
Preface: To the Instructor

How often have you, as a reading or writing teacher, asked yourself questions such as these:

- Why must I spend so much time looking for timely selections that students will *want* to read?
- Where can I find a book of essays that also helps me teach the reading and writing skills my students need to know?
- Is there a reader out there devoted to old-fashioned human values—ones that can inspire and motivate even today’s students?

If you’ve asked any of the above questions, *Voices and Values* may be the book for you. Suitable for reading and/or writing classes, the book provides a series of forty lively and thought-provoking essays that will compel student attention. Each selection is accompanied by a set of activities to help students read, understand, and write about the essay. By providing instruction and practice in the skills necessary for close and thoughtful reading, the text will help all those teachers whose students say, “I read it, but I didn’t understand it.” And by providing a wide number and range of writing assignments, as well as help with getting started on these assignments, the text will help all those teachers whose students say, “I don’t know what to write about.”

Distinguishing Features of the Book

Readings that celebrate human values. The book contains forty essays chosen for their celebration of significant human values. For example, in

the first selection, “Bird Girl,” an author describes the guilt he feels for doing nothing when his high school classmates behaved cruelly toward a student who was different. The story becomes a plea for the importance of courage—speaking up in defense of another—and the need for kindness. Other essays—in a style that never preaches—cover such values as gratitude, personal growth, fairness, responsibility, love and compassion, common sense, and moderation.

Emphasis on clear thinking. A basic truth that is at the heart of both the reading and the writing process is that any thoughtful communication of ideas has two basic parts: (1) a point is made and (2) that point is supported. As they work their way through this book, students learn to apply this principle of point and support. They are encouraged when *reading* an essay to look for a central idea as well as for the reasons, examples, facts, and details that support that idea. They are reminded when *writing* to follow the same basic principle—to make a point and then provide support for that point. And they discover that clear *thinking* (which they also do when actively reading or writing) involves both recognizing ideas and deciding whether there is solid support for those ideas.

Frequent skills practice. Accompanying the high-interest selections is a series of high-quality activities that truly help students improve their reading, thinking, and writing. As we have already stated, the book assumes that reading and writing are interrelated skills. Work on reading can improve writing; work on writing can improve reading. Extensive practice in reading, thinking, and writing follows each of the forty selections. Here is the sequence of activities—prepared by two authors who have themselves been teachers—for each essay:

- ***First Impressions*** Following each reading is a freewriting activity titled “First Impressions” that encourages students to come to terms with what they have read. The activity consists of three questions that permit students to respond on different levels of feeling and opinion. For example, the first question is always “Did you enjoy reading this selection? Why or why not?” The two other questions focus on particular issues raised by the essay—issues about which every student should have something to say. Students can respond to one or all of these questions at the beginning of a class session, or, alternatively, students can record their responses in a “reading journal.”

The “First Impressions” activity provides at least two additional benefits. First, it lays the groundwork for oral participation; many more students can contribute intelligently to classroom discussion after they have collected their thoughts on paper in advance. Second, as an integral step in the writing process, freewriting or journal

keeping can supply students with raw material for one or more of the paragraph and essay assignments that follow the selections.

- ***Words to Watch and Vocabulary Check*** Students need to strengthen their vocabularies in order to succeed in school—and they know it. *Voices and Values* builds vocabulary in the most research-proven and interesting way, by providing hundreds of useful words in context. The most challenging words and phrases in each selection are defined in the “Words to Watch” section that precedes each reading, and four of these words are tested in the “Vocabulary Check” activity that follows each reading. Other words from the reading that may be unfamiliar to students also appear in the Vocabulary Check. Students thus have frequent opportunities to sharpen their skill at deriving meaning from context.
- ***Reading Check*** Practice in reading skills is provided through an activity titled “Reading Check,” a series of comprehension questions that follow the Vocabulary Check. The questions involve four key skills: finding the central point and main ideas, recognizing key supporting details, making inferences, and understanding the writer’s craft. The craft questions include such elements as introduction and conclusion strategies; types of support; patterns of organization and the transitions that indicate these patterns; tone; purpose; intended audience; and titles. As students sharpen these crucial reading skills, they will become better, more insightful readers—and they will be ready to use the same techniques in their own writing.
- ***Discussion Questions*** Four discussion questions follow the Reading Check. These questions provide a final chance for students to deepen their understanding of an essay and the issues and values that it contains. They also function as a helpful intermediate step between reading a selection and writing about it. If the teacher chooses, these discussion questions can serve as additional writing topics.
- ***Paragraph Assignments and Essay Assignments*** Four writing topics—two paragraph assignments and two essay assignments—conclude the activities for each selection. The assignments emphasize the basic principle of clear communication: that a student make a point and support that point. Numerous sample topic sentences and thesis statements, along with specific suggestions for supporting these points, help students to succeed on these assignments. Twenty additional topics on pages 461–468 invite students to read pairs of essays and write papers inspired by both.

Versatility. Since it is “a reader for writers,” *Voices and Values* can be used in a number of teaching and learning situations:

- As a reader in a writing course covering paragraphs, essays, or both
- As an anthology in an English course studying the essay as a *genre*
- As the core text in a reading course employing a whole-language approach
- As a collection of inspiring motivational readings

Ease of use and helpful support. The book is designed to be simple for both teachers and students to use. The activities already listed are easy to present in class and convenient to correct. Answers to the activities appear in two places. First, an annotated *Instructor’s Edition* of the book—chances are you are holding it in your hand—includes answers to the Vocabulary Checks and Reading Checks, making the book very easy for teachers to use. Second, an *Instructor’s Manual* provides complete answers on letter-sized sheets for these activities. At the teacher’s option, these sheets can easily be duplicated and distributed to students so they can check their own answers. The manual also contains teaching suggestions, suggested answers to the “Discussion Questions” that follow each reading, and ten additional guided writing assignments.

In short, *Voices and Values* contains an appealing collection of readings and an exceptional series of activities that will give students extensive guided practice in reading and writing. We believe the book’s value lies in the humanistic quality of the selections, the variety of activities that follow each essay, and the integrated approach to reading and writing that is maintained throughout.

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