one another, wave their hobbled claws impotently . . . it is difficult not to sense that they're unhappy, or frightened. . . ."

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"Every creature on earth has approximately two billion heartbeats to spend in a lifetime. You can spend them slowly, like a tortoise, and live to be two hundred years old, or you can spend them fast, like a hummingbird, and live to be two years old."

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"I was Spartan to my father's Athenian. Modern to his Victorian. Butch to his nelly."

JOEY FRANKLIN *Working at Wendy's* (2006) 401

"My son is asleep in the next room. There is food in the fridge, and I have a job that pays an honest wage."

NICHOLAS CARR *Is Google Making Us Stupid?* (2008) 411

"Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going—so far as I can tell—but it's changing."

ANNA QUINDLEN *Stuff Is Not Salvation* (2008) 425

"Why did we buy all this stuff? Did anyone really need a flat-screen in the bedroom, or a designer handbag, or three cars? If the mall is our temple, then Marc Jacobs is God. There's a scary thought."

EULA BISS Time and Distance Overcome (2009) 430

“‘Time and dist. overcome,’ read an early advertisement for the telephone. . . . The telephone, Thomas Edison declared, ‘annihilated time and space, and brought the human family in closer touch.’ . . . In 1898, in Lake Cormorant, Mississippi, a black man was hanged from a telephone pole.”

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“The one bright ray of hope about the farm bill comes from the burgeoning food movement. . . . Food has one particular advantage for advocacy. . . . Everyone eats.”

JUDITH NEWMAN To Siri, with Love: How One Boy with Autism Became BFF with Apple’s Siri (2014) 450

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“A Facebook user can now identify as a genderqueer, neutrois, cis male, androgynous other, but Facebook friends can only wish him, her, or them a happy birthday.”

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“Williams has lived her whole life as a religious and patriotic citizen. But now, when her country has failed her . . . she has no choice but to act.”

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Celebrating Fifty Years

A Brief History of *The Norton Reader*



A good anthology, like a good banquet, offers food for every taste, and all of it high quality.

—ARTHUR EASTMAN, from his preface to the first edition

November 1962. Professor Arthur Eastman was sitting in his office at the University of Michigan—a room with bookshelves on three sides, two ashtrays, the musty smell of cigarettes and old books. That morning, Eastman met with Norton traveler Howard Sims, who told him that W. W. Norton & Company was looking to publish some books for composition courses. Sims explained that they were thinking of anthologies that would cover “the entire field of writing, with a separate book on each genre—poetry, prose, drama, fiction, all that” (Sabine 5). Eastman had no interest in editing such a book and proposed instead “‘an anthology of expository prose, a long volume, very long, to fit a whole range of teacher interests’” (5). Norton, which had in 1962 published its first Norton anthology, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, quickly saw the potential in Eastman’s approach. Jack Neill, the head of the college division at Norton, began working on the contract.

Eastman recruited his editors following the model of the Norton anthologies, that is, by assembling a large team to ensure varied interests and tastes. A week after Sims’s visit, Eastman, Caesar Blake, Hubert English Jr., Alan Howes, Robert Lenaghan, Leo McNamara, and James Rosier—all then teaching at the University of Michigan—signed a contract for *The Norton Reader* (22). All were professors of literature, most of whom regularly taught composition and were members of

Michigan's Freshman English Committee, working to find more effective ways of teaching composition.

At the time, in the early 1960s, first-year composition—then called freshman English—was taught primarily by professors and graduate students trained in literature. According to Albert Kitzhaber, in a 1963 book about the teaching of first-year writing, the purpose of college composition was to teach students to “write with ease, precision, and correctness” and to “focus the student’s attention on fundamental principles of clear thinking and the clear and effective written expression of that thinking” (2, 3). Kitzhaber’s study, based on analysis of ninety-eight courses from 1961 to 1962, revealed a diversity of approaches, with courses focusing on everything from grammar and mechanics to literature, “Great Books” to logic, or even propaganda analysis (12–13).

Kitzhaber also noted that the textbooks for these courses were “likely to be among the poorest, the least scholarly, that the student will encounter” (15). He critiqued the readers in particular as merely “springboards for discussions of things in general . . . cut-and-paste affairs that can ill sustain a course of true college grade” (16). He pointed further to the “extraordinary number of these collections on the market” and how they “come and go with extraordinary rapidity” (17).

Eastman and his colleagues had been dissatisfied with “the crop of new readers available,” and they wanted to offer something different: “works from the past as well as the present, foreign as well as native, long as well as short, light as well as serious, and in addition, those kinds of literature—journals, letters, characters, apothegms, parables—that are first cousins . . . to the essay.”

They also sought to create a book that would appeal to a range of teacher and student interests, an anthology that would, in Eastman’s words, be “like a good banquet,” with “food for every taste, and all of it high quality.” To achieve these goals, Eastman established a process for

choosing readings. Each editor nominated ten to twelve readings, which were then reviewed by two other editors; if they both voted “yes,” the piece was likely to be included. In the case of one “yes” and one “no,” the reading went to another editor for review, or the general editor broke the tie. This process continued for two more rounds with different editors.

To give a sense of how these editors were thinking about that first edition, here’s what one of them said: “You’re going to go for a few red-hot seventeenth-century pieces. You’re not trying to be fair to the centuries to achieve equal or proportional representation, but Plato is going to get a word and Aristotle and Jesus and guys like that” (Sabine 13). Indeed, “guys like that” did get a word—as did Emerson, Thoreau, Orwell, Bacon, Hazlitt, Carlyle, Lamb, and many others. Of the 220 readings included in the first edition, only ten were by women, including a selection from Katherine Mansfield’s journal; a few letters by Margaret Culkin Banning and Emily Dickinson; and essays by Hannah Arendt, Edith Hamilton, Margaret Mead, Gertrude Stein, and Roberta Wohlstetter. The only essay by a writer of color was James Baldwin’s “Stranger in the Village.”

The final table of contents featured eleven thematic chapters, some with subsections of prose forms: “Journals” in the chapter on “Personal Reports,” “Apothegms” in the one on “Government,” and so on. Eastman explained the organization this way:

They begin with personal experience, turn to the equipment and training with which a person confronts and masters experience—his language, his education, his mind; then look broadly outward at certain insistent concerns of our civilization—manners and marriage, discrimination, poverty, the machine; and develop, finally, along the great traditional lines of a liberating education—art, morality, politics, history, science, religion.

The book included some glosses and contextual notes—and some readings had study questions—but Eastman feared that further help would be intrusive, reasoning that teachers “tend to like to go by their own paces along roads of their own choosing.”

Writing instruction came at the end of the book in “A Compendious Rhetoric and Rhetorical Index,” which provided guidance for developing a thesis statement, using rhetorical methods to support the thesis, and paying attention to style. These guidelines were also linked to examples from the readings.

Through attention to selection and organization, Eastman and his colleagues created an anthology of excellent writing, one that was better than just a “cut-and-paste affair,” that linked reading with writing, that prompted discussion of much more than “things in general”—a book that would last.

Much has changed in *The Norton Reader* since that first edition. New editors from different generations and schools—some with degrees in literature, others in creative writing or rhetoric and composition—have introduced new readings and pedagogical approaches. This anthology has changed with the times to include more diverse authors, topics, themes, and genres; to pay more attention to the writing process; and to focus on the ways new technologies shape reading and writing.

Diversity of Authors

Do you have a policy concerning selections by and about women
in composition texts? Do you think you should?

—JOAN HARTMAN, from a letter to publishers

In the 1960s and early 1970s, calls for women’s rights and civil rights were much in the news: Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, published by Norton in 1963; Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965; the National Organization for

Women was founded in 1966. Protests, marches, civil disobedience. Laws were changing, making discrimination on the basis of race and gender illegal. But not everyone agreed on the best way to enact such changes—or that change was even necessary.

Just as social change does not happen overnight, neither do changes in textbooks. The second edition of *The Norton Reader* included a few more women (Jane Jacobs, Diana Trilling, Virginia Woolf) and one more African American (Martin Luther King Jr.) but most of the essays were still written by white men. Between the second and third editions, though, universities began to change. The first Black Studies program began at San Francisco State in 1968. CUNY instituted its open admissions policy in 1970, welcoming a wider and more diverse population. That same year, Women's Studies programs were established at San Diego State and SUNY–Buffalo. And change came as well to the third edition of the *Norton*, thanks in part to Joan Hartman, a professor of English at the College of Staten Island.

As a member of the MLA Commission on the Status of Women in the Profession, Hartman wrote to the major publishing houses, including Norton, asking about their policies concerning the inclusion of women in composition texts. Recognizing the need for more diversity in *The Norton Reader*, Art Eastman invited Hartman to nominate essays written by women. Her nominations helped increase the number of female authors to twenty-seven in the third edition, adding Joan Didion, Emma Goldman, Pauline Kael, Adrienne Rich, Simone Weil, and many others.

This third edition also welcomed a number of African American writers: Maya Angelou, Eldridge Cleaver, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, George L. Jackson, Toni Morrison, Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, and others. It's worth noting that these authors spoke to different audiences and took different positions. Angelou praised the sustaining power of "preachers, musicians and blues singers." Smart-Grosvenor critiqued those who would "rap for hours" about the feminine mystique

and black power but didn't recognize the importance of food and cooking. Jackson, a member of the Black Panthers, concluded his "Letter from Soledad Prison" by proclaiming "Power to the People"—a letter that directly followed the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which Martin Luther King Jr. signed off with "Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood."

Over time, attention to diversity has continued to evolve. In his preface to the sixth edition (1984), Eastman noted that women writers discuss "a far wider range of topics than matters exclusively female" and that writers from other countries "speak to issues far less national than broadly human," signaling a move beyond seeing writers as representatives of a particular gender, ethnicity, place, or kind of experience. This new perspective helped expand the range of voices, and by the seventh edition (1988), the book included forty-one essays by women as well as works by S. I. Hayakawa, N. Scott Momaday, Gloria Naylor, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Richard Rodriguez, and other African American, Native American, Asian American, and Chicano authors.

In addition to adding new writers and perspectives, the editors continually reconsidered readings already in the book. When Linda Peterson, who became an editor of *The Norton Reader* in the eighth edition, reviewed the seventh edition, she critiqued the bias of some chapters and selections, noting, for example, that the "Mind" chapter had only male authors. Come the eighth edition, that chapter was gone. And consider the uproar over Wayne Booth's essay "Is There Any Knowledge That a Man Must Have?" Booth first thought feminist critics were "over-reacting," but after thinking about it, he added the following in a footnote:

Once I reread the essay carefully . . . I discovered, with some shock, that the women had a right to complain. Though I had been thinking of both men and women as I wrote, I had simply failed to consider how my language would strike female readers,

consciously or unconsciously, or how it might encourage males to see themselves as the real center of all thought about education. My excuse now is only that I wrote before the feminist critique of language had got well under way, and that I was an author who badly needed that critique.¹

By the ninth edition (1996), however, Booth's essay was no longer included. Not all readers, though, agreed with the feminist critiques. One professor, in a letter to Norton in the late 1980s, worried that Norton would come under the "pernicious pressure of radical feminists." He complained, that he'd "seen their influence on textbooks already," and believed it was "narrow, ideological, unscholarly and full of special pleading," continuing, "I urge you, sir, to come against the manipulative aggression of the feminists" (qtd. in Sabine 35). A decade later, one teacher requested that Booth's essay be reinstated, arguing that "its thesis becomes ever increasingly important to the products of the computer generation for whom electronic gadgets are all" (personal correspondence, files of Linda Peterson), demonstrating again the ways concerns shift over time.

Questions of diversity were not limited to gender, race, and ethnicity. The ninth edition featured several authors writing about living with disease or disability: Nancy Mairs on multiple sclerosis, Alice Walker on blindness, Michael Lynch on AIDS, Maggie Helwig about eating disorders. These pieces were added just two years after the first Disability Studies program was instituted at Syracuse University in 1994 and six years after the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990.

1. In the materials that Linda Peterson gave me when I became general editor, I found exchanges between Eastman, Booth, and the other editors on the controversy that led to the footnote, including a letter sent to Norton that pointed to Booth's "macho style" that said, "My God, imagine trying to teach a human being who doesn't have a penis; what folly!" (qtd. in Sabine 61).

The editions published in the 1990s and early 2000s brought new emphasis on multiculturalism, at a time when more colleges were establishing offices of multicultural affairs. Writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa in “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” Maxine Hong Kingston in “Tongue-Tied,” and Richard Rodriguez in “Aria” showed different perspectives on language and culture. These pieces, in the same chapter as John Tierney’s “Playing the Dozens,” Patricia Williams’s “The Death of the Profane,” and Gloria Naylor’s “Mommy, What Does ‘Nigger’ Mean?” showed not only the importance of language and identity but also the challenges of communication. Many essays seemed simultaneously to value home cultures and to recognize that cultures and values change over time—changes that can be both painful and liberating, marked by both gains and losses.

As the twenty-first century has progressed, there seems to be a growing awareness of the realities of intersectionality—that gender, sexuality, class, culture, language, disability, and other aspects of identity interact. Although an author might emphasize only one of these aspects, the realities of individual lives are far more complicated. In the fourteenth edition (2016), readings such as Gwendolyn Ann Smith’s “We’re All Someone’s Freak” and Jaswinder Bolina’s “Writing Like a White Guy” reflect that complexity.

For each team of editors, the question of diversity and how it is represented in the book is significant. One of the advantages of a long volume designed to appeal to a range of interests is the space for inclusivity; still, space and resources are not limitless, and the editors have to decide what to include—and what to leave out. Each generation of editors, including the present one, has its own expertise, concerns, and blind spots. With each edition, we find room for change and improvement—and for bringing in new voices that challenge us to examine the past as well as to look forward, to see the world and its inhabitants anew.

Readings: Something Old, Something New

A vital culture is constantly in motion. The interests of readers change with the times. Essays which stood at the forefront of student concern only a few years ago, now seem dated, calling for us to address new issues and to reinforce old ones, always with one prime prerequisite—quality.

—ARTHUR EASTMAN, from his preface to the sixth edition

While certain topics and themes remain from edition to edition, the essays that address them change over time. Compare, for example, Allan Seager's "The Joys of Sport at Oxford," a 1962 narrative about one student's experience rowing and swimming at a British university, to David Halberstam's "Jordan's Moment," a journalistic profile of Michael Jordan leading the Chicago Bulls to an NBA championship in 1998. Or read Charles Lamb's "A Dissertation upon a Roast Pig," first published in 1822, and get lost in his elevated language: "Pig—let me speak his praise—is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate." Then read Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's "The Kitchen Crisis," a 1970 manifesto against instant food, urging readers, "PRO TECT YO KITCH'N." Something for every taste, indeed.

Beyond taste, such differences illustrate, though, that the diction, focus, and conventions of writing—from paragraph length to punctuation—sometimes evolve slowly, other times dramatically. And writing, even on the same topics—sports or food—looks very different depending on author, era, purpose, and genre.

Given that interests of readers do, indeed, change over time, roughly a third of the essays are new in each edition. Some new selections are chosen to introduce specific genres—Michael Lewis's sportswriting or Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, for example. Other selections may be added to highlight particular topics or important perspectives on

historic events. In the latest edition, for example, we include President Barack Obama's eulogy for Reverend Clementa Pinckney. We also sometimes feature clusters of essays that reflect concerns of the times: animal rights, AIDS, 9/11, binge drinking, environmental issues, and so on.

Although much has changed over the past fifty years, it's important to acknowledge what has lasted: eight readings—yes, all by men, but also vastly different in purpose and genre—have appeared in every edition of *The Norton Reader*:

E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake"

James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village"

Niccolò Machiavelli's "The Morals of the Prince"

Henry David Thoreau's "The Battle of the Ants"

Thomas Jefferson's "The Declaration of Independence"

Abraham Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address"

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal"

Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave"

Why have these selections lasted? And why might they matter to students today? Even though White's reflection on returning to a camp in Maine was first published in 1941, and recalls his childhood memories from 1904, the themes of change and timelessness still resonate with readers today, and his sensory descriptions of the lake model a kind of writing students can learn from.

"Stranger in the Village" begins with a glimpse of life in a tiny, isolated Swiss village, a setting where Baldwin's presence as a black American makes him, at first, an unfamiliar outsider—not merely a stranger, but wholly alien. Using this unique circumstance as pretext, Baldwin shifts the focus and expands on the larger issue of black-white relations in America, reflecting on "the rage of the disesteemed." From

our present-day vantage, we recognize his prescience in analyzing the enduring issues of race in America: domination, identity, and the difference between citizen and waster. Baldwin's insights remain thought-provoking as racial injustices endure.

The Declaration of Independence is included not just for the quality of its writing but also because it still inspires students to reflect on the multiple ways one sentence has been interpreted, revised, and used in various contexts for different purposes for more than 200 years: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

As for "The Morals of the Prince," Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address," "The Battle of the Ants," "The Allegory of the Cave," and "A Modest Proposal," they all provide examples of different genres, as well as material that helps students interrogate current political positions and philosophical viewpoints. And in a time when satire as seen in the *Onion* and on the *Daily Show* shapes responses to current events, an understanding of satire and other methods of making arguments remains relevant.

Although only a small number of selections have been published in every edition, many other essays have been included in almost every edition. Selections by Zora Neale Hurston, Annie Dillard, Brent Staples, Joan Didion, Scott Russell Sanders, Martin Luther King Jr., George Orwell, and Langston Hughes are perennial favorites, assigned year after year. These essays encourage readers to reflect on their identities, to question their behaviors and allegiances, and to think about the basis for their beliefs—from parental values to religion, to race to the expectations of others. And new selections and authors—Hula Bawa, Roxane Gay, Tim Kreider, and many others—help readers see those familiar favorites in a different context, perhaps prompting reflection on what has changed and what remains the same.

A Range of Nonfiction Genres

It is far easier to say what the essay is not than to say
what it is. . . .

—from “Notes on Reading and Writing,”
in the seventh edition

From “Journals” and “Letters” to “Op-eds” and “Cultural Analysis,” *The Norton Reader* has always had sections on a number of prose forms. Over the years, various prose forms have come and gone: “Letters” and “Characters”² were removed from the third edition “for want of use,” and “Op-eds” were introduced in the tenth edition. Initially, prose forms were treated as subsections of thematic chapters: “Parables,” for example, began as a subset of the “Science” chapter, was later expanded to “Fables and Parables” and moved to the “Literature and the Arts” chapter—and then ceased to be its own section, though the chapter on “Philosophy and Religion” now includes a Zen parable and one from Jesus.

In recent editions, these prose forms have been presented in their own chapters, no longer subsets of thematic chapters. One reason for this shift is to emphasize the connections between specific themes and genres. In fact, the titles of some chapters have even been changed to emphasize genre—for example, the chapter once titled “People, Places” is now called “Profiles,” a genre composition instructors often assign. Another example of a shift from theme to genre is the chapter “Cultural Analysis,” once called “Signs of the Times.” Embedded in this new title is a widely taught approach to both reading and writing: analysis.

2. As a prose form, “characters” were short profiles of certain types of people. In the first edition, these included, among others, a coward, a harlot, a flatterer—and, no joke, a fair and happy milkmaid.

Increased Attention to Writing

How a reader might link reading and writing has exercised my imagination throughout my rereading of the Norton.

—LINDA PETERSON, from a review of the seventh edition

As a text for composition classes, *The Norton Reader* has always paid attention to writing, but as composition pedagogies have developed, the support for student writing provided in this book has increased.

The first six editions included a chapter originally called “A Compendious Rhetoric and Rhetorical Index” at the end of the book. Organized in three parts—“Saying Something That Matters,” “The Means of Saying It,” “And the Style”—it included instructions on writing thesis-driven essays, marshalling evidence, drawing conclusions, and paying attention to style. Renamed “Notes on Composition” in the second edition, this chapter remained in the book for four more editions.

Some of the readings were followed by study questions—mainly reading comprehension, though other questions asked students to find evidence to support or refute a thesis or to compare two selections. By the seventh edition the study questions had a new dimension, inviting students to practice different kinds of writing and to engage with the readings by writing in different ways. This edition also offered a new chapter on reading and writing that “explicitly yet informally [coached] young readers in analyzing the processes of writing and reasoned response.” This chapter, written by Robert Hosmer, took a decidedly different approach and tone from Eastman’s. Whereas Eastman emphasized “the hard labor of writing,” saying, for instance, that “no worthwhile thesis comes without work,” Hosmer told students not to “despair,” acknowledging that all writers make mistakes and encouraging them not to be “crippled by unrealistic expectations”—either their own or their instructor’s. This new chapter also focused on writing as a process—one that involved invention, drafting, and revising—an established concept in composition pedagogy at the time.

The seventh edition was reviewed by Linda Peterson, director of the Bass Writing Program at Yale and president of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Critiquing “the failure to connect the kinds of essays contemporary writers produce with the kinds of essays students might try,” Peterson argued that study questions should not only focus on an essay’s subject but should also ask students to do the kind of writing and analyses that an essay models. This critique led to further changes in the writing prompts and helped make *The Norton Reader* a book that would inspire students not just to analyze essays they read but to practice the kinds of writing they were reading: personal essays, nature writing, op-eds, analyses, and many other genres.

The writing instruction has been expanded in subsequent editions, providing additional guidance on determining purpose and writing for a specific audience, on choosing a genre and deciding which rhetorical methods of development to use to support a claim, on acknowledging the words and ideas of others, and more—all things that address the WPA Outcomes and that help students “learn to analyze rhetorical situations, identify genre conventions, and understand how genres shape reading and writing.”

Attention to How Technologies Shape Reading and Writing

For some time now, students have been writing for peers outside of class and for larger communities as well. . . . creating discussion boards, blogs, wikis, websites, and other new genres.

—from the introduction to the thirteenth edition

Technology has dramatically changed the ways we read, research, write, revise, and even think about composing. When the first edition of *The Norton Reader* was published in 1965, there was no internet, and there were no personal computers, smartphones, e-readers, or online

courses. Whereas early editions asked students to focus on close reading of texts, later editions also ask for collaboration and research. And students are expected not only to research books and periodicals but also to conduct interviews and to consult and analyze databases, websites, films, podcasts, photographs, archives, and more.

Many teachers today are likely to assign multimodal reading and writing projects, ones that require an ability not only to analyze and write text but also to understand and include appropriate visuals or audio. For both reading and writing, students have access to more information and have more choices in terms of genre, format, design, and media than ever before. With so many genres available, which ones do we choose to write and for what purposes? How do we choose from such a range of sources—images, sounds, printed words—and use them effectively, persuasively, and responsibly?

Such questions have shaped writing instruction—and the selections and chapters included in *The Norton Reader*. The fourteenth edition includes a new chapter, “Media and Technology,” opening with Nicholas Carr’s provocative essay “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” The chapter includes a range of perspectives on the ways technology is affecting our lives, from Judith Newman’s personal narrative about the relationship between her son and Siri to Tasneem Raja’s argument that coding is the new literacy, one that should be taught more widely in schools.

Technology has shaped *The Norton Reader* in other ways as well. Consider the prevalence of images. The first edition had one essay that included a map, another with some tables, a third with a few drawings; the fourteenth edition includes a wide range of photographs, drawings, maps, graphs, and more. Sometimes an image supports or illustrates a point made in writing; other times it might challenge the reader’s understanding of the text; still other times, it might evoke an emotion or other response independent of the written words. Selections such as Scott McCloud’s from *Understanding Comics* and Alison Bechdel’s from *Fun Home* depend as much on visual information as on written text.

Other selections include audio and video. For example, Annie Leonard's "The Story of Bottled Water," included in the fourteenth edition as an annotated script, also appears as an eight-minute film online. In its film format, it's part animation, part speech. But the text version includes yet another dimension: footnotes that reveal the extensive research involved in creating the film and its argument. We hope students will read the text and view the film.

A print anthology, of course, has its limits. It can't include audio files or active hyperlinks. The fourteenth edition, therefore, is available as an e-book. We also offer a companion website that allows teachers and students to search for and sort readings by theme, genre, keyword, medium, and date. Still, we believe there are advantages to sitting down with a print book—pleasure from reading without the distraction of ads, videos, animations, news tickers, links, or automatic alerts. And so we offer you both: a beautiful print anthology and the convenience of reading it on a digital device.

Then and Now

Excellence would be their pillar of smoke by day,
of fire by night.

—ARTHUR EASTMAN, from his preface to the eighth edition

I conclude as I began, by quoting Art Eastman—here, with an allusion to a verse from Exodus. What was Eastman's intention? Was he being ironic, replacing "the LORD" with "excellence"? Or was he serious? To claim "excellence" without defining it, as none of the editors (including me) has been able to do, might be like trusting a cloud or spirit as guide. To shape and reshape a book over time requires faith in collaboration, a belief that excellence can be achieved when writers, editors, publishers, teachers, and students work together. And there's a kind of faith in hoping that this collaboration will continue—in whatever form it takes—for another fifty years or more.

Although much has changed in the decades since work on the first edition of *The Norton Reader* began, the current editors share the same commitment held by the original team: to work collaboratively to find and present excellent writing. This task, however, is not without its challenges. The cost of permissions, for example, rises with each new edition. Consider this: several readings in the fourteenth edition of *The Norton Reader* cost more to reprint individually than the entire budget for the 220 readings in the first edition. Dramatically increasing permissions fees (sometimes a fee will increase 100 percent from one edition to another) make it impractical—even impossible—to reprint certain essays.

Still, the process of choosing readings hasn't changed, except that the editors have moved from planning new editions at Art Eastman's kitchen table to sharing ideas in a conference room at Norton's New York office. And instead of sending materials by mail, we share files electronically using Dropbox. But wherever we are and no matter what mediums we use to communicate, we continue to work together, valuing the work of those who came before us, even as we try to offer something new.

A half-century ago, Arthur Eastman compared a good anthology to a banquet. He acknowledged in his preface to the first edition that some pieces may be "better than others" and that "undoubtedly some fall short of the highest mark," but he also affirmed what I believe to be true of every edition: that although times and tastes change, "*The Norton Reader* offers very little that is not very good." And much of it is positively delicious. Welcome to the table.

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Bell-Bottoms, English 101, and *The Norton Reader*

LIBBY FALK JONES



September 1968. My first day as a teacher: English 101, Composition, at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. My section, one of fifty-odd, met in the Light Engineering Building; Stony Brook was a science-emphasis institution, boasting multiple engineering buildings, but only one building to house all of the humanities. Still, the faculty had decided that all first-year students should “develop abilities in expository and argumentative writing . . . and gain practice in the logical and clear expression of ideas and the exposition of facts and opinion,” as the English 101 catalogue description proclaimed. The task of developing and teaching composition fell naturally to those of us in English. As a second-year graduate student, I was raring to go.

I wore, I’m sure, my 1960s bell-bottom cords, an oxford cloth shirt, and boots; I carried a handful of white index cards with my first-day notes. Barely six years older than the students who turned to greet me as I came into the room, I held tight to my new authority; I would ask my students to address me as Mrs. Jones and I’d call them “Mr.” and “Miss.” My role, as I understood it, was to stimulate students’ intellectual excitement about reading and writing—and to teach them the skills of analysis and expression. I was a woman with a mission, and in addition to my academic title and my index cards, I carried with me one other

badge of authority, a kind of secret weapon: the first edition of *The Norton Reader*. Though I knew that this book would be valuable for my students, I didn't know then that I would cut my teeth on it as a writing teacher, that the *Norton* would help shape my teaching philosophies and practices.

English students and professors at the time bandied about theories of literature, not of composition. And though change was in the air (the next year, the department would offer a seminar in the theory and practice of teaching composition), in 1968, I was pretty much on my own. It was assumed then that learning to write meant reading models of good writing, learning to make arguments about readings, and supporting claims with textual references. Thomas Rogers, Director of Composition and my personal mentor, modeled the kind of classroom inquiry I aimed for. I'd studied eighteenth-century literature with Tom the previous year, and had observed his undergraduate literature class, so I was deeply familiar with his pedagogy. He posed open-ended questions about texts, urged respondents to support their points with references to specific passages, and never gave the class any "right" answers. I had seen how a group of students working together could challenge one another and tease out meaning even from difficult texts, yielding ample material to be pursued in individual expository and argumentative essays, the frequent "short papers" English 101 students were expected to write. How best to offer instructors and students the intellectual grist for such writing? A reader, of course.

A month before, I'd stood in the English Department's office, pondering the two readers from which teaching associates could choose. I hefted both volumes, scrutinized contents, and flipped pages. No contest: *The Norton Reader* was small but rich, compact enough to slide easily into a book bag, extensive enough at 1221 pages to include voices and ideas for a lifetime, not just a semester, of learning. Its pages were solid enough to receive (and preserve!) underlining and penciled marginal notes, but thin enough that it was only a little more than an inch thick and weighed less than two pounds. I was later to discover as

well that the binding was solid. Nearly a half-century later, my copy shows only a little fraying on the front spine of the bright orange cloth cover.

I liked the *Norton's* organization—with pieces on subjects from education to ethics to history, civilization, science, and the arts—and the clusters of readings written in particular prose forms, among them journals, letters, and fables. I knew my writing students would bring diverse academic and personal interests, and I wanted to be sure that reading and writing assignments would invite everyone in. In choosing the *Norton*, I'd also been swayed by my colleagues' preferences. My best friend in graduate school, Barbara Leuthner, who already had a year of teaching under her belt, had told me she'd share some assignments. Indeed, she recently reminded me that at that time, everyone in Stony Brook's English Department—from teaching associates to full professors—taught composition, mostly using *The Norton Reader*. If Professors Alfred Kazin, Richard Levin, and Homer Goldberg liked the book, how could I go wrong? The department had even developed an informal instructor's manual through word-of-mouth recommendations about provocative readings and successful assignments.

I still recall some of my favorite assignments from the *Norton*. Asking my students to compare Jonathan Edwards's sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," with the priest's sermon from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* elicited insightful analyses of subject and style. Another comparison, of Margaret Culkin Banning's "Letter to Susan" with Lord Chesterfield's "Letter to His Son," asked students to analyze each writer's arguments, use of evidence, and tone—and I found that these letters to young people from different eras still spoke to my students' sensibilities. I lifted another assignment straight from my Boswell-Johnson course with Tom Rogers: to analyze Samuel Johnson's thesis and structure in his *Rambler* piece "On Self-Love and Indolence." That had been my graduate class's opening inquiry, one which rewarded careful reading of topic sentences as well as attention to sequences of reasoning and kinds of evidence. It was Barbara who directed me to essays in the *Norton* related to the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in

Queens: the *New York Times* story “37 Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call the Police,” Stanley Milgram and Paul Hollander’s analysis of what would come to be called the “bystander complex,” and Milgram’s earlier study on behavioral obedience. These materials—timely and geographically relevant—led students to probing causal analyses. And finally, perhaps my all-time favorite writing assignment—breathtaking in its demand for both imagination and logic—was to apply the principles described by Thomas Henry Huxley in “The Method of Scientific Investigation” to James Thurber’s fable “The Glass in the Field,” arguing that the swallow was either foolish or wise.

The Norton Reader spurred my own intellectual development as well. I had entered graduate English studies with a B.A. in history and a background in journalism and technical writing; there was lots of literature I hadn’t read. *The Norton Reader* introduced me to texts that would become formative, almost mythic, in my personal and scholarly growth. These included E. B. White’s “Once More to the Lake,” which still speaks to me now as movingly as it did almost five decades ago; Bruno Bettelheim’s “A Victim,” which introduced me to the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy; and Jonathan Swift’s brilliantly ironic argument, “A Modest Proposal.” My years of teaching critical writing and thinking as well as my work with faculty across the curriculum have been helped immensely by William Perry’s distinction between “bull” and “cow” (“Examsmanship and the Liberal Arts: A Study in Educational Epistemology”), precursor to his theories of cognitive stage development. I credit the *Norton* as well for deepening my understanding of some pieces I’d already come to love: Thurber’s fables, especially “The Unicorn in the Garden,” and the preface to Joseph Conrad’s *The Nigger of the “Narcissis,”* a piece that Reynolds Price, my own first-year writing instructor at Duke University, had claimed was the most useful guide for fiction writers he’d ever encountered.

Its role in shaping readers and writers has propelled the *Norton* through fourteen editions to this milestone fiftieth anniversary. *The*

Little Norton Reader is a perfect way to celebrate. These fifty selections testify to the enduring life of the essay; to its marvelous range of subject, shape, tone, and style; to its ability to shout, whisper, illuminate, stir to action. Readers will each have their own favorites; writers may benefit especially by reading fruitful pairings or clusters. A. Bartlett Giamatti's "The Green Fields of the Mind" (1977), for example, plays productively off of White's "Once More to the Lake" (1941). Mark Twain's "Advice to Youth" (1882), William Zinsser's "College Pressures" (1979), and Lynda Barry's "The Sanctuary of School" (1992) will speak to students of all ages. By reading George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), Langston Hughes's "Salvation" (1940), and Judith Ortiz Cofer's "More Room" (1990), writers can explore the implications of personal choices within larger social contexts. Try coupling Virginia Woolf's reflection "The Death of the Moth" with Annie Dillard's argument on the importance of seeing ("Sight into Insight") or David Foster Wallace's lobster with Sandra Steingraber's tuna fish to explore rhetorical purposes and techniques; Chang-rae Lee's depiction of his mother with Scott Russell Sanders's portrait of his father; Gertrude Stein and Martin Luther King Jr. for stylistic virtuosity. Almost a century of commentary on race relations emerges through reading Zora Neale Hurston's "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928) alongside Eula Biss's "Time and Distance Overcome" (2009), especially by bringing in the essays by James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., Maya Angelou, Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, Alice Walker, Brent Staples, and Henry Louis Gates Jr.

My advice to writers for engaging with *The Little Norton Reader*? As you read and reread this rich collection, keep your writer's notebook by your side, à la Joan Didion. You'll fill it with quotations, comments, memories, maybe even some postcards (Garrison Keillor) or blog posts (Dennis Baron)—and, in time, with essays of your own.

Berea, Kentucky
May 2015

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



The Language of the Street

1840

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803–1882) wrote essays, poetry, and lectures, collected in *Essays: First Series* (1841), *Nature: Addresses and Lectures* (1849), and several other books. Emerson is seen as the father of Transcendentalism, an American philosophical and political movement that encouraged individualism over conformity, and the search for one's "original relation to the universe." This selection is drawn from Emerson's June 24, 1840, journal entry. In the full entry, he also reflects on how other writers—Carlyle, Plutarch, Montaigne, Milton, Goethe, and others—use language.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE STREET IS ALWAYS STRONG. WHAT can describe the folly and emptiness of scolding like the word *jawing*? I feel too the force of the double negative, though clean contrary to our grammar rules. And I confess to some pleasure from the stinging rhetoric of a rattling oath in the mouth of truckmen and teamsters. How laconic and brisk it is by the side of a page of the *North American Review*. Cut these words and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive; they walk and run. Moreover they who speak them have this elegancy, that they do not trip in their speech. It is a shower of bullets, whilst Cambridge men and Yale men correct themselves and begin again at every half sentence.

Thinking about the Text

1. What does Ralph Waldo Emerson mean by the “language of the street”? Who, according to Emerson, speaks this language? Who does not?
2. Emerson points to the communicative power of words and constructions that may not follow conventional rules of grammar or speech but are nonetheless effective. For example, he mentions “the force of the double negative.” Are there any kinds of speech that do not follow conventional rules that you find especially powerful or effective? If so, what are they—and what makes them so compelling?
3. Listen carefully to a group of people speaking and jot down any words, phrases, and constructions they use that stand out to you. Then write a short essay in which you analyze how the language is used and why it’s particularly effective (or not).

HENRY DAVID THOREAU



Observation

1854

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817–1862) composed essays and poems. Best known for *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), he also wrote *Resistance to Civil Government, or Civil Disobedience* (1849), *Walking* (1861), and many other books on nature, philosophy, and politics. Thoreau's writing has been included in every edition of *The Norton Reader*. This selection is from Thoreau's journal entry from May 6, 1854.
