

# PREFACE

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I am gratified that *Developing Critical Reading Skills* is now going into its ninth edition. The text has evolved over its many editions, in response to instructors' concerns, to our students' needs, and to the changing world. The consequences resulting from the 2001 terrorist attacks, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the enormous political and cultural shifts now going on in the United States, helped along by social networking (Web 2.0), have made it imperative for us to be an educated populace, able to read with accuracy and skilled in identifying claims and in detecting manipulation, emotional appeals, bias, and propaganda. More than ever, students of all ages need to develop a worldview and a rational means of evaluating arguments.

Finally, recent events and our military involvement in the Middle East have also made it more important than ever to acquire knowledge about other cultures, particularly about those cultures that have different worldviews and whose members, thus, behave in seemingly incomprehensible ways. Perhaps this book can do a small part to help students—indeed, all of us—to be better thinkers and better citizens, able to participate fully in the democratic process.

Although the world has changed a lot since the first edition, the underlying premise of *Developing Critical Reading Skills* has not. The premise of the text is that good reading and clear thinking go hand in hand. For this reason, it emphasizes practice in sustained, analytical reading. Because learning to read analytically requires concentration and an intense engagement with the text, the text emphasizes the importance of reading with a pencil in one's hand and deliberately omits practice in speed techniques. Students first work with high-quality short passages before moving on to more substantive pieces of greater complexity. The readings explore diverse subjects: anthropology, sports, human behavior, politics, social policy, education, ethics, autobiography, personal reminiscence, the minority and immigrant experience, humor, satire, and so forth. The passages also reflect diverse writing styles, thereby giving students the experience of reading high-level prose by its best practitioners.

This book succeeds if students become more self-assured about their reading and if they recognize that reading well—with confidence, fluency, and enjoyment—is a significant part of their emotional and academic lives. My hope is that students will feel genuine excitement when they encounter a writer who shows them a new way of looking at their lives and at the world. It is this feeling—or inspiration, perhaps, for lack of a better word—that I hope to impart.

## ■ CHANGES TO THE NINTH EDITION

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I am grateful for the many thoughtful and practical suggestions reviewers and colleagues have given me, which almost without exception I have incorporated. I hope that these new features will make the ninth edition attractive and pedagogically useful.

Perhaps the most noticeable change in the ninth edition is greater focus on subjects that I hope will appeal to our current generation of readers—readings on the deleterious effects of Facebook on friendships and college GPAs, the observation that our reliance on Google might actually be making us stupid, and the value of a college education, to cite just three examples.

Here is a brief overview of the major changes in the ninth edition:

- A new section titled “Some Thoughts on E-Readers.”
- Continued emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, including more variety in vocabulary exercise material.
- Annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing exercises appear in greater numbers. One of these three follows almost every long selection.
- An increased number of Critical Thinking Exercises and material for online research called Online Learning Centers.
- Exercises to give students practice in distinguishing between fact and opinion and in determining how arguments could be strengthened or weakened with added information.
- An expanded discussion of making inferences in literature (Chapter 3) and of tone (Chapter 7). Poetry has been added.
- Chapter 8 begins with a new discussion of worldview, asking students to examine the differences between Middle Eastern culture and our own.
- The critical reading chapters—Chapters 8, 9, and 10—have been completely revised and slightly expanded. They reflect the spectrum of political opinion and offer current examples of manipulative and fallacious thinking from both politics and the real world.
- Expanded coverage of critical reading and evaluation of visual material, including political cartoons, graphs, advertisements, and public service announcements.
- Two paired editorials in the argument section: The first one consists of arguments for and against the proposal to make national service compulsory for 18-year-old Americans. The second topic is the proposal to return to a system of corporal punishment (flogging) for criminals, but in this case, both writers argue the same point of view. The student’s task is to determine which one does the better job of persuasion.
- By popular request, I have brought back Steven Jay Gould’s little gem of an essay, “Preposterous: What Has Happened to the Rhinoceros Is as Hard to Fathom as the Beast Itself,” which is the basis for further instruction in annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing at the beginning of Part 5.

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- New Readings** • Just about half of the longer readings throughout the text are new, and all but one of the editorials are new. In addition to Barack Obama’s stump speech on the campaign trail and an analysis of his rhetorical and persuasive devices, reprinted in the ninth edition is Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech from 1963.
- Here are some of the new writers represented in the ninth edition: Sherry Turkle, Gregory David Roberts, Mark Spragg, Paul Theroux, Alexandra Teague, Alvaro Huerta, Ruben Navarrette, Jr., Naomi Schaefer Riley, Paul Krugman, Kathleen Parker, Nicholas Carr, and Mary Roach. There are four new short stories: Paul Theroux, “Eulogies for Mr. Concannon” and J. Robert Lennon, “The Cement Mailbox” (both examples of flash fiction), Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants,” and Katherine Mansfield, “Miss Brill.”

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- Other Helpful Features** • As in the eighth edition, each chapter begins with an explanation of the chapter objectives and a list of topics covered in the chapter. Important information and Key terms throughout the text are boxed for convenient reference.
- In Chapters 1–9, short practice exercises interspersed throughout the text allow students to reinforce the particular skills under discussion. As before, each chapter in Parts 1–3 ends with three short exercises and a longer essay to analyze.
  - Each of the book’s longer essays and articles ends with suggestions for further exploration: Features called “In the Bookstore” or “On DVD” point the students to relevant books and films thematically connected to the reading. “On the Web” points students to websites thematically connected to the reading, also giving them an opportunity to do simple research tasks related to the reading.
  - Suggestions for using the text and answers to the exercises are available as Microsoft Word files in the instructor portion of the book’s website.

## ANCILLARY MATERIALS

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- Supplements for Instructors** • **Online Learning Center** <[www.mhhe.com/spears](http://www.mhhe.com/spears)>. Instructors can find a variety of tests to accompany the text on a password-protected area of the text’s website. Class-tested sets of exams are available for Chapters 2–3; Chapters 2–5 (midterm); Chapters 6–7; Chapters 8–9; and final examinations. (Click on the book’s cover to reach the site.)

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- Supplements for Students** • **Online Learning Center** ([www.mhhe.com/spears](http://www.mhhe.com/spears)) Students will find an extensive array of practice exercises accompanying Chapters 2–9 of the text. Click on the book’s cover to reach the site.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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No textbook can be created without the assistance of many people. First, I am grateful to the many teachers across the country who read the manuscript for this edition carefully and made many judicious recommendations:

Amy Freese, Santiago Canyon College  
Darnell Kemp, Fullerton College  
Carol Fregly, City College of San Francisco  
Melissa Grahek, Normandale Community College  
Melanie Haeri, Irvine Valley College  
Melissa Dalton, Lanier Tech College

I am grateful to my colleagues at City College of San Francisco for their kind words and sensible recommendations, specifically Jessica Brown, Joan Wilson, Eleanor Brown, Carol Fregly, Pamela Gentile, Amy Miles, and Susan Zimmerman. Special thanks to these faculty members at American River College for their comments and suggestions for the eighth edition: Pauline Fountain, Nancy Bertoglio, Leah Arambel, Shannon Pries.

The following people are sources for exciting new writers to explore: My daughter, Charlotte Milan, and my brother, Geoffrey Koziol, both of San Francisco; the FMI group—Julia Hansen, Carole Levine, Marlene Mann, Naomi Mann, all of San Francisco; Robin McKnight, of El Granada, California; Geri McCauley, of Sebastopol, California; my old high school friends, great readers all—Julie Green, of Divide, Colorado; Cathy Griffin of Rancho Mirage, California, Janet Allen-Shaw of La Jolla, California, Mary Brent Wehrli, of Palm Springs, California, and Kareen Sturgeon of McMinnville, Oregon. And finally special thanks to my oldest reading friend, Jennifer Ruddy, of Rockport, Maine.

Warmest thanks to Janice Wiggins-Clarke for her attention to endless details and efficient handling and disposition of a complicated revision process, and to Deb Hash and Jolynn Kilburg for their patience and efficiency during the production process. Finally, special thanks to my husband, David, for his kind and steady heart.

Instructors who have comments, suggestions, or questions are invited to contact me via e-mail at [dkspears@gmail.com](mailto:dkspears@gmail.com). I will do my best to answer within a day or two of receiving messages.

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