TO THE STUDENT

Thinking Beyond the Text: Critical Reading for Academic Success was designed to help you move beyond literal understanding of a text and to encourage you to exercise higher-order thinking of the sort that is increasingly valued in post-secondary academic settings. The book has four units, each with a different theme explored from different points of view through three readings. We have chosen readings we feel will be academically challenging for more advanced learners of English and yet still accessible. You will probably need to read each selection more than one time to fully comprehend the content. However, you should be aware that this is a common practice for many native speakers when they encounter readings that contain new information or information that is more complex than they are used to.

Academic reading is not a passive activity. To be a good academic reader, you must read actively, critically, and deeply. This book is designed to teach you some techniques for doing that. Throughout your reading, you will want to highlight important information and make marginal notes because, unlike reading for pleasure, reading for academic purposes requires you to remember important information for later use. You will also want to write any questions that the reading might provoke in preparation for doing further research on the subject. You can either highlight and make marginal notes on your first reading or on subsequent readings as you begin to understand the text more clearly. Either way, you will want to practice these strategies with the readings in this book so they come naturally when you are in the university or college classroom.

Each reading begins with a Pre-Reading activity to start you thinking about the topic or topics that you will encounter. If you are in a class with other students, your teacher may ask you to work together with a small group of classmates on some of the activities. At other times, you may be asked to work on your own. You might be asked to share your ideas with the rest of the class or engage in some form of group discussion. Thinking about and discussing the topic with others activates any background knowledge you may have about the topic, and this will help you be better prepared to process any new information and vocabulary that may be contained in the reading.

After each reading, you will encounter several post-reading activities. First, you will generally be presented with a Critical Focus that will help you understand some important elements to look for in academic texts. This advice is then followed by a Critical Focus Application to give you an opportunity to use what you are learning. At times you will be challenged to apply a previously learned strategy in a more complex manner as you progress through the book.
The **Getting at the Matter** section is designed to check your comprehension of key ideas and important details in each reading. Sometimes these questions will require you to include information you gathered in the strategy section that preceded it; however, you will usually be asked to present the information in complete sentences and in your own words. The **Academic Vocabulary Focus** will help you increase your academic vocabulary by focusing on 176 words from the 570 word families that are commonly found within academic writing across the various disciplines. A variety of activities will help you with recognition of this vocabulary and reinforce your ability to recognize or use it in context.

An important aspect of American higher education is the application and extension of knowledge as well as the questioning of it. **For Discussion** sections will help you move beyond the information gathered from the text by having you explore your personal responses to what you have read, to think of further applications and implications of ideas from the readings, or to think of objections and criticisms of those ideas. In addition, at the end of each unit is a **For Further Investigation** section. Here, you will be invited to do further research and present the information that you find either in oral or written form. This is important because doing research and synthesizing information from various sources is an important aspect of a college student’s academic life. This is your opportunity to begin practicing advanced scholarship and to contribute new insights related to the material in this book—to go beyond the text.