

PREFACE

Learning to write effective paragraphs and essays, master essential sentence skills, and read critically are turning points for writers; these skills will prepare them to tackle many types of writing in college and beyond. Along the way, however, there are many other important skills to explore and develop—using specific and concrete language to make a point and stick to it, selecting good supporting details to back up that point and create a convincing argument, organizing a paragraph in a way that best fits its purpose, and writing clear, error-free sentences to maximize the effectiveness of the writing. In *Exploring Writing: Paragraphs and Essays*, I encourage new writers to see writing as a skill that can be learned *and* a process that must be explored. I refer to a set of four skills for effective writing as **the four bases**:

- **Unity:** Discover a clearly stated point, or topic sentence, and make sure all the other information in the paragraph or essay is in support of that point.
- **Support:** Support the points with specific evidence, and plenty of it.
- **Coherence:** Organize and connect supporting evidence so that paragraphs and essays transition smoothly from one bit of supporting information to the next.
- **Sentence skills:** Revise and edit so that sentences are error free for clearer and more effective communication.

The four bases are essential to effective writing, whether it be a narrative paragraph, a cover letter for a job application, or an essay assignment.

Highlights of the *Second Edition*

Real Students

Whether it is in the avatars (see the front cover foldout or jump online to meet a few) or the *Writer's Template* activities, *Exploring Writing* emphasizes meaningful writing across the curriculum and throughout life.

- **Avatars:** Throughout the margins of *Exploring Writing*, you will meet more than thirty characters who are experiencing various writing dilemmas. For instance, within the chapter on commas, we meet Amy, who is having trouble using commas correctly in her journal entries. Writers are prompted to visit these fellow students online to learn more about their stories and to complete the lessons that solve and correct each writing problem. NOTE: The easiest way to locate a specific character online is to go to the *Connect Writing* Web site at mhconnectwriting.com and enter the topic/subject area you are working on (for instance, *commas*) in the search box. This will bring up a link to the writing scenario for that particular character.

- **A Writer's Template:** The *Templates* showcase the writing of a student from a different course across the disciplines. Writers will read Reynaldo's nutrition paper and Jennifer's sociology writing assignment and will be asked to evaluate and edit them in terms of the four bases. My hope is that by allowing new writers to see how writing plays a significant part in their other college courses, it will help to validate the importance of learning how to write, and write effectively. In addition, they will learn how the four bases can be applied to the writing they do in their other classes as well.

Real Situations

Just as the avatars work to improve their writing in class, at home, and in the workplace, *Exploring Writing* offers *Beyond the Classroom* to show students how each mode of writing may be used in various other courses, such as the sciences, humanities, engineering, or business. This activity also allows students to explore how certain professionals in the workforce may utilize a particular mode of writing in their day-to-day tasks.

How Am I Improving?

Students often struggle to see their improvement as writers. To help, *Exploring Writing* offers *Reflective Activities* that invite students to consider what they've learned thus far, to note their progress as writers, and to take some pride in their growth. Similarly, the personalized *Learning Plan* online shows students the skills they have mastered and charts their progress toward new levels of attainment.

More Activities

With over 4,000 online activities and 350 more in print (50% of which are new to *Exploring Writing*) students have ample opportunity to practice their skills.

- **Collaborative Activity:** These activities give students a chance to collaborate as they develop stronger writing skills.
- **Exploring Writing Online:** These writing prompts give students a chance to apply a chapter's lessons to a specific purpose—while learning to make use of the Internet at all stages of the writing process.
- **Responding to Images:** Throughout the text, images are used to help students visualize concepts (such as comparison or contrast and argument). Writing prompts are provided to get students thinking and responding critically to each image.
- **Writing Assignments:** The text includes a variety of writing assignments focusing on many new and interesting topics, such as racial profiling, returning to school after age 30, and how electronic devices enhance as well as interfere with our daily lives. Some assignments are highly structured with suggestions for prewriting and revision; others are open-ended.

- **Review Test:** Chapters in Part 5 conclude with tests that cover all the content in that chapter; answers to these are available in the *Instructor's Manual* and the *Annotated Instructor's Edition*, but not in the student text.
- **Editing Test:** In addition to a full chapter of *Editing Tests*, each section in Part 5 ends with 2-3 tests that combine the skills learned in that section and assess students' understanding of them.

Goals

Exploring Writing's diagnostics help students set individual learning plans and goals for their writing skills. Similarly, each part of the print text opens with a list of goals and an intriguing full-page visual accompanied by a related writing prompt to get writers writing—and thinking—immediately.

Readings for Writers

Part 6 has been carefully updated and expanded in the *Second Edition*. The new readings were selected based on recommendations from our panel of reviewers, and I am excited to include them in this edition. New selections range from Malcolm X's *Prison Studies* to the *Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy* to Thomas J. Billitteri's *How Can Cyberbullies Be Stopped?* and Suzanne Britt's *Neat People vs. Sloppy People*. I have retained the more popular and thought provoking readings of the first edition, including Dick Gregory's *Shame*, Roger Wilkins's *I Became Her Target*, *The Professor Is a Dropout* by Beth Johnson, and *How to Make It in College, Now That You're Here* from Brian O'Keeney. I am sorry to have to remove Alex Haley's essay *Thank You*, however, his estate has unfortunately denied permission to reprint any of his writings at this time. I hope you enjoy the new reading selections and that they prompt lively discussions in your classroom or chatroom.

Flexibility

Since no two instructors teach in exactly the same way and no two students have identical needs, I have designed *Exploring Writing* to be extremely flexible. Online, the lessons adapt to the needs of each individual student, while in print each of the book's six parts is color-coded along the outside margins so that instructors can turn quickly and easily to the skills they want to present. A sample syllabus is provided in the *Instructor's Manual* (available in the *Exploring Writing Online Learning Center* at www.mhhe.com/langan).

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