

The Rhetoricity of *Cultural Literacy*

Paul G. Cook

Since its publication more than twenty years ago, E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* (1987) has become something of an academic urban legend, which is to say that it has begun to take on a life of its own in the way that all enduring urban legends eventually do. As everybody knows, what matters most to the staying power of any good story is not so much its finer details but its sheer audacity, its power to resonate shock and provocation. No one cares, in other words, whether the hook on the car window was left by an escaped mental patient or a pirate, as long as it's hanging there by the end of the tale.

In his contribution to this issue's symposium, "Bloom and His Detractors," Adam Ellwanger remarks that Hirsch's book — like Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) — has been "accorded one of academia's most dubious honors — the right *not* to be read" (this issue; p. 475). When it *is* read and discussed, my informal experience with *Cultural Literacy*, at least in more colloquial discussions, has been that good-faith attempts to take the text on its own terms quickly devolve into reactions that oscillate between a nervous "should-I-be-taking-this-seriously?" and a humorous "can-you-believe-someone-actually-argued-this?" exercise in the suspension of disbelief. As often happens with books like *Cultural Literacy* and *The Closing of the American Mind*, potentially productive encounters are sometimes thwarted by our general inability to get around the brazenness in which the proposals are packaged. Although they are not always taken seriously, they do make for a good story.

Inconspicuously nestled in the second chapter of *Cultural Literacy* is a brief passage that would prove to be a rather odd premonition of the kind of reception Hirsch's manifesto would receive from academics and educators. In describing the logic of cultural literacy and how reading is dependent on the smooth operation of both long- and short-term memory, Hirsch (1987: 36) claims that "our memories for the literal words of sentences [are] poor, whereas our long-term memories for their gist [are] quite reliable." Although the passing of twenty years has shown our long-term memories quite capable of recalling the gist of the book (with its notorious five-thousand-item list of figures, ideas, concepts, and scattered bits of cultural lore¹ that "every American needs to know"), I suspect that for many of us our memories have

failed in remembering its subtleties, particularly the more complex, nuanced elements of its central thesis.

Time and history do strange things to texts, especially to a text whose rhetorical force has resounded along such disparate institutional and disciplinary lines. Like other reviewers of Hirsch's work, I too sense that there are aspects of the book's argument with which we can take exception, elements that fall flat or that do not quite do exactly what they set out to accomplish. Yet my hunch is that when people today talk about *Cultural Literacy*, the ensuing conversation is a lot like hearing the retelling of a well-known urban legend: the narrative hook sounds immanently familiar, but the precise details tend to get lost in the rhetorical haze.

This essay makes two related claims. First, I suggest that the *rhetoricity* of *Cultural Literacy* had a major effect on the book's reception in that it tended to obscure the more engaging elements of Hirsch's project. By *rhetoricity*, I mean simply those markers (both implicit and explicit, subtle and obvious) that prefigured how the book would be received, including the quality of its scholarship and the presentation of its conclusions. Second, I argue that cultural literacy *as concept* hinges on a more sophisticated rhetorical-pedagogical mechanism than most reviewers of the book were willing to concede. Here I use the term *rhetorical* to indicate how Hirsch's proposals tend to conflate both the static (e.g., common knowledge, the content of learning) and the flexible (e.g., rhetorical ability, familiarity with shifting discursive milieus), resulting in a relatively coherent pedagogical program.

However, these rhetorical underpinnings did not complement each other in the way one might have expected. The rhetoric of Hirsch's text tends to obfuscate precisely what I find most interesting and significant about the text—the pedagogical and rhetorical utility of the mechanism on which cultural literacy is predicated. Given the inconstancy inherent to memory, I very briefly recount the main components of Hirsch's argument in *Cultural Literacy* as well as comment on some of the more prevalent themes among the academic responses to the book's initial publication.

The book identifies what Hirsch saw as a major problem with both primary and secondary education in the United States, namely, that students' abilities to read and write effectively were in sharp decline, hampered by their lack of general cultural knowledge. For Hirsch, this lack was due in large part to what he calls "cafeteria-style education" and the pedagogical dominance of Deweyan educational formalism, though he also mentions cultural pluralism and various multiculturalist educational agendas.² Although Hirsch

(1987: 18) lauds these latter educational programs on the grounds that they are intrinsically valuable, supportive of tolerance, and “provide a perspective on our own traditions and values,” he also stresses that they “should not be allowed to supplant or interfere with our schools’ responsibility to ensure our children’s mastery of American literate culture.”

According to Hirsch, what students need is a firm foothold in the shared background knowledge of literate culture, which he terms “cultural literacy.” Through early exposure to — and inhabitation of — the traditional, shared cultural knowledge of literate Americans, students would not only become better readers, writers, and learners but also would be in a better position to engage productively in political discourse and to join in the ongoing democratic conversation of the United States. To this end, Hirsch (146), along with colleagues from the University of Virginia and with feedback from more than a hundred outside consultants, came up with a “provisional [list] intended to illustrate the character and range of the knowledge literate Americans tend to share” that could be supported, augmented, and put into place by various agencies and organizations. Whether because of its ambitious attempt to give shape to a “suitable” body of knowledge or simply because of its rhetorical chutzpah, this list was to become the stuff of legend.³

Many commentators on Hirsch’s work, among them quite a few compositionists, focused on what I single out as the *content* of Hirsch’s argument: that is, on the provocative list of historical figures, places, ideas, and concepts from some idealized, textbook version of American culture. Susan H. McLeod (1990: 272) presciently noted in an early review that “most critics of Hirsch’s work have centered their objections around his list of facts and phrases,” and I am convinced that on a gut level the polemics of Hirsch’s project engendered this kind of engagement. It is hard not to take umbrage with a list that, as we are told on the cover in true bestseller reprint format, “every American needs to know.” (Incidentally, this is but one example of the sorts of publishing mechanisms that made *Cultural Literacy* look “like just one more sensationalist educational jeremiad,” as Patrick Scott [1988: 333] ruefully noted.)⁴ All this is to say nothing of the book’s provocations concerning the failures of public schooling and various multicultural educational agendas. However, these critiques indicate a recurring critical emphasis on the latter part of Hirsch’s project, what I call the *what* of cultural literacy as opposed to the *how*.⁵

Other critics, such as Robert Scholes (1988: 331) in his early review of the book for *College English*, commented on *Cultural Literacy*’s mass rhetori-

cal appeal among educators and laypersons alike and seemed impressed that such “pseudo-scientism” (what he also called “voodoo education”) wielded the kind of explanatory force that it did. As he explains, “*Cultural Literacy*, upon a first reading, is a book of extraordinary plausibility. Its tremendous appeal stems from the way it describes a large and serious problem, to which it offers a simple, easy, and inexpensive solution” (328).

Also commenting on Hirsch’s rhetorical footwork was Bennett Lovett-Graff’s (1995: 101) review of the culture wars, in which he asserted that

what riled so many (despite the nagging sense that Hirsch was onto something) was the implied whiteness of [*Cultural Literacy*’s] white-collar heritage. Hirsch himself had deftly tried to get around this difficulty by pointing out the dependence of something as radical as the Black Panther newspaper and party platform on a reader’s knowledge of the “Declaration of Independence, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the Gettysburg Address, and the Bible.”

I am tempted to refer to such force, in an admittedly rather broad sense, as one aspect of the “rhetoricity” of Hirsch’s text, which — with its alarmist identification of the dire situation in American schools, its “extraordinary plausibility” (Scholes 1988: 328), and the way it tended to draw readers’ attention to the infamous list — is certainly not one element among others when it comes to surveying the book’s reception. To my mind, the rhetoricity of *Cultural Literacy* not only tells us a great deal about the general attitude with which the book was received on the academic front but also provides a useful perspective from which to engage Hirsch’s project today.

Perhaps more than a little ironically, then, it seems that both *Cultural Literacy* and “cultural literacy” were too rhetorical for their own good, albeit in two distinct ways. In the first sense, some reviewers found it difficult to get past certain elements of the text itself. As a consequence, scholarly responses failed to take note of the budding rhetorical sensibility operating at the center of cultural literacy *as concept*: the pedagogical emphasis on cultivating in students a rhetorical familiarity with a general body of knowledge, an attunement to the vitality of rhetorical fitness within the shifting constraints of various discursive and communicative milieus. In other words, the ideological baggage that inhered in the content of the infamous list eclipsed what was a burgeoning rhetorical sensibility, one that still holds a high degree of pedagogical utility.

However, even among those reviewers who did not focus primarily on the list’s content, the general consensus held that the rhetorical mechanism

of cultural literacy — the *how* of Hirsch’s proposal — was nothing more than a reinstatement of the much-maligned “banking model” of education, perhaps most notably contested by Paolo Freire.

Examples are not difficult to find. In a six-item list of things wrong with the “cultural literacy movement,” Leila Christenbury (1989: 14) placed “cultural literacy encourages superficial notions of knowledge” at the top. Contrasting Hirsch’s project against Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, Scholes claimed that “for Hirsch, just knowing the names of the great books and authors will suffice” (1988: 324) and went on to say that the mechanism of cultural literacy “trivializes the concepts of culture and of literacy by suggesting that culture can be reduced to just 5,000 bits of information and literacy to the *passive possession* of those bits” (1988: 327; emphasis added).

Lovett-Graff (1995: 101) referred to the proposal as a “sausage grinder model of education, out of which American children filled with the same facts and figures might be ground.” The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1988: 106) also voiced its opinion on the matter, passing a resolution on 22 November 1987 that held that the “reduction of literature ‘to an accumulation of particular facts such as titles, names, phrases, and dates’ negates its very integrity.” Eugene F. Provenzo Jr. (2005: 30), in his recent book on *Cultural Literacy*, devotes a section to “What Hirsch’s Curriculum Is Mainly About: The Transmission or Banking Model of Education and Culture.” Finally, in a statement most reminiscent of the dreaded banking model, McLeod (1990: 272) argued that Hirsch’s book defines education as “the transfer of knowledge from books and teachers into students’ heads.”

However, some scholars did nod toward the rhetorical deployment of cultural literacy. Among them was Patrick Scott’s rather generous review (1988: 337), in which he notes how the “most widely circulated criticisms of Hirsch — against the Appendix as over-demanding, culturally selective, and pedagogically regressive — ha[ve] little impact on Hirsch’s main thesis”: that a rhetorical attunement to the storehouse of cultural literacy is, as Hirsch (1987: 128) writes, as “equally essential” as intensive study suited to a specific task. In other words, a deep and wide knowledge of content is a programmatic prerequisite for cultivating rhetorical capacities for response in specific situations.

Scott’s review (1988: 333) also bemoans how the book’s “summary style, and occasional use of anecdotal material” tends to mask what is an otherwise “serious, documented study by a serious, experienced scholar, propounding a thesis that is theoretically independent of its traditionalist wrappings.” What is significant about Scott’s remarks is that they indicate an early

recognition that the book's rhetorical packaging tended to push the more productive, engaging elements of *Cultural Literacy* into a background that was widely perceived as either theoretically blurry or just plain irresponsible.⁶

For the most part, however, the secondary literature of the time seemed to suggest that the most glaring theoretical problem with the text was its privileging of certain knowledges over others, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1999) makes clear in her very important and persuasive essay "Cult-Lit: Hirsch, Literacy, and the 'National Culture.'" Beyond even the theoretical concerns, this stance is understandable in many respects, particularly because it is obvious to anyone who glances even cursorily at the front or back cover that the content of cultural literacy — and the ideological and rhetorical baggage it carries with it — is prominently featured throughout the text.⁷

Still, I believe Hirsch's project hinges less on the content of learning, the list or the *what* of cultural literacy, than it does on the deployment of cultural knowledge in given situations, which I have been referring to as the *how* of the project. That is, what we should now pay renewed attention to is how Hirsch advocates a deployment of shared knowledge that is rhetorically sophisticated in its privileging of contingency and its emphasis on cultivating a sensitivity to particulars.

From the outset, Hirsch frames his views on the nature and function of cultural literacy in rather broad rhetorical terminology. First, Hirsch (1987: 11) foregrounds how "general literate information is the basis for many changing tasks," which, contrary to Yinger (1988: 20), does not lead to rote "memorization and other receptive learning processes"; nor, as Warnock (1987: 489) suggests, does it make the claim that "once the contents of a subject are known the means of conveying them are of little significance." On the contrary, what it does point up is that cultural literacy — as an important implement in what Hirsch (1987: 30) calls the "intellectual equipment" of all people — presupposes an epistemology that views knowledge as operationally contingent but shared within the bounds of a given culture's historically constituted "conscious construct" (82).

Second, the claim that cultural literacy is "part of [a literate individual's] intellectual equipment" suggests that it is not necessarily an epistemological be-all end-all, despite what the text's obfuscatory language at times seems to imply. It indicates that cultural literacy can be one skill among others and that it need not be an either/or proposition. There is simply no need to jettison flexibility, contingency, or an attunement to particularity when it comes to educational praxis or theory, and cultural literacy can play a valuable role in the overall process of rhetorical pedagogy (30).

Hirsch makes this explicit when he points out that “we need both commonality and flexibility in American education and that there is no reason we cannot have both at once” (127). Extensive cultural literacy—that is, the “traditional literate knowledge . . . information, attitudes, and assumptions that literate Americans share”—is important but is not the only game in town. Having both the common or static and the flexible is a notion that pervades Hirsch’s concept of cultural literacy and is crucial to understanding the rhetorical sensibility at its core. It is also a position that underscores the rhetorical nature of teaching, pedagogy, and effective communication in general (127).

Thus, on what we might call the macrolevel, the implementation of cultural literacy into preexisting educational systems contains both a static, extensive component as well as an intensive flexibility that allows for local deployment either in a “highly formal traditional school or in a more informal progressive school” (128). As Hirsch goes on to say, “Any sort of school can find ways of incorporating these minimal contents in its courses, given a determination to do so and coordination among grade levels in deciding on the appropriate times for introducing particular aspects of particular subjects” (128).

However, what interests me more is the microlevel implementation of cultural literacy, or the way in which the concept of cultural literacy functions rhetorically for the individual student, which is central to being culturally literate. Hirsch notes that the *extensive* (i.e., cultural literacy, shared background knowledge, or *doxa*) and the *intensive* (i.e., the Deweyan insistence that students be “deeply engaged with a small number of typical concrete instances”) should be viewed as complementary, as two sides of the same pedagogical coin. It is not at all a matter of getting rid of the intensive side of pedagogy; in fact, commenting on the necessity of flexibility in education, Hirsch (1985: 49) writes that “intensive teaching is where real learning occurs.”

What Hirsch advocates as cultural literacy is not docile enculturation in some monolithic, stable knowledge-entity but is something like a heuristic for rhetorical invention that stresses the relevance of being merely familiar with certain cultural *doxai*, opinions, attitudes, or values. Instilling in students enough cultural familiarity to rhetorically operate comfortably and nimbly within the bounds of particular bodies of knowledge—whatever they might be—is an intriguing pedagogical concept and one to which I think we should be more open.

Indeed, one need not look far in rhetorical studies to find similar

refrains. Josiah Ober's (1989: 315) *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, a landmark study of classical oratory and its relation to the popular attitudes and beliefs of Athenian democracy, points out that "Athenian politicians were well aware of the climate of opinion [*doxa*] in which they operated, and no public speaker could afford to contradict the central principles of the Athenian belief structure very often." This "climate of opinion," belief structure, or what we might call—following Ekaterina V. Haskins (2005: 111)—the "culturally embedded attitudes of the demos," can be compared to *doxa*, the body of public opinion on which classical orators depended. As Haskins suggests, although *doxa* was "a continually reinforced ideology of the Athenian imperial democracy [that] constituted a *conservative cultural force* that a rhetorician could *exploit but not easily challenge*" (112; emphasis added), *how* one deployed or voiced these "culturally embedded attitudes" was not carved in stone—a fact of which the sophists (and others) were certainly well aware (111).

Some scholars have recognized the compatibility between Hirsch's concept of cultural literacy and cultural *doxa* or rhetorical pedagogy. In *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, Power, Pedagogy*, Yun Lee Too draws some notable comparisons between the two, though she is quick to rescind any implication that Hirsch's "blueprint for the transformation of the academy"—with its emphasis on an "ideal of culture" and education's "role in the formation of the citizen"—is comparable to Isocratean rhetorical pedagogy, claiming that Hirsch's notion of cultural literacy disallows for flexibility and instead "insist[s] upon the need for conformity" (1995: 222). However, before ultimately refusing the possibility of such a comparison, she writes,

Since Hirsch's "cultural literacy" locates its language and terms so explicitly within a social context, it might be described as an epistemology of a new rhetoric, a return to the classical orator's *doxa* and *eikos*. This is an epistemology based on what the general public knows and thinks and, as the author himself observes, anyone who addresses the general public . . . will be obliged to use its terms. Hirsch makes the rhetorical basis of his ideal of literacy explicit. He suggests that this basis of public language in what he terms the "modern republic" has an analogy in Ciceronian literacy. (223)

In his review of *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates* (1995), Ober (1998: 85) remarks that Too's "appropriation of Isocrates against the sort of education reform advocated by Hirsch will not really hold up." He goes on to say that "it seems hard to imagine that Isocrates—who cites, and thus

assumes a prior knowledge of, many historical and literary ‘facts’ (as T’s book richly documents) — would have disagreed with Hirsch on this score” (85–86).⁸

Whether they would have agreed is perhaps an interesting question but even more compelling is Too’s acknowledgment of the similarities between cultural literacy and classical oratorical pedagogy. Aside from the implicit rhetorical mechanism at play in Hirsch’s concept of cultural literacy, we can also detect in Hirsch’s overall project a concern with the construction and circulation of political discourses.

Take, for example, what used to be called “computer literacy.” Simply knowing what RAM means or what TCP/IP stands for will not help you feel your way around Windows Vista or the latest Mac operating system. One must also be comfortable with the software’s interface, know which icons to double-click and which ones get a single click, be aware of how to access the Internet, and so forth. (Incidentally, this may explain why inveterate Mac users — who are usually quite computer-savvy — are often lost when they find themselves in the increasingly common circumstance of having to operate a PC machine.)

This is how most people begin learning their way around computers, and as starting points go, it is as good a place as any. But if you want to go a little deeper — say, if you want to start messing around with your system’s registry — you need to know what you are doing. These are sensitive operations that can have disastrous results. Just knowing your way around the Windows interface won’t cut it anymore; you also have to know the terms, the conventions, and the ins and outs of how power functions within your particular system or which registry modification will yield the desired end result. In short, you have got to know what *really* computer literate people know about computers and how they work, which often includes heuristically deploying your knowledge of the system to *invent* methods of intervention — whether your objective is to fix the system or dismantle it from the inside, like a computer virus or a dangerous biological mutagen.

My intent is not to trivialize the vitality and importance of contemporary political discourse with this analogy to computers, but I do think this technological idiom can shed some light on Hirsch’s claims regarding the importance of cultural literacy for pragmatic rhetorical intervention in the political sphere. As Jeff Smith (1994: 705) notes, for Hirsch “neither the work nor even the knowledge he wants taught is intrinsically important; rather he argues for its *instrumental* value, its ability to help us achieve something else: access to our shared public discourse.”

In an oft-cited example from the first chapter of the book, Hirsch (1987: 22) spends several pages discussing *The Black Panther*, the official news organ of the Black Panther Party, a publication he deems “a radical and revolutionary newspaper if this country ever had one.” He indicates how *The Black Panther* was “highly conservative in its language and cultural assumptions, as it had to be in order to communicate effectively.” Some reviewers scorned Hirsch’s mention of *The Black Panther* on the grounds that he was merely throwing a rhetorical bone or flashing his counterhegemonic credentials to his academic audience (22). However, this is a crucial moment in the argument, primarily because it underscores Hirsch’s attempt to draw parallels between cultural literacy and the construction and circulation of counterhegemonic political discourse, one’s intervention in the system. It also indicates something fundamental about the rhetorical mechanism of cultural literacy, namely, that a rather high degree of literacy in the dominant culture — whether we call it *doxa*, shared knowledge, cultural tradition, system, or something else entirely — is a precondition for any politically engaged, transformative, or transgressive discourse.

Indeed, the conclusion Hirsch draws from this is quite similar to that which we have come to recognize as central to rhetorical interactions between mass and elite in the Athenian demos, or, to play with the terminology a bit, between competing hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses. If we think of Hirsch’s list as a kind of primer or handbook on rhetorically significant *doxa*, it becomes clear that a crucial element of Hirsch’s project is the cultivation of a kind of rhetorically sophisticated mastery of mainstream, traditional cultural knowledge. Just *knowing* it is not enough (i.e., the failure of the banking model); it has to be invented and deployed in strategic ways.

Is there anything in Hirsch’s argument that demands that the all-important content of cultural literacy be limited to *only* traditional cultural knowledge? The aforementioned computer idiom indicates that what is really at stake in the concept of cultural literacy, particularly when it comes to meaningful rhetorical intervention in political, social, or cultural discourse, is simply this: rhetorical awareness, a mastery of the knowledge so familiar that rhetorical flexibility cannot be far behind — a supple mastery of relevant concepts and ideas. Smith (1988: 26) remarks that

in sum, we are all training students in dominant cultural ideologies every day that we continue to work in the present system — ideologies that the students instantly (if subconsciously) take to as such. Hirsch simply proposes making this training

systematic and rational in ways that might ultimately create space for resistance to those ideologies.

If, as I have attempted to suggest, there is the kernel of a rhetorical epistemology operating at the center of Hirsch's concept of cultural literacy, then is it necessary or desirable to throw out the baby of rhetorical pedagogy with the bathwater of ideological content?

Cultural Literacy is a text of tremendous potentials. Obviously, it has the power to polarize public and academic scrutiny, but it can be made to do many other things as well. The academic responses to Hirsch's text overwhelmingly indicated that content, broadly construed, somehow "is what it is" and simply *cannot* be made to do something different than that which has previously been supposed.

In contemporary composition studies, as well as in education as a whole, the concern with content is very much with us, and rightly so, in my opinion. The point here is that content is not everything. The reception of Hirsch's book underscores the extent to which our disciplinary self-image is linked to curricular, content-based issues and the extent to which we tend to assume that *some* curricula — some texts, some concepts, some ideas — are invested with an intrinsic pedagogical value (or lack thereof) based simply on what they *are* or what they *represent*.

I am uncomfortable with the assumption that *Cultural Literacy*, or any text for that matter, simply "is what it is," especially when these judgments are predicated largely if not solely on issues of content. Rather than rushing to judge a text like *Cultural Literacy* based on its apparently politically regressive content or its supposedly untenable pedagogical policies, as many did, we should suspend judgment long enough to discover what such a text can *do*, how it might resonate, and what potentials it may have for pedagogical or rhetorical interaction.

Notes

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1. I use the term *lore* here because I suggest that Hirsch's project—particularly the encyclopedic list—has something in common with Stephen M. North's (1987: 22) notion of composition studies' "house of lore," which is described as a rambling, rather unwieldy body of "traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners [composition teachers] understand how writing is done, learned, and taught." Like *lore*, Hirsch's list seems to function in a similar fashion, though it concerns primary and secondary school students rather than composition instructors. Perhaps the most significant similarity between the two terms—and a point that was apparently lost on many reviewers—is that the corpus of cultural literacy is not a closed system: it continues to accumulate new facts, ideas, practices, figures, and concepts. As Hirsch (1987: 90) remarks, "the vocabulary of a culture, like that of a language, is open to change." Hirsch also addresses this issue in "'Cultural Literacy' Doesn't Mean 'Core Curriculum'" (1985).
2. Eugene F. Provenzo Jr. (2005: 20) argues in his recent book that Hirsch makes Dewey into something of a straw man and—citing some of Hirsch's specific references to Dewey in *Cultural Literacy*—claims that "either Hirsch has not read Dewey or has done so very superficially so that he misses much of his essential meaning."
3. Since the initial publication of *Cultural Literacy* in 1987, there have been several permutations of the list, including a series of books specifically aimed at primary-school grade levels, and some more recent books, such as *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (2002) and *The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* (2006). Hirsch's work has also led to the establishment of the Core Knowledge Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Charlottesville, Virginia. Although this essay focuses primarily on the initial list included in the appendix of the book's first edition, it is important to note that this list has undergone many revisions since that time—a practical and conceptual necessity Hirsch makes clear in the original publication of *Cultural Literacy*.
4. For another example of how the book's subtitle may have played a role in the intellectual armament that followed its publication, see Johnson 1988.
5. See Warnock 1987 for a lengthy discussion of the definitional problems that inhere in Hirsch's attempt to draw contours around a body of cultural literacy.
6. One of the more vitriolic responses to the quality of Hirsch's scholarship was Andrew Sledd and James Sledd's 1988 essay. Here, the authors document what they perceive as Hirsch's irredeemably poor scholarship, claiming that "Hirsch misrepresents his sources [and] his reasoning suffers from obvious contradictions and non sequiturs, that he constantly makes rash claims, unsupported assertions, and false promises, and that he conceals his failures in logic by bullyboy rhetoric and genteel sneers" (Sledd and Sledd 1988: 38).
7. Patrick Scott remarks in his review that the "list was a risky undertaking, and tactically, within the profession, it has obviously been a mistake" (1988: 337). Hirsch also mentions that his casual reference in *Cultural Literacy* to his father's use of Shakespeare in business memos was a "tactical mistake" (1989: 453).
8. T. L. Papillon, in his review of *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates*, also underscores Too's claim that Hirsch shares "with Isocrates an interest in training the citizenry

through an educational program [that differs] from Isocrates in the rigidity of their programs, since Isocrates allows flexibility” (1998: 342).

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