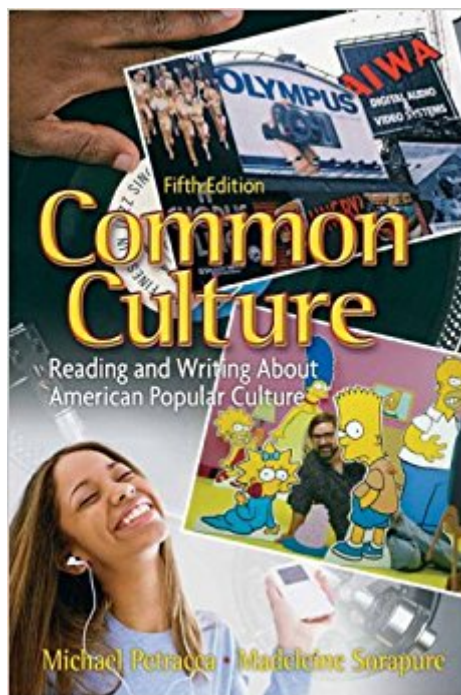




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# Common Culture: Reading And Writing About American Popular Culture (5th Edition)



## Synopsis

From Barbie to the Internet, the Simpsons to the malls, this engaging book on pop culture can help readers develop writing skills while reading and thinking about subjects they find inherently interesting. It contains essays addressing pop culture topics along with suggestions for further reading. Topics covered in the essays include advertising, television, popular music, cyberculture, sports, and movies. Because of its several comprehensive indexes, this book is an excellent reference work for writers and analysts of popular culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

POP GOES THE READER! This composition reader calls on our daily experiences with popular culture to help you understand culture in general and to promote critical thinking, reading, and writing. Offering thought-provoking essays for the classroom, the authors of Common Culture explore our world of iPods and hip-hop, of reality TV, and blockbuster movies to help create a course that is meaningful and challenging. . .and fun. This outstanding learning tool is key to your success in class and will help you think, read, and write clearly both in college and beyond.

When we started teaching composition courses that examined television, pop music, movies, and other media-generated artifacts, we looked for a text that would cover a full range of topics in the field of popular culture from a variety of theoretical perspectives. We discovered that no satisfactory text existed, and therefore we began putting together assignments and reading materials to meet

our needs. From this compilation Common Culture emerged. The more we've taught writing courses based on popular culture, the more convinced we've become that such courses are especially appealing for students and effective in improving their critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Students come into the writing classroom already immersed in the culture of Britney, Benetton, Beastie Boys, and Barry Bonds. The advantage, then, is that we don't have to "sell" the subject matter of the course and can concentrate on the task at hand—namely, teaching students to think critically and to write clear and effective prose. Obviously, a course that panders to the lowest common denominator of students' taste would be a mindless, unproductive enterprise for all concerned. However, the underlying philosophy of a pop culture-based writing course is this: By reading, thinking, and writing about material they find inherently interesting, students develop their critical and analytical skills—skills which are, of course, crucial to their success in college. Although students are already familiar with the many aspects of popular culture, few have directed sustained, critical thought to its influence or implications—that is, to what shopping malls might tell them about contemporary culture or to what they've actually learned from watching "The Jerry Springer Show." "Survivor." Because television shows, advertisements, and music videos, for example, are highly crafted artifacts, they are particularly susceptible to analysis; and because so much in contemporary culture is open to interpretation and controversy, students enjoy the opportunity to articulate and argue for their own interpretations of objects and institutions in the world around them. Although popular culture is undeniably a sexy (or, at least, lively) subject, it has also, in the past decade, become accepted as a legitimate object of academic discourse. While some may contend that it's frivolous to write a dissertation on "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," most scholars recognize the importance of studying the artifacts and institutions of contemporary life. Popular culture is a rich field of study, drawing in researchers from a variety of disciplines. Because it is also a very inviting field of study for students, a textbook that addresses this subject in a comprehensive and challenging way will be especially appealing both to them and to their writing teachers. Common Culture, fourth edition, contains an introductory chapter that walks students through one assignment—in this case, focusing on the Barbie doll—with step-by-step instruction in reading carefully and writing effectively. The chapters that follow open with a relevant and catchy cultural artifact (for example, a cartoon, an ad, an album cover) that leads into a reader-friendly, informative introduction; a selection of engaging essays on an issue of current interest in the field of pop culture; carefully constructed reading and discussion questions; and writing assignments after each reading and at the end of the chapter. This fourth edition also contains new sections on visual literacy and conducting research on popular culture, along with a selection of color and black & white images

that students can analyze and enjoy. Common Culture approaches the field of popular culture by dividing it into its constituent parts. The book contains chapters on advertising, television, music, cyberculture technology, sports, and movies. Most of the chapters are divided into two parts: the first presents essays that address the topic generally, while the second offers essays that explore a specific aspect of the topic in depth. For example, in the chapter on advertising, the essays in the first group discuss theories and strategies of advertising, while later essays explore images of women in advertising. We've purposely chosen readings that are accessible and thought-provoking, while avoiding those that are excessively theoretical or jargon-ridden. The readings in this book have the added advantage of serving as good models for students' own writing; they demonstrate a range of rhetorical approaches, such as exposition, analysis, and argumentation, and they offer varying levels of sophistication and difficulty in terms of content and style. Similarly, the suggested discussion and writing topics move from relatively basic concerns to tasks that require a greater degree of critical skill. Because of this range, instructors using Common Culture can easily adapt the book to meet the specific needs of their students.

**Acknowledgments** As California instructors and therefore participants in the growth-and-awareness movement, we'd like first to thank each other for never straying from the path of psychic goodwill and harmony, and then to thank the universe for raining beneficence and light upon this project. And while on the subject of beneficence and light, we'd like to thank our original editor, Nancy Perry, as well as Harriett Prentiss, who helped us with the second edition, Vivian Garcia, who patiently shepherded us through the third, and Karen Schultz, our present editor and Karen Schultz, who worked with us on the fourth edition. We thank our current editorial team—Brad Pothoff, Jennifer Conklin and Tara Culliney—for their expert assistance with this edition. We also want to thank Muriel Zimmerman and Judith Kirscht, former Directors of the Writing Program at UCSB, for lending moral and intellectual support to the original project, and Susan McLeod, our current Director. Thanks also to Larry Behrens and Sheridan Blau for lending their expertise in the area of textbook publishing. Madeleine would like to thank Bob Samuels for his many delightful contributions to the cause of Common Culture. Michael would like to shower Jan Ingram with bonus mega dollars for her unflagging support of this project and her inspiring devotion to reality television, but he will exercise his usual restraint and merely thank her.

Common Culture was received on time and was in excellent condition. The book was valuable to my course that I was enrolled in. Thank you

Book delivered quickly and in time for school. Not 5 stars because I was not aware they were

sending the instructors version of the book.

I'm using it with my students this semester and it appears to be a hit. Of course, some students who are loathe to engage in critical thinking will find this book useless, but for those who enjoy thinking, analyzing, and questioning, this book serves as a good segueway into deeper critical analyses. This book features readings on pop culture ranging from relatively easy-to-read articles to selections from academic articles from scholarly journals. As a result, many students are faced with difficult and complex readings, often for the first time. By focusing on critical analysis, with this text in the guise of questioning the function of pop culture, students develop their analytical skills and refrain from being passive. Thus, they're encouraged to be active and engaged with their environment. I much prefer a reader in the composition classroom instead of the boring, "how-to" compositions. For the actual writing, I make my own handouts and assignments (individual, small group, and large group), and conduct in-class writing conferences. If a professor isn't willing to do the extra work needed in order to show and model solid collegiate writing, then this book, perhaps, isn't for him or her. But if a professor likes depth to the composition classroom and likes to encourage critical thinking in the students, then this book may be for him or her.

Very informative and interesting. I even read the stories that weren't assigned in my class.

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