

A NOTE TO TEACHERS

WHAT MAKES THIS TEXTBOOK DIFFERENT?

Urban Reader for College Writers is different from most other textbooks currently available on the market because it introduces a number of innovative teaching features and it uses varied sources of articles.

The first distinct feature, *Global Learners*, is an activity that brings classroom discussions of current issues onto a global stage by allowing for both native and non-native speakers to share their living-abroad or traveling-abroad experiences. The textbook's "built-in" teaching is done via the second distinct feature *Tips for Success*, a clear-cut, brief but focused system of guiding students through reading and writing about current political, social or cultural issues. Most composition textbooks either lack this feature or utilize text-heavy and less accessible forms of built-in instruction. In the world of technology and online communication overloads, crisp and direct text instruction may help keep the students focused and "on their toes."

Next, the units address the not-so-frequently asked question: How can we, as individuals and as a group, help make changes in our daily life, in our community, in our city, and ultimately in our country? In a way, this textbook helps highlight the issues that seem to be small and very local, but are, in essence, global and far-reaching. *Urban Reader for College Writers* shows that all issues are community issues that can affect all of us, so we need to be part of the solution from the start.

Urban Reader for College Writers also showcases successful citizen action: how parents have influenced school zoning, how local residents created healthy vegetable gardens in their back yards, or how enthusiastic neighbors revitalized an abandoned city lot by creating a successful community garden.

What follows are detailed descriptions of each book feature. They should be used as instructional guides for teachers.

SOURCES OF ARTICLES

The articles come from a broad spectrum of sources. Some come from *The New York Times*, others from free community weekly papers. Still others are academic book excerpts or press releases from government web sites. *Urban Reader for College Writers* also includes excerpts from the official Borough of Manhattan president's report on sustainable city initiatives, a poem by Rilke, and essays written by the book author.

THEMES AND TOPICS

The reading selections focus on current issues that are also timely topics—quality of life, efforts to improve urban access to healthy foods, sustainable initiatives such as developing urban farms and roof-top gardens, or dealing with financial and safety problems on individual, institutional, and government levels. The final unit addresses more philosophical, everlasting questions—those of self and cooperation with one another and the Earth.

UNIT AND CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

Units can be covered in the order they appear in the book, or according to the instructor's class syllabus and student needs. Chapters are organized thematically. Each reading selection is related to the other readings by highlighting an aspect of the theme discussed in that unit. Although unified by the same theme, all chapters are independent of each other and can be mixed and matched in any order. However, if you decide to read with your class the unit on Community Action (Unit 2) or Green Communities (Unit 3), it may

be useful to first cover Unit One (Chapter One on Civics) for basic concepts. Otherwise, remember that you can always check basic concepts in the Glossary (in the back of the book).

Each chapter has the same exercise features, but *Civics Corner* and *Global Learners* may be highlighted in some chapters and not in others. That is because all activities are text-based; some texts allow for more focus on one activity than other texts.

BONUS READINGS

At the end of each unit, there is a Bonus Reading chapter. This extra reading selection provides additional views on the unit's theme, opposing views, or an illustration of the ideas discussed in the chapter. For example, Unit One ends with a sample community board calendar. This is a real-life calendar of all activities, events and hearings the Community Board Two in Manhattan is scheduled to cover during one month. Unit Seven ends with a Bonus Reading poem by Rilke, "A Walk." Instructors can use creative ways to connect bonus readings with other chapters.

UNIQUE FEATURES

The following unique features can invigorate both the teacher and the students and make class activities more meaningful.

Civics Corner—is a special feature in this textbook that provides civic grounding for all students.

- It helps explain concepts such as civic volunteering, youth civic action, neighborhood communities, city government structure, community boards, and other terms that are frequently used in many chapters of this book.
- The definitions of civic terms are made accessible to all students, native and non-native speakers of English alike. The language is purposely crisp and straight forward. Instructors should expand on definitions or provide extra examples whenever needed.
- A full list of all terms covered by the *Civics Corner* feature is given again in the back of the book as Glossary.

Tips for Success—is a teaching tool. It contains the following: (a) mini lessons on genres covered in the book; (b) quick guides for successful reading; and (c) tips on successful writing practices in some chapters. Tips for Success feature is immediately followed by an exercise for students to practice what they have learned. This feature is called “Try it Out”.

In many ways this feature addresses strategies for successful learning. It offers guidelines for understanding culture-specific concepts and ideas expressed in the texts. *Tips for Success* will be useful for all students, particularly global learners. It is purposely short and bulleted so that students can read and review the contents as many times as needed. The instructors should go over the section with students and provide additional explanations if needed.

Global Learners—is designed to include all students in classroom discussions, native speakers and English as a second language speakers. The questions are meant to set the stage for discussing issues on a global level. All students are asked to share their experiences, whether the experiences come from living outside of the United States (such as immigrants, or Americans who lived abroad for a while); or whether the experiences come from simply having traveled to other countries. In this way, we, as educators, bring the questions onto a larger stage to help our students understand the world beyond what they know, or are used to: their own classroom, their campus, their home town and state, or the country of their origin.

On Campus—encourages students to go out of the classroom and find out what their peers think. This kind of interactive activity should give a real-life perspective on the issues discussed in this textbook. It is also a great source of data for writing reports. Instructors can get creative in planning assignments to incorporate students’ research data. They can plan end-of-semester power point presentations that would summarize all survey results done in the course of the semester.

Have the Last Word!—intends to bring the focus back on the learners. It asks them to think critically about what they have read or learned. Global learners can once again, focus on vocabulary and new cultural information.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO USE THE FEATURES

Internet-based Activities

Blog It! Website It!—Both of these activities require Internet access. If your class does not have Internet connection, you can ask students to orally share their responses to the questions with the whole class. Website It! activities can be done using library resources or a school computer lab. Remember to plan ahead to schedule the use of the computers in the library or in the writing center.

Blog It!

This activity has been created as an electronic version of the *Reader Response* approach to reading. Students are asked to respond to the readings by blogging their personal reactions to them. The blog format allows for sharing of everyone's reactions at the same time. If your class has a *Smart Board* you can ask the students to share their blog entries in class so that everyone can comment on each other's responses.

If your class does not have a blog, you can use *Google Document* to create a common space for all students to make entries and share their reactions to readings. Again, you can use the *Smart Board*, an overhead projector, or any other available classroom technology that would allow you to project the document on a screen.

Website It!

This activity is meant to encourage Web research.

- The questions are designed to assist the students in creating Internet "search" words. Students can use any search engine such as "Google Search" and type in the key words from the task. Then the list of search results will have to be narrowed down. Instructors should assist their students to make sure the students understand how to find an article or a source that will best suit the task.
- Instructors should use "Tips for Success: Evaluating Sources" (Unit One) as a guide for students on how to evaluate sources for credibility and reliability. One way of doing this is by

checking designation of sources, such as (.org), (.com), or (.edu). Each of these designations should be discussed for their advantages and disadvantages.

IN WHAT ORDER SHOULD THE ACTIVITIES BE DONE?

Most activities are designed to be independent of each other. The instructor can plan activities based on classroom needs. However, some features can be more helpful to students if done prior to reading. For example, *Preview the Issues* and *Zoom in on Vocabulary* may need to be done prior to reading the article.

Preview the Issues

This is a warm-up activity and an orientation to the topic of the chapter. It should be done before reading the text in order to help students focus on the issues in the readings. Instructors should provide any additional information necessary to help the students grasp the topic.

Zoom in on Vocabulary

Instructors can preview the vocabulary before asking students to read the text. This will facilitate student comprehension of the text and may be particularly helpful for global learners. Alternative uses of this feature are: (a) to ask the students to read the text first, then to check the vocabulary; or (b) to do a parallel activity such as reading the text and checking the vocabulary at the same time. Note that the vocabulary is listed in the order it appears in the text. It is marked with a circle for easy recognition.

Tips for Success

If you have a class of students who happen to be predominantly global learners, you should consider working on *Tips for Success* prior to starting the reading selection or discussion activities. *Tips for Success* activity typically covers instructional items such as how to read successfully, how to take notes, or how to recognize genre types.

Main Idea/Support

This is an activity that should help students build their overall reading comprehension skills. Additionally, it is designed to support test taking skills in those courses that have the developmental reading component built into their syllabus.

HOW TO USE THE BACK MATTER

Summary Sheets

Each reading has a summary sheet form in the back of the book. Students can work on summaries in class or at home. The peer-evaluation option allows for an exchange of feedback between peers. It should help students develop a critical eye when looking at written work. If the students are asked to do summaries for every chapter, by the end of the semester they will be able to evaluate their own writing more successfully.

Vocabulary List

The list of all words highlighted in each chapter has been alphabetized for easy access. Some words recur so students can look them up as needed. The list can also assist teachers in assessing student progress.

Glossary of Terms

A list of all civics terms highlighted in each chapter has been alphabetized for easy access. Instructors and students can look up words and concepts as needed. Some concepts recur in chapters so in order to avoid repetition they are all listed in the back of the book.

Website Resources

A list of web addresses that appear in chapters has been compiled for easy access.