



SIXTH EDITION

# FIELDS OF READING

*Motives for Writing*

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## Preface

This sixth edition of *Fields of Reading: Motives for Writing* contains ninety-one readings from a broad range of academic, professional, and literary writing, organized around four main purposes for writing: Reflecting, Reporting, Explaining, and Arguing. In focusing on purpose, we give students and instructors the opportunity to explore the complex relationships among writers and readers that vary according to "what" and "why" people write and read. The title *Fields of Reading: Motives for Writing* identifies our goal of providing students with tools to establish and develop their own motives for writing throughout their college and professional lives.

### Highlights of the Sixth Edition

**New Prose Selections.** Of the seventy-five prose selections, twenty-nine are new to the sixth edition. These pieces represent a culturally varied array of thinkers, critics, and scholars who did not appear in the fifth edition, including Henry Louis Gates Jr., Amitav Ghosh, Sherry Turkle, Cynthia Ozick, and Stuart Moulthrop. These new essays continue to provide students with models of finely crafted writing from a diverse range of fields.

**Poems as New Selections.** For the first time, we have chosen to include poetry among the readings, with sixteen poems grouped under the same rhetorical and cross-curricular categories as their prose counterparts. The poems, which were carefully chosen as models of rhetorical effectiveness in their respective categories, include works by Langston Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Elizabeth Bishop, W. H. Auden, Rita Dove, William Carlos Williams, Thom Gunn, and Robert Frost.

## THEME FOR ENGLISH B

### Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1902–1967) grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, and Columbus, Ohio, and began writing at an early age, publishing his first poems when he was in high school. At twenty-one, he enrolled at Columbia University in New York City, but he left after his first year (he would later graduate from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri). In New York, Hughes came under the influence of the writers who were part of what came to be called the Harlem Renaissance, and he turned his poetic talents to the distinctive rhythms and concerns of the African American community. His first collection, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926. Hughes went on to become one of the premier voices in American letters through his poems, short stories, novels, essays, articles, plays, and screenplays. He also translated the works of black poets from around the world. The following poem appeared in *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951).

The instructor said,

Go home and write  
a page tonight.  
And let that page come out of you—  
Then, it will be true.

I wonder if it's that simple?  
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.  
I went to school there, then Durham, then here  
to this college on the hill above Harlem.  
I am the only colored student in my class.  
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,  
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,  
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,  
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator  
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me  
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what  
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:  
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.

(I hear New York, too). Me—who?  
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.  
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.  
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,  
or records—Bessie,<sup>1</sup> bop, or Bach.

I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like  
the same things other folks like who are other races.  
So will my page be colored that I write?  
Being me, it will not be white.

But it will be  
a part of you, instructor.  
You are white—  
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.  
That's American.

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.  
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.  
But we are, that's true!  
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me—  
although you're older—and white—

and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

## QUESTIONS

1. This poem presents itself as having been written to meet a composition assignment requiring students to write a page, "And let that page come out of you." What do you think the instructor meant by urging his students to "let that page come out of you"? In what respects do you think that letting something "come out of you" might be similar to reflective writing? In what ways do you think it's different?
2. In line 19, the student says "we two—you, me talk on this page." Who is he referring to when he says "we two"? How is it possible for two voices to speak on a single page? In what ways does the style of Hughes's poem seem to be like "talk"? How does the form of the poem seem to be like "talk"? In what ways do you think talking on a page might be similar to reflective writing? In what ways do you think it's different?

<sup>1</sup>Bessie: Bessie Smith (1898?–1937), a blues singer. [Eds.]