E. D. Hirsch, Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know. 1987.

CHAPTER I

Literacy and Cultural Literacy

THE DECLINE OF LITERATE KNOWLEDGE

This book explains why we need to make some very specific educational changes in order to achieve a higher level of national literacy. It does not anatomize the literacy crisis or devote many pages to Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. It does not document at length what has already been established, that Americans do not read as well as they should. It takes no position about methods of initial reading instruction beyond insisting that content must receive as much emphasis as "skill." It does not discuss teacher training or educational funding or school governance. In fact, one of its major purposes is to break away entirely from what Jeanne S. Chall has called "the great debate" about methods of reading instruction. It focuses on what I conceive to be the great hidden problem in American education, and I hope that it reveals this problem so compellingly that anyone who is concerned about American education will be persuaded by the book's argument and act upon it.

The standard of literacy required by modern society has been rising throughout the developed world, but American literacy rates have not risen to meet this standard. What seemed an acceptable level in the 1950s is no longer acceptable in the late 1980s, when only highly literate societies can prosper economically. Much of Japan's industrial efficiency has been credited to its almost univer-

sally high level of literacy. But in the United States, only two thirds of our citizens are literate, and even among those the average level is too low and should be raised. The remaining third of our citizens need to be brought as close to true literacy as possible. Ultimately our aim should be to attain universal literacy at a very high level, to achieve not only greater economic prosperity but also greater social justice and more effective democracy. We Americans have long accepted literacy as a paramount aim of schooling, but only recently have some of us who have done research in the field begun to realize that literacy is far more than a skill and that it requires large amounts of specific information. That new insight is central to this book.

Professor Chall is one of several reading specialists who have observed that "world knowledge" is essential to the development of reading and writing skills.[1] What she calls world knowledge I call cultural literacy, namely, the network of information that all competent readers possess. It is the background information, stored in their minds, that enables them to take up a newspaper and read it with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implications, relating what they read to the unstated context which alone gives meaning to what they read. In describing the contents of this neglected domain of background information, I try to direct attention to a new opening that can help our schools make the significant improvement in education that has so far eluded us. The achievement of high universal literacy is the key to all other fundamental improvements in American education.

Why is literacy so important in the modern world? Some of the reasons, like the need to fill out forms or get a good job, are so obvious that they needn't be discussed. But the chief reason is broader. The complex undertakings of modern life depend on the cooperation of many people with different specialties in different places. Where communications fail, so do the undertakings. (That is the moral of the story of the Tower of Babel.) The function of national literacy is to foster effective nationwide communications. Our chief instrument of communication over time and space is the standard national language, which is sustained by national literacy. Mature literacy alone enables the tower to be built, the business to be well managed, and the airplane to fly without crashing. All nationwide communications, whether by telephone, radio, TV, or writing are

fundamentally dependent upon literacy, for the essence of literacy is not simply reading and writing but also the effective use of the standard literate language. In Spain and most of Latin America the literate language is standard written Spanish. In Japan it is standard written Japanese. In our country it is standard written English.

Linguists have used the term "standard written English" to describe both our written and spoken language, because they want to remind us that standard spoken English is based upon forms that have been fixed in dictionaries and grammars and are adhered to in books, magazines, and newspapers. Although standard written English has no intrinsic superiority to other languages and dialects, its stable written forms have now standardized the oral forms of the language spoken by educated Americans.[2] The chief function of literacy is to make us masters of this standard instrument of knowledge and communication, thereby enabling us to give and receive complex information orally and in writing over time and space. Advancing technology, with its constant need for fast and complex communications, has made literacy ever more essential to commerce and domestic life. The literate language is more, not less, central in our society now than it was in the days before television and the silicon chip.

The recently rediscovered insight that literacy is more than a skill is based upon knowledge that all of us unconsciously have about language. We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than the surface meanings of words; we have to understand the context as well. The need for background information applies all the more to reading and writing. To grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page.

Consider the implications of the following experiment described in an article in *Scientific American*.[3] A researcher goes to Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with a tape recorder hidden in his coat pocket. Putting a copy of the *Boston Globe* under his arm, he pretends to be a native. He says to passers-by, "How do you get to Central Square?" The passers-by, thinking they are addressing a fellow Bostonian, don't even break their stride when they give their replies, which consist of a few words like "First stop on the subway."

The next day the researcher goes to the same spot, but this time

he presents himself as a tourist, obviously unfamiliar with the city. "I'm from out of town," he says. "Can you tell me how to get to Central Square?" This time the tapes show that people's answers are much longer and more rudimentary. A typical one goes, "Yes, well you go down on the subway. You can see the entrance over there, and when you get downstairs you buy a token, put it in the slot, and you go over to the side that says Quincy. You take the train headed for Quincy, but you get off very soon, just the first stop is Central Square, and be sure you get off there. You'll know it because there's a big sign on the wall. It says Central Square." And so on.

Passers-by were intuitively aware that communication between strangers requires an estimate of how much relevant information can be taken for granted in the other person. If they can take a lot for granted, their communications can be short and efficient, subtle and complex. But if strangers share very little knowledge, their communications must be long and relatively rudimentary.

In order to put in perspective the importance of background knowledge in language, I want to connect the lack of it with our recent lack of success in teaching mature literacy to all students. The most broadly based evidence about our teaching of literacy comes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This nationwide measurement, mandated by Congress, shows that between 1970 and 1980 seventeen-year-olds declined in their ability to understand written materials, and the decline was especially striking in the top group, those able to read at an "advanced" level.[4] Although these scores have now begun to rise, they remain alarmingly low. Still more precise quantitative data have come from the scores of the verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). According to John B. Carroll, a distinguished psychometrician, the verbal SAT is essentially a test of "advanced vocabulary knowledge," which makes it a fairly sensitive instrument for measuring levels of literacy.[5] It is well known that verbal SAT scores have declined dramatically in the past fifteen years, and though recent reports have shown them rising again, it is from a very low base. Moreover, performance on the verbal SAT has been slipping steadily *at the top*. Ever fewer numbers of our best and brightest students are making high scores on the test.

Before the College Board disclosed the full statistics in 1984, antialarmists could argue that the fall in average verbal scores could be explained by the rise in the number of disadvantaged students taking the SATs. That argument can no longer be made. It's now clear that not only our disadvantaged but also our best educated and most talented young people are showing diminished verbal skills. To be precise, out of a constant pool of about a million test takers each year, 56 percent more students scored above 600 in 1972 than did so in 1984. More startling yet, the percentage drop was even greater for those scoring above 650 — 73 percent.[6]

In the mid 1980s American business leaders have become alarmed by the lack of communication skills in the young people they employ. Recently, top executives of some large U.S. companies, including CBS and Exxon, met to discuss the fact that their younger middle-level executives could no longer communicate their ideas effectively in speech or writing. This group of companies has made a grant to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to analyze the causes of this growing problem. They want to know why, despite breathtaking advances in the technology of communication, the effectiveness of business communication has been slipping, to the detriment of our competitiveness in the world. The figures from NAEP surveys and the scores on the verbal SAT are solid evidence that literacy has been declining in this country just when our need for effective literacy has been sharply rising.

I now want to juxtapose some evidence for another kind of educational decline, one that is related to the drop in literacy. During the period 1970–1985, the amount of shared knowledge that we have been able to take for granted in communicating with our fellow citizens has also been declining. More and more of our young people don't know things we used to assume they knew.

A side effect of the diminution in shared information has been a noticeable increase in the number of articles in such publications as *Newsweek* and the *Wall Street Journal* about the surprising ignorance of the young. My son John, who recently taught Latin in high school and eighth grade, often told me of experiences which indicate that these articles are not exaggerated. In one of his classes he mentioned to his students that Latin, the language they were

studying, is a dead language that is no longer spoken. After his pupils had struggled for several weeks with Latin grammar and vocabulary, this news was hard for some of them to accept. One girl raised her hand to challenge my son's claim. "What do they speak in Latin America?" she demanded.

At least she had heard of Latin America. Another day my son asked his Latin class if they knew the name of an epic poem by Homer. One pupil shot up his hand and eagerly said, "The Alamo!" Was it just a slip for *The Iliad*? No, he didn't know what the Alamo was, either. To judge from other stories about information gaps in the young, many American schoolchildren are less well informed than this pupil. The following, by Benjamin J. Stein, is an excerpt from one of the most evocative recent accounts of youthful ignorance.

> I spend a lot of time with teen agers. Besides employing three of them part-time, I frequently conduct focus groups at Los Angeles area high schools to learn about teen agers' attitudes towards movies or television shows or nuclear arms or politicians. . . .
>
> I have not yet found one single student in Los Angeles, in either college or high school, who could tell me the years when World War II was fought. Nor have I found one who could tell me the years when World War I was fought. Nor have I found one who knew when the American Civil War was fought. . . .
>
> A few have known how many U.S. senators California has, but none has known how many Nevada or Oregon has. ("Really? Even though they're so small?") . . . Only two could tell me where Chicago is, even in the vaguest terms. (My particular favorite geography lesson was the junior at the University of California at Los Angeles who thought that Toronto must be in Italy. My second-favorite geography lesson is the junior at USC, a pre-law student, who thought that Washington, D.C. was in Washington State.) . . .
>
> Only two could even approximately identify Thomas Jefferson. Only one could place the date of the Declaration of Independence. None could name even one of the first ten amendments to the Constitution or connect them with the Bill of Rights. . . .
>
> On and on it went. On and on it goes. I have mixed up episodes of ignorance of facts with ignorance of concepts because it seems to me that there is a connection. . . . The kids I saw (and there may be lots of others who are different) are not mentally prepared to continue the society because they basically do not understand the society well enough to value it.[7]

My son assures me that his pupils are not ignorant. They know a great deal. Like every other human group they share a tremendous amount of knowledge among themselves, much of it learned in school. The trouble is that, from the standpoint of their literacy and their ability to communicate with others in our culture, what they know is ephemeral and narrowly confined to their own generation. Many young people strikingly lack the information that writers of American books and newspapers have traditionally taken for granted among their readers from all generations. For reasons explained in this book, our children's lack of intergenerational information is a serious problem for the nation. The decline of literacy and the decline of shared knowledge are closely related, interdependent facts.

The evidence for the decline of shared knowledge is not just anecdotal. In 1978 NAEP issued a report which analyzed a large quantity of data showing that our children's knowledge of American civics had dropped significantly between 1969 and 1976.[8] The performance of thirteen-year-olds had dropped an alarming 11 percentage points. That the drop has continued since 1976 was confirmed by preliminary results from a NAEP study conducted in late 1985. It was undertaken both because of concern about declining knowledge and because of the growing evidence of a causal connection between the drop in shared information and in literacy. The Foundations of Literacy project is measuring some of the specific information about history and literature that American seventeen-year-olds possess.

Although the full report will not be published until 1987, the preliminary field tests are disturbing.[9] If these samplings hold up,

and there is no reason to think they will not, then the results we will be reading in 1987 will show that two thirds of our seventeen-year-olds do not know that the Civil War occurred between 1850 and 1900. Three quarters do not know what *reconstruction* means. Half do not know the meaning of *Brown decision* and cannot identify either Stalin or Churchill. Three quarters are unfamiliar with the names of standard American and British authors. Moreover, our seventeen-year-olds have little sense of geography or the relative chronology of major events. Reports of youthful ignorance can no longer be considered merely impressionistic.[10]

My encounter in the seventies with this widening knowledge gap first caused me to recognize the connection between specific background knowledge and mature literacy. The research I was doing on the reading and writing abilities of college students made me realize two things.[11] First, we cannot assume that young people today know things that were known in the past by almost every literate person in the culture. For instance, in one experiment conducted in Richmond, Virginia, our seventeen- and eighteen-year-old subjects did not know who Grant and Lee were. Second, our results caused me to realize that we cannot treat reading and writing as empty skills, independent of specific knowledge. The reading skill of a person may vary greatly from task to task. The level of literacy exhibited in each task depends on the relevant background information that the person possesses.

The lack of wide-ranging background information among young men and women now in their twenties and thirties is an important cause of the illiteracy that large corporations are finding in their middle-level executives. In former days, when business people wrote and spoke to one another, they could be confident that they and their colleagues had studied many similar things in school. They could talk to one another with an efficiency similar to that of native Bostonians who speak to each other in the streets of Cambridge. But today's high school graduates do not reliably share much common information, even when they graduate from the same school. If young people meet as strangers, their communications resemble

the uncertain, rudimentary explanations recorded in the second part of the Cambridge experiment.

My father used to write business letters that alluded to Shakespeare. These allusions were effective for conveying complex messages to his associates, because, in his day, business people could make such allusions with every expectation of being understood. For instance, in my father's commodity business, the timing of sales and purchases was all-important, and he would sometimes write or say to his colleagues, "There is a tide," without further elaboration. Those four words carried not only a lot of complex information, but also the persuasive force of a proverb. In addition to the basic practical meaning, "Act now!" what came across was a lot of implicit reasons why immediate action was important.

For some of my younger readers who may not recognize the allusion, the passage from *Julius Caesar* is:

> There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat,
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures.

To say "There is a tide" is better than saying "Buy (or sell) now and you'll cover expenses for the whole year, but if you fail to act right away, you may regret it the rest of your life." That would be twenty-seven words instead of four, and while the bare message of the longer statement would be conveyed, the persuasive force wouldn't. Think of the demands of such a business communication. To persuade somebody that your recommendation is wise and well-founded, you have to give lots of reasons and cite known examples and authorities. My father accomplished that and more in four words, which made quoting Shakespeare as effective as any efficiency consultant could wish. The moral of this tale is not that reading Shakespeare will help one rise in the business world. My point is a broader one. The fact that middle-level executives no

longer share literate background knowledge is a chief cause of their inability to communicate effectively.

THE LIST

1066
1492
1776
1861–1865
1914–1918
1939–1945
1984 (title)

Aaron, Hank
Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.
abbreviation
Aberdeen
abolitionism
abominable snowman
abortion
Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
absenteeism
absolute monarchy
absolute zero
abstract art
abstract expressionism
academic freedom
a capella
accelerator, particle
accounting
acculturation
AC/DC
Achilles
Achilles' heel
acid
acid rain
acquittal
acronym
acrophobia
Acropolis
Actions speak louder than words.
act of God
actuary
acupuncture
A.D.
ad absurdum
adagio
Adam and Eve
Adams, John
Adams, John Quincy
adaptation
Addams, Jane
Addis Ababa
Adeste Fideles (song)
ad hoc
ad hominem
adieu
ad infinitum
adiós
Adirondack Mountains
adjective
Adonis
adrenal gland
adrenaline (fight or flight)
adultery
adverb
AEC (Atomic Energy Commission)
Aegean, the
Aeneas
Aeneid, The (title)
aerobic
Aeschylus
Aesop's fables
aesthetics
affirmative action
affluent society
Afghanistan

aficionado
AFL-CIO
Africa
Agamemnon
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety.
aggression
agnosticism
agreement
agribusiness
Ahab, Captain
AIDS
air pollution
Air Quality Index
Akron, OH
Alabama
à la carte
Aladdin's lamp
Alamo
Alaska
Alaskan pipeline
Alas, poor Yorick . . .
Albania
Albany, NY
albatross around one's neck
Albuquerque, NM
alchemy
Alcott, Louisa May
Aleutian Islands
Alexander the Great
Alexandria, Egypt
al fresco
algae
Alger, Horatio
Algeria
Algiers
alias
Alice in Wonderland (title)
Alien and Sedition Acts
alienation
Ali, Muhammad
alkaline
Allah
All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.
Allegheny Mountains
allegory
allegro
Allen, Woody
allergy
Alliance for Progress
alliteration
alloy
All roads lead to Rome.
All's fair in love and war.
All's well that ends well.
All that glitters is not gold.
all the news that's fit to print
All the world's a stage.
all things to all men
allusion
All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.
alma mater
alpha and omega
alpha radiation
Alps, the
alter ego
alternating current (AC)
alternator
alto
altruism
Alzheimer's disease
a.m.
Amazing Grace (song)
Amazonian
Amazon (myth)
Amazon River
America
American Gothic (image)
American Legion

American Revolution
American Stock Exchange
America the Beautiful (song)
amicus curiae
amino acids
Amish
amnesia
amnesty
amniotic sac
amoeba
amok, run
amortization
amp (ampere)
ampersand (&)
amphibians
amplifier
Amsterdam
anaerobic
analogy
anal personality
An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
anarchy
An army travels on its stomach.
Anchorage, AK
ancien régime
andante
Anderson, Hans Christian
Andromeda
And thereby hangs a tale.
anecdote
anemia
Angelou, Maya
Anglican church (Church of England, Episcopal church)
Angola
angst
animal kingdom
animal/vegetable/mineral
animism
Ankara
Annapolis
Ann Arbor, MI
anno domini (A.D.)
annuity
annus mirabilis
anon.
anorexia
Antarctica
antebellum
Anthony, Susan B.
anthropology
anthropomorphism
antiballistic missile (ABM)
antibiotic
antibody
anticlericalism
antigen
Antigone (myth)
Antigone (title)
antimatter
antiparticle
antipodes
anti-Semitism
antitrust legislation
Antony and Cleopatra (title)
antonym
Antony's speech at Caesar's funeral
anxiety
any port in a storm
aorta
Apache Indians
apartheid
aphorism
aphrodisiac
Aphrodite (Venus)
apocalypse
apocryphal
Apollo
Apollo program
Apostles, the Twelve

apostrophe (')
Appalachian Mountains
appeals, court of
appeasement
appendix (anatomy)
Appleseed, Johnny
Appomattox Court House
apportionment
appraisal
appropriation
April showers bring May flowers.
apropos
Aquinas, Saint Thomas
Arabia
Arabian Nights
Arab-Israeli conflict
arbitration
arch
Archduke Francis Ferdinand
archetype
Archimedes
archipelago
Arctic, the
Arctic Circle
Arctic Ocean
Argentina
aria
aristocracy
Aristophanes
Aristotle
Arizona
Arkansas
Armageddon
Armenian massacres
armistice
Armstrong, Louis
Arnold, Benedict
arrivederci
Artemis (Diana)
arteriosclerosis
artery
art for art's sake
arthritis
article (grammar)
Articles of Confederation
artificial intelligence (AI)
Art is long, life is short.
asceticism
ascorbic acid
asexual reproduction
As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods.
Asia
Asia Minor
Ask, and it shall be given.
Ask not what your country can do for you . . .
assessment
assimilation
Astaire, Fred, and Ginger Rogers
asteroid belt
as the crow flies
astrology
asymmetry
As you make your bed so must you lie in it.
atheism
Athena (Minerva)
Athens
A thing of beauty is a joy forever.
Atlanta, GA
Atlantic Charter
Atlantic City, NJ
at large
Atlas
atlas
atmosphere
atmospheric pressure
atoll
atom
atomic bomb (A-bomb)
atomic number

atomic weight
atom smasher
atrium (of heart)
attaché
AT&T
Attila the Hun
attorney general of the United States
Auckland
audit
auditory nerve
Audubon
auf Wiedersehen
Augean stables
Augustine, Saint
Augustus Caesar
Auld Lang Syne (song)
au revoir
auricle
aurora borealis (northern lights)
Auschwitz
Austen, Jane
Austin, TX
Australia
autistic
autobiography
autocracy
automation
autonomic nervous system
auxiliary verb
A word to the wise is sufficient.
axiom
Axis powers
azimuth
Azores
Aztecs

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep (text)
Babbitt (title)
Babel, Tower of
Babylon
bacchanalian
Bacchus (Dionysus)
Bach, Johann Sebastian
bacillus
Back to the drawing board.
Baconian method
Bacon, Sir Francis
bacterium
Bad news travels fast.
bad penny always turns up., A
bad workman always blames his tools., The
Baez, Joan
Baghdad
Bahamas
baker's dozen
Bakke case
balanced diet
balance of nature
balance of payments
balance of power
balance of terror
balance sheet
Balboa
balkanization
Balkans
ballad
ballerina
ballet
ballistic missile
Baltimore, MD
Balzac, Honoré de
banana republic
Bangkok
banjo
bank run
bankruptcy
Banneker, Benjamin
baptism
Baptist
Barber of Seville, The (title)
Barcelona
Bard of Avon, the

baritone
bark is worse than his bite., His
bar mitzvah
Barnum, P. T.
barometer
baroque
barrier island
Barrymores, the
Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (title)
Barton, Clara
basal metabolism
basalt
base
basilica
Basque
bas-relief
bass
bass drum
bass fiddle
basso
bassoon
basta
Bastille, fall of the
baton
battery
Battle of Britain
Baudelaire, Charles
Bauhaus movement
Bavaria
Bay of Biscay
Bay of Pigs
bayou
Beale Street
bear market
beat around the bush
Beatitudes (text)
Beatles, the
beaucoup
Beauty and the Beast (title)
Beauty is but skin deep.
Becket, Thomas à
bed; You've made your ——, now you must lie in it.
bee in your bonnet
Beethoven, Ludwig von
Beggars can't be choosers.
beginning, In the
beg the question
behaviorism
Beijing (Peking)
Beirut
Belfast
Belgium
Belgrade
Bell, Alexander Graham
bell curve
benign
Bergen
Bering Sea
Berkeley, CA
Berkshire Hills
Berlin
Berlin, Irving
Berlin airlift
Berlin Wall
Bermuda
Bernhardt, Sarah
Bernstein, Leonard
Berry, Chuck
best-laid plans of mice and men oft' go awry., The
best of friends must part
best things in life are free., The
beta radiation
bête noire
Bethlehem
Bethune, Mary
Better late than never.
Better safe than sorry.
between a rock and a hard place
Beverly Hills, CA
Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.
Beware the Ides of March.

Bible Belt
bibliography
bicameral legislature
big bad wolf
big bang theory
Big Ben
big board
Big Brother is watching you.
big business
Big Dipper, the
bigger they come, the harder they fall., The
big-stick diplomacy
bilateralism
bile
Bill of Rights
Billy the Kid
biochemistry
biofeedback
biography
biology
biomass
biosphere
Birch Society, John
bird in the hand is worth two in the bush., A
Birds of a feather flock together.
Birmingham, AL
birth control
birthday suit
Birth of a Nation, The (title)
Birth of Venus, The (image)
bishop
Bismarck, Otto
bit between your teeth
bit (computer term)
bite the bullet
bite the dust
biting the hand that feeds you
Bizet, Georges
Black, Hugo
blackball
blackbody radiation
Black Boy (title)
black cat
Black Death
Black Hills, the
black hole
Black Hole of Calcutta
blacklist
black market
Black Muslims
black power
Black Sea
black sheep
Blake, William
blank verse
Blarney Stone
blasé
blind leading the blind
blitzkrieg
Blood is thicker than water.
blood, sweat, and tears
blood type
blow hot and cold
Blue and the Gray, the
Bluebeard
blue-chip stock
blue-collar
blue laws
Blue Ridge Mountains
Blue-tailed Fly (song)
boat people
Boers
Bogart, Humphrey
bohemian
Bohr, Niels
Bohr atom
boiling point
Boleyn, Anne
Bolivia
Bolsheviks

bolt from the blue
Bombay
bona fide
bond (business)
bond (chemical)
bone to pick
bonjour
Bonn
bonus
Book of Common Prayer
boom (business)
boom (sonic)
Boone, Daniel
Booth, John Wilkes
Bordeaux
Borgia, Cesare
Borgia, Lucretia
born-again Christian
Borneo
born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
Bosporus, the
Boston, MA
Boston Massacre
Boston Tea Party
botany
Botticelli
bottleneck
bottom line
botulism
bounty
Bourbon
bourgeois
bowdlerize
Bowery, the
boycott
Boy Scouts of America
Boys will be boys.
Boy Who Cried "Wolf," The (title)
brackets ([ ])
Bradley, Omar
Brahmin
Brahms, Johannes
Braille
brain trust
brainwashing
Brasilia
brass band
brave new world
Brazil
breach of contract
bread and circuses
break the ice
Brer Rabbit
Brevity is the soul of wit.
brinkmanship
Brisbane
Britain
Britain, Battle of
British Columbia
Broadway
broker
bronchial tubes
Brontë, Charlotte and Emily
Bronx, The
Bronze Age
Brooklyn
Brooklyn Bridge
Brooks, Gwendolyn
brother's keeper?, Am I my
Brown, John
Brownian movement
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett
Browning, Robert
Brown v. Board of Education (Brown decision)
Brueghel, Pieter (the Elder)
Brussels
Brutus
Bryan, William Jennings
bubble (business)