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# Preface

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Favourable response to the first Canadian edition has allowed me to revise the text originally based on the seventh edition of Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Literature*. This new edition is based substantially on the first Canadian edition, and incorporates some changes introduced into the ninth U.S. edition when William E. Cain became a collaborator.

This edition adds a new chapter which has two aims: to present a case study of a contemporary cross-discipline research project employing non-literary sources to explore literary subjects, and to show the process of electronic research. This chapter takes the student step-by-step through a search employing online search engines to locate relevant Web sources. It augments the preceding chapter on traditional research, which is extensively revised from the first edition.

The section on documentation is, of course, heavily revised to include citations of electronic sources and to update the print citations.

As well, I have added a sketch of grammar definitions and common grammar errors. While it was impossible to add a full grammar primer to this already lengthy text, this brief overview will provide students with a quick refresher and reminders of errors to avoid. For many students, this checklist will eliminate the need to purchase a separate grammar textbook.

Throughout, I have revised (and often shortened) the chapters to make them as clear and concise as possible and to update them.

The text retains elements of the first edition that colleagues and students have told us are valuable: examples of preliminary notes, drafts and revisions of drafts, checklists of questions, bibliographies for further reading, and examples of student writing. We believe that all writers gain from the examples of other writers, and that student writers gain confidence both from reading effective essays by their peers and seeing how some of these drafts can be further improved.

Part 1 is based in the premise that good writing requires good reading. The early chapters emphasize annotating a text, brainstorming, and asking questions to generate ideas. Explication and analysis are discussed and illustrated.

Part 2 considers definitions of literature, including contemporary notions of cultural performance and the performative. This section urges students to think critically about literature, considering relationships among inter-

pretation, meaning, and evaluation. It discusses persuasive writing and provides brief introductions to critical approaches employed by contemporary critics, including the post-colonial theories so germane to Canadian criticism. These introductions to critical theories have been revised and updated.

Part 3 considers the three major genres (fiction, drama and poetry) and briefly discusses film. Each chapter provides technical and analytic tools, shows the process of thinking through an analysis, and offers sample essays. We comment upon the sample essays with marginal notations or brief assessments. Chapters conclude with checklists of questions students may ask as they read and think about a work.

Changes to Part 4 have already been mentioned: “Style and Format” now includes matters of grammar; “Writing a Research Paper” is updated and now includes electronic citation styles; a new chapter, “New Approaches to the Research Paper: History and the World Wide Web” explores the relationship between historical and political documents and the writing of Japanese-Canadians interned in camps during World War II. The chapter offers a guide to evaluating sources on the Web and directories of search engines and print guides to electronic sources.

There are three appendices: two stories which are used as the subjects of many of the student essays and a revised glossary of literary terms which provides quick definitions of key terms highlighted throughout the text. The glossary and index were completely reconfigured in the First Canadian edition and this apparatus has been continued and expanded in this second edition.

The book continues to use examples from First Nations’ writers, to quote writers from the various ethnic backgrounds that make up Canadian society, and to introduce marginalized voices. It also uses excerpts from early Canadian writers whom we must not forget.

As the preface to the first edition notes, this book assumes “the role of literature in ‘making’ Canada and Canadians—sometimes in positive and sometimes in negative ways.” Literature provides provisional or partial answers to complex questions, and while no one today assumes that literature will offer universal truths, the sharing of stories—told in many voices—allows us to read and reread ourselves. This process of reading and thinking about literature, then, is far more than simply an exercise for school: It is fundamental to our understanding of who we are, where we live, and what we value.

I would like to thank the following reviewers, all of whom offered valuable suggestions: David Hyttenrauch of Mount Royal College, Marlene A. Sawatsky of Simon Fraser University, and Mary Keating of University College of Cape Breton.

The basis of this text is still the work of Sylvan Barnet, to whom generations of students continue to be indebted—as do I. I would also like to thank Marianne Minaker and Andrew Simpson of Pearson Education Canada for their assistance. I thank Michael Young again for the original commission. My thanks also to copy editor Tara Tovell for her keen editorial eye. I

thank my colleagues Jean Clifford and Bill Schermbrucker of Capilano College, Alan Filewod of Guelph University and Susan Bennett of the University of Calgary for their advice, and the reference librarians of Capilano College—especially George Modenesi—for their generous assistance. I thank Andrea and Douglas Westcott for a hideaway in which to write. In particular I would like to thank Dorothy Jantzen, of Capilano College, for continuing support and friendship. This second edition is for my parents, and, once again, for James Power.

REID GILBERT

# A Key to Types of Writing Assignments

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