Open English @ SLCC

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Texts on Writing, Language, and Literacy

SLCC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

OPEN ENGLISH @ SLCC
SALT LAKE CITY

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Welcome to Open English @ SLCC

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What We Are

Open English @ SLCC is an evolving digital book created and maintained by English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies Department faculty at Salt Lake Community College. It exists to provide our faculty—over one hundred full- and part-time instructors—with robust, flexible, and locally produced open educational resources (OER) that can be used for teaching a variety of courses across our composition sequence.

This book is evolving and adaptive, offering a range of texts on rhetoric, writing, and reading, all written by SLCC faculty with specific attention to the needs of SLCC students and the local conditions of our work and study at a large, multi-campus, increasingly diverse community college in Salt Lake City, Utah. Unlike a traditional textbook, the writing in this book invites remix, adaptation, and repurposing to match the specific

needs of its users—SLCC writing students and instructors primarily, but also faculty and students at other schools, course designers, WPAS, and anyone else interested in open texts about writing, language and literacy.

Open English @ SLCC is a community-authored, community-focused text, one that invites conversation, change, addition, and repurposing over time in the interests of attuning itself to the needs of those who use it. To this end the book invites public digital annotation through Hypothesis, allowing readers to add notes, questions, observations and resources directly to the texts. This ethos of shared knowledge, creative reuse, and ongoing conversation is at the heart of the Open English @ SLCC project.

Where We're Coming From

The book is organized around a set of six locally responsive threshold concepts that form the conceptual backbone of how our department approaches the work of teaching reading, writing, and rhetoric. These threshold concepts—transformative, integrative and troubling ideas that we feel are essential for any kind of mastery in writing and literate practices—build on foundational work in thresholds by Eric Meyer and Ray Land, in addition to more recent work on threshold concepts in writing by Linda Adler-Kassler, Elizabeth Wardle and many others.

In our department, these concepts have served as an agreed-upon starting point, a collection of fundamental arguments about writing that remain open to adaptation, addition and revision. They provide a shared vocabulary and a simplified framework for teaching writing to our students—a framework that is both unifying, in that it makes explicit our currently

shared values about writing, but also flexible and expansive, in that courses and instructors across our curriculum can teach with these concepts in individualized ways, according to their strengths and interests.

Threshold Concepts in Writing at SLCC

- Writing is a resource people use to do things, be things, and make things in the world.
- Rhetoric provides a method for studying the work that language and writing do.
- Writing is a form of action. Through writing people respond to problems and can create change in the world.
- Writing is a process of deliberation. It involves identifying and enacting choices, strategies, and moves.
- Meaningful writing is achieved through sustained engagement in literate practices (e.g., thinking, researching, reading, interpreting, conversing) and through revision.
- The meanings and the effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses.

Our department's uptake of threshold concepts as a flexible and collaborative approach to course design coincides with a growing college-wide push towards more equitable learning

conditions, including the shift away from expensive, general textbooks and towards OERs that reduce learning costs for students and allow faculty to play a more dynamic role in selecting readings, resources, and projects tailored to our students' specific needs.

Glynis Cousin has argued that a focus on threshold concepts helps "teachers to make refined decisions about what is fundamental to a grasp of the subject they are teaching." Teaching with OERs invites the same kind of refined decision making. This growing collection of faculty-authored, open texts is intended to serve as an evolving record of how our department brings our most valued ideas about writing into our teaching practices—how we use these ideas, develop our knowledge about them, and create methodologies for sharing them with students.

Voices from Open English @ SLCC: Faculty Reflect on Working with OER

Faculty point to collaboration, creativity, interconnectedness, knowledge building, deep engagement, flexibility, and a sense of "walking the walk" with our students as some of the rewards of creating OERs and using them in their teaching at SLCC. The selection of faculty voices below speak directly to this expanding sense of what is possible when writing teachers take up the generative practice of teaching with OERs.

> Collaboratively crafting and using Open Education Resources in my courses has given me a new

appreciation for the interconnectedness of my various disciplinary passions. Those passions include composition, creative writing, literature, diversity, and pop cultural studies. Additionally, creating OER texts affords me the opportunity to walk the research, writing, revision, and reflection talk with my students. And what's more invigorating as a writing instructor than that? —**Kati Lewis**

My view of the department OER texts is all about activating knowledge about writing, both in our students and in ourselves, articulating that knowledge, and building upon that. In both creation and utilization, the texts are devices that invite us each to own what we know about writing, negotiate differences in understanding and belief among ourselves and others, and collaborate in the building of new knowledge. —**Clint Johnson**

Writing open educational content for our composition program has been meaningful for me because it is an opportunity to develop as a knowledgeable and skilled faculty member. In writing course content, I learn what I know and what I want to know about writing and the study of writing, and I hope to pass on my engagement with

the writing process to my students when they work with this content in our program. —**Marlena Stanford**

Working on and with OER has been fulfilling in a lot of ways, but the one that stands out the most is collaborating with other faculty members. While working on the Contingency text, Justin and I had several conversations about how intricate writing-situation analysis really is. I love having the opportunity to think about how interconnected the threshold concepts truly are and the challenge of articulating those thoughts in writing. The academic writer in me is very happy! —**Jessie Szalay**

For me, the big thing about OER is making teaching materials locally meaningful while also responsive to recent research in the field. For a publisher, the highest priority is profit, which encourages more traditional material in textbooks. The "tried and true" is a much safer bet for textbook sales, leaving the material often very generic or simply not making use of recent advances in the scholarship of teaching and learning. OER allows us to avoid these restrictions and is therefore the best option for student learning. —**Chris Blankenship**

> Writing OER texts pushed me to do what I ask my students to do every semester: rhetorically construct a piece of writing for a particular audience. Sure, I know how to do that but rarely have I specifically written a text intended to appeal to both students and my colleagues. Peer-reviewed academic writing has a clear set of troubling challenges, but OER texts also have their unique, troubling challenges. And it was a challenge. And it was fun. I'm proud of what we all have created. There's value in showing our students that we write, that we care enough about teaching writing to write about it, and that we have struggled to create a text intended to appeal to these very students. —**Ron Christiansen**

Open English @ SLCC invites all SLCC faculty to consider submitting texts related to writing in their own disciplines. For details, email your queries and ideas to openenglish@slcc.edu.

Technical Writing @ SLCC

In addition to the Open English @ SLCC textbook, faculty at Salt Lake Community College have also created the Technical Writing @ SLCC textbook for use in English 2100 Technical Writing courses. This second textbook contains reading materials that the Technical Writing Committee of the English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies Department have deemed important for students of ENGL 2100 to learn. It also is used by other SLCC departments and by the tutors of the Student

Writing and Reading Center at SLCC to help students improve in writing associated with STEM and other related fields.

It contains the following sections:

- **The Writing Process:** An overview of the steps of writing including planning, research, organizing, drafting, revising, and proofreading.
- **Introduction to Writing in the Sciences:** This chapter uses published science articles to give students a basic introduction to the scientific format, IMRaD.
- **Introduction to Writing in Engineering:** This uses a published engineering article to give students a basic introduction to writing in various fields of engineering; also emphasizes where science and engineering writing differ.
- **Citation and Copyright:** An introductory overview of the importance of citation and copyright with a brief look at the most common ways of citing materials in STEM fields
- **Civic Engagement in Technical Writing:** The Department of English, Linguistics, and Writings Studies at SLCC is an Engaged Department that emphasizes community engagement for both faculty and students
- **Project Planning:** The ENGL 2100 Technical Writing course at SLCC requires students to complete a Writing and a Design Project; this chapter assists students with writing work plans that include project calendars.

Why Six Core Concepts? So You Can Write ANYTHING

An Introduction to Writing, Rhetoric, Action, Deliberation, Engagement & Contingency

NIKKI MANTYLA

- Writing — Aim for a Specific Goal
- Rhetoric — Maximize Your Intended Effect
- Action — Motivate Toward Desired Change
- Deliberation — Wow with Ideal Options
- Engagement — Exert the Necessary Effort
- Contingency — Adapt to the Given Demands
- Write ANYTHING

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Ten years into our marriage, my husband and I discovered we had a problem. Specifically, a mouse problem. Actually, the entire neighborhood had a mouse problem. We had moved into a new master-planned development, and the field mice who used to live in the fields that were no longer fields were moving in with us. I couldn't blame them. The houses were charming.

Mice are cute in an objective way that has to do with being furry. But. There is nothing quite so squeal inducing as seeing a tiny creature scurry across your kitchen and disappear under your fridge. There is nothing quite so gag inducing as finding rodent excrement on the floor of your pantry. There is nothing quite so anxiety inducing as hearing little chewing noises as you try to sleep while they eat through your brand-new home. The mice had to go.

That was my *exigency*—the situation pushing me to respond. I knew what **goal** I needed to accomplish (evicting the mice). I knew I needed to maximize the **effect** (so the mice would stay out). I knew I needed to **motivate** my husband to agree to whatever solution I wanted to try. I knew I needed to think through lots of **options** and select the best ones. I knew it would take plenty of **effort**. And I knew I needed to **adapt** my strategies to fit the situation.

Those bold words highlight the way I see the six core concepts that make up the main sections in this Open English textbook: Writing, Rhetoric, Action, Deliberation, Engagement, and Contingency. While the Welcome at the front of our text provides the theoretical framework for these concepts (mainly of interest to educators), my goal here is to introduce them to students like you in a way that makes them understandable and valuable. In other words, I want to make each concept a strategy you can put to use.

Real-life exigencies like my mouse situation require problem solving, and problem solving requires you to implement strategic concepts so you can discover the best solutions.

When your solution involves writing or speaking, the concepts might sound like this:

What's cool about these six concepts is that, instead of walking you through one narrow approach at a time, like how to write a report or a memoir, they teach you how to write *anything*.

In fact, I've used them to compose this article:

1. WRITING — I've tried to *aim* for the *goal* of introducing these concepts memorably via stories & analogies.
2. RHETORIC — I've tried to *maximize* my intended *effect* of convincing you these strategies are valuable.
3. ACTION — I've tried to *motivate* you to *change* the way you write and try these concepts for yourself.
4. DELIBERATION — I've tried to *wow* you with cool *options* like photos, charts, icons, bold words, text boxes, etc.
5. ENGAGEMENT — I've tried to *exert* lots of *effort* into inventing, researching, drafting, & revising until every sentence works.
6. CONTINGENCY — I've tried to *adapt* to the *demands* of an online textbook with essay

format, hyperlinks, headings, etc.

So let's walk through how I solved the mouse problem, how it relates to writing, and how animal associations might help you remember strategies that will make you a versatile writer.

WRITING — AIM FOR A SPECIFIC GOAL

Writing is a resource people use to do things, be things, and make things in the world. When approaching whatever exigency you face, a good starting point is to decide what you want to do, be, or make—in other words, what **goal** you're specifically **aiming** to accomplish.

Mouse Situation

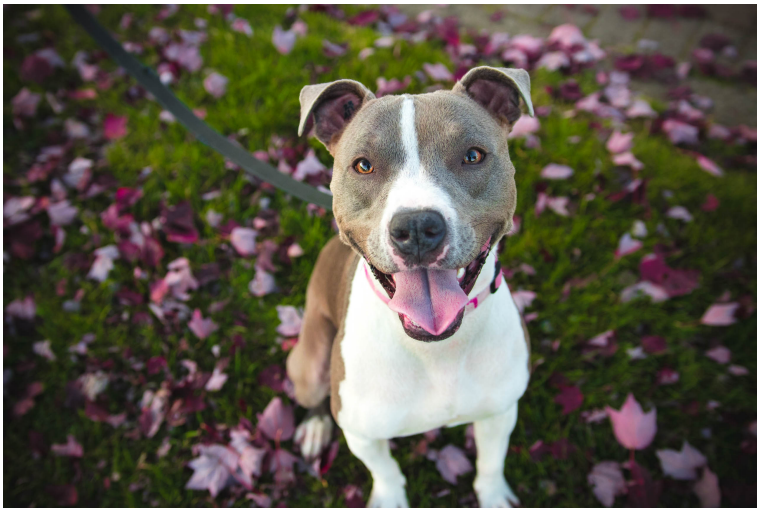
Broadly, what I wanted to do was get rid of the mice. But I needed to be more specific than that. I began by asking lots of questions in order to understand exactly what I was up against. Since this was a neighborhood-

wide problem, I talked with my neighbors to find out the extent of it. They told me about traps they had tried that worked or didn't work, but they said ultimately more mice kept coming, no matter how they killed them off. I realized that my goal wasn't to kill the critters; my goal was to drive them away for good.

Writing Application

With writing, sometimes the goal will already be spelled out for you, like an assignment from a teacher or a boss. In those cases, your job is to ask questions and make sure you are clear about the expectations. Other times, you might have personal reasons for writing. In those cases, self-reflection can help you clarify your own goal and decide exactly what you're aiming to accomplish.

Animal Association



Justin Veenema justinveenema, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

One way to remember this is to think of writing like dog training. Your broad goal is to have a trained dog, sure—but you'd need to specify what that means for you and your dog. Do you want your dog to perform fun party tricks? Fetch ducks you've shot while hunting? Walk calmly on a leash rather than dragging you down the street? Become a diabetic-alert service animal? Quit chewing up the furniture? Defining the parameters of your **goal** is crucial before you can **aim** to accomplish it!

RHETORIC — MAXIMIZE YOUR INTENDED EFFECT

Rhetoric is a method of studying the work that language and writing do. Analyzing the effects of language teaches you how to impact your audience in intentional ways. In other words, awareness of rhetoric allows you to create and **maximize** whatever **effect** you are going for.

Mouse Situation

After pinpointing my goal, I knew exactly what kind of effect I wanted to have on those mice: a terrifying one. I wanted them to quiver in their bones and flee with zero inclination to return. As I analyzed how to do that, I realized we needed a predator. My husband and I had never had a pet, but it was time to adopt a cat—and not just any old scaredy cat hiding under the beds. To maximize the terrifying effect, we'd need a confident mouser with sharp claws and a dominant personality.

Writing Application

Similarly, you have to decide with any writing situation what effect will best meet your goals and how to maximize it. If you want to entertain, you need to analyze how humor works in order to figure out what will best tickle your audience's funny bones. If you want to persuade, you need to analyze how to sway your audience by appealing to their values etc. If you want to blow their minds, you need to analyze methods of

shocking your audience with unexpected twists. The more you pay attention to rhetoric—the effects produced by language—the more you'll be able to utilize those effects on purpose and maximize them via the strongest techniques. As you do, you'll also become a more confident writer!

Animal Association

Free photo via MaxPixel.net

Cats are masters of rhetoric: they meow to pester you into feeding them, purr to flatter you into massaging them, hiss and swipe to frighten you into backing off—choosing the most effective approach for each goal. So be like a cat and be *purr*poseful about your rhetoric to **maximize** your intended **effect**.

ACTION — MOTIVATE TOWARD DESIRED CHANGE

Writing is a form of action. Through writing people respond to problems and create change. This happens most overtly via proposals, open letters, editorials, etc, but a writer takes action any time they compose words hoping to **motivate** readers toward a desired **change**.

Mouse Situation

> The biggest hiccup in my glorious plan to adopt a ferocious mouser was … my husband. He didn't want a pet of any kind. To him, traps were better because you didn't have to commit to housing/feeding them for years! To persuade him otherwise, I had to consider his values. (Notice how rhetoric and action go hand in hand—as do all six concepts.) I knew he loved the NY Yankees. At the time of the mouse debacle, one of his all-time favorite players, Mariano Rivera—whom fans lovingly called Mo—had just torn his ACL while shagging fly balls during batting practice. Everyone thought his career was over, and my husband was understandably depressed.
>
> "What if we name the cat Mo?" I asked. Somehow that did the trick. He agreed to getting a cat.

Writing Application

Action is one of the big reasons writers write: to respond to problems and create some kind of change in the world, even if just within the microcosmic world of their own private life. Pushing your audience toward action, including the simple action of getting them to keep reading to the end of your piece, isn't an easy task. You have to consider your audience's values and how you can connect those values to what you want them to do.

Animal Association

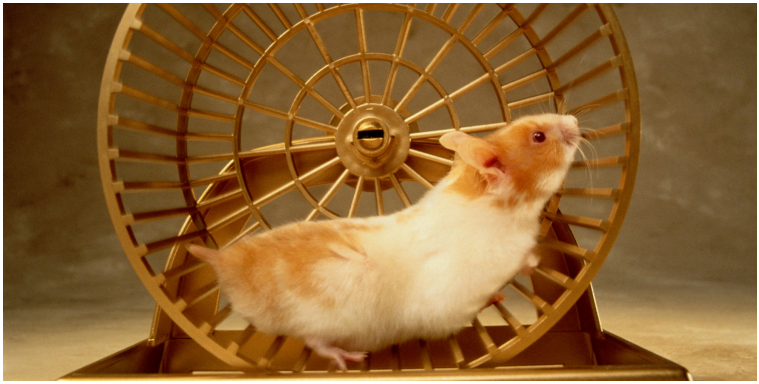


Image courtesy HuffPost via Medium.com

Maybe you can remember the concept of action by picturing a hamster wheel. When you use writing to respond to problems and create **change**, you're offering your audience a way to jump on board with what you're suggesting and get moving—even if just by **motivating**

them to read to the end and let your ideas turn the wheels in their head.

DELIBERATION — WOW WITH IDEAL OPTIONS

Writing is a process of deliberation. It involves identifying and enacting choices, strategies, and moves. It means writers have to deliberate about a whole slew of **options** for their text by deciding which ones will best fit their purpose and **wow** their audience.

Mouse Situation

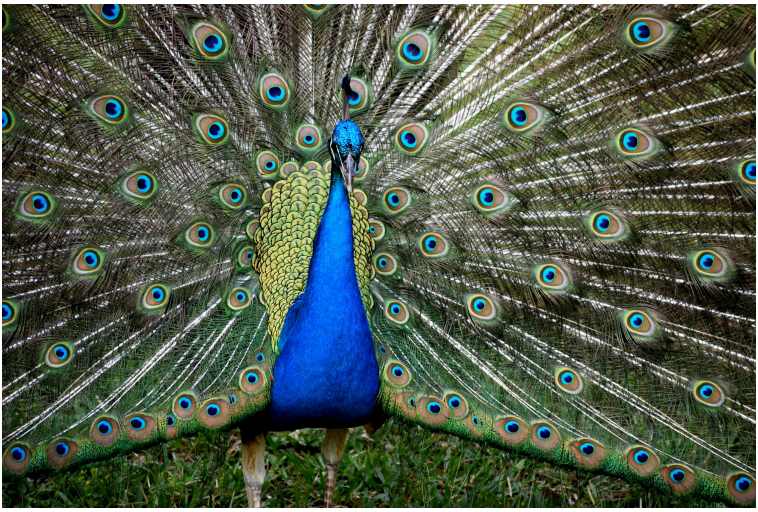
When getting a cat, there were lots of choices to consider. I needed a mouser, and I also wanted a family pet for our three young boys, and I thought it would be nice to have another girl in the house, and I imagined a pretty calico cat or orange tabby. But my goal was more important than my preferences. I did some research and found out big male tom cats made the best terrifying predators + chill family members. A friend advised me to pick up each big kitty, flip him onto his back like cradling an infant, and choose the cat that didn't mind. As long as he still had his claws, such a laid-back cat would also keep the mice at bay.

As luck would have it, a "super adoption" was happening that weekend in a Petco parking lot with 600 dogs and 400 cats. As we walked between hundreds of distraught, meowing kitties, we instantly recognized Mo—a huge fifteen-pound Russian blue–gray tabby mix—because he flipped onto his back inside the cage as if flirting with us. He dazzled us from the moment we laid eyes on him.

Writing Application

In writing, it can be tempting to default to your own preferences, whether a favorite font or a certain layout style, and lose sight of your goal. If we'd chosen a cat based on gender balance and looks instead of personality and size, we wouldn't have gotten what we needed. As you deliberate about your writing choices, big and small—including ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence flow, conventions, etc [see "Movies Explain the World (of Writing)"]—keep your goal in mind. Make the choices that fit what you're trying to accomplish. Decide on options that will truly dazzle your audience.

Animal Association



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Think of how mesmerizing a peacock becomes with his tail feathers fanned out. When you fan out an array of perfectly chosen **options** in a piece of writing, that's how you'll truly **wow** your audience.

ENGAGEMENT — EXERT THE NECESSARY EFFORT

Meaningful writing is achieved through sustained engagement in literate practices (e.g. thinking, researching, reading, interpreting, conversing) and through revision. In other words, meaningful writing (vs quick notes) is a sustained (long-haul) process that requires you to **exert** lots of **effort**.

Mouse Situation

> One other hiccup I haven't mentioned yet: I was allergic to cats. When I visited cat-person friends, free-floating fur would find my face, making my eyes and nose itchy and red. But I was determined to have a mouser, so I poured a ton of effort into research and learned that fur allergies have to do with pet dandruff, which has to do with skin health, which has to do with diet. I then put effort into diet research and discovered that the easiest foods—e.g. dried kibble—are the worst for a cat's skin, while the healthiest foods—e.g. raw ground poultry mixed with liver, plain yogurt, and shredded veggies—require the most effort.
>
> As of this writing, we've had our cat for nine years. That's nine years of mixing homemade cat food weekly, dishing it into separate little containers, freezing them, and moving them one by one to the fridge in time to thaw for the next morning or night feeding. But I believe in the adage "anything worth doing is worth doing well," and I haven't had itchy eyes or nose the whole time Mo's been with us.

Writing Application

When you read a piece of writing that feels "effortless," it can be easy to think that writers sit down and type word after word with the same level of ease you are reading them. In fact, the opposite is usually true: the more effortless something seems, the more effort it took to get that result! That's the ironic illusion. This article required lots of planning, lots of drafting, lots of revising and rethinking and rearranging, rereading (and often rewriting) every sentence dozens and dozens of times. I had to work hard to make it work. I had to really engage with my text for sustained periods of time, trying to transform it from raw ingredients to final product.

Animal Association

CC-BY-NC-ND

Think about how it takes more than 500 bees scouring two million flowers to produce a pound of honey, and

how each bee flies more than 25,000 miles to do it. Whatever **effort** a piece of writing requires, **exert** it. Make the sacrifice. Dive into research. Brainstorm lots of ideas. Draft and revise as many times as you need to. Be like a busy bee, putting in the hours it takes until you can taste the sweet payoff of a job well done.

CONTINGENCY — ADAPT TO THE GIVEN DEMANDS

The meanings and effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses. In other words, the way your writing is perceived depends on where it's presented, who reads it, how it's used, etc. Therefore, your best bet is to anticipate and **adapt** to those **demands**.

Mouse Situation

I'd never had a cat before. As we filled out the paperwork, the adoption people advised us to keep our cat indoors no matter what so he wouldn't pick up diseases or get hit by a car. We agreed, but our cat had other ideas. He was eighteen months old and acted like a rebellious teenager protesting his imprisonment: trying to dart between our legs any time the door opened, clawing at the carpet as if he could dig under it

to escape, pooping on the rug despite being fully litter-box trained.

After almost a year of pet-owner hell—during which my husband dramatically decreed, "It's me or the cat!"—I became so sick of Mo's temper tantrums that I opened the door wide saying, "If you want to go out so badly, go!" Five hours later he hadn't come back. I was sick to my stomach. The kids were crying. Even my husband who claimed to hate the cat was worried.

Then we heard a meow from the other side of the door. Mo walked back inside a model citizen, never terrorizing the carpets again. We adapted to his needs by installing a cat door for him to come and go as he pleased. We threw away the litter box since he preferred to bury his business outside. Everyone was happy.

Writing Application

This last concept, contingency, deals with things beyond your control. You chose your goal, your effect, your motivation, your options, your level of effort; next you have to work around the aspects you didn't choose—the ones inherent to your situation. Each piece of writing will have its own demands. Maybe it needs to be in slideshow format for a presentation. Maybe it needs to change from a short story to a film script. Maybe it needs to fall within a 50,000–70,000 word-count range to be considered for publication. Identify the needs of your audience, purpose, situation, etc and adapt your writing accordingly. Just as I couldn't force an outdoor cat to be an indoor cat, there will be aspects of your situation that require you to make adjustments.

Animal Association

Image courtesy WeAreTeachers.com

> Think of it this way: a fish has to live in water. There isn't any way around that! So if you want a fish as a pet, you would have to adjust to that situation by acquiring a fish bowl or fish tank, filling it, prepping it, and meeting all the fish's other environmental and dietary needs. Likewise, be aware of the **demands** of your writing circumstances so you can **adapt** and prepare as needed.

WRITE ANYTHING

A week after we brought Mo home, I watched a mouse run out of our house, across the yard, and far away to find a new place to live. Since then, the only mouse problem we've had is cleaning up the occasional "present" that Mo might leave

on the welcome mat after his nightly hunts. Though I never wanted to deal with dead bodies, at least they've been fewer than if I'd set traps. The living mice tend to avoid us—exactly as I'd hoped.

Also, we got a pretty great family pet.

Mo the 15-pound Russian blue–gray tabby cat

Goal(s) achieved.

As for this essay, whether or not I succeeded depends on what you got out of these paragraphs. I hope they've empowered you to problem solve each writing situation you encounter—each exigency—step by step:

1. WRITING — *aim* for a specific *goal*
2. RHETORIC — *maximize* your intended *effect*
3. ACTION — *motivate* toward desired *change*

4. DELIBERATION — *wow* with ideal *options*
5. ENGAGEMENT — *exert* the necessary *effort*
6. CONTINGENCY — *adapt* to the given *demands*

Do all of that, and I bet you could write *anything*.

PART I

WRITING: HOW WE DO, BE, & MAKE IN THE WORLD

Writing is a resource people use to do things, be things, and make things in the world.

1. Donald J. Trump, Pope Francis, and the Beef That Defied Space and Time

BENJAMIN SOLOMON

- Here's an Idea
- Doing, Making, and Being
- Jedi Mind Tricks

HERE'S AN IDEA

Language isn't just a tool for saying things. It's a tool people use to do things, make things, and be things in the world.

Take presidential candidate Donald Trump's Facebook post on February 18, 2016, after Pope Francis criticized Trump's plan to build a wall between the United States and Mexico:

Donald J. Trump
23 hrs ·

In response to the Pope:

If and when the Vatican is attacked by ISIS, which as everyone knows is ISIS's ultimate trophy, I can promise you that the Pope would have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been President because this would not have happened. ISIS would have been eradicated unlike what is happening now with our all talk, no action politicians.

Donald J. Trump's tweet in question

As a writing teacher, I'm fascinated by these sentences. On the one hand, they're a logical train wreck—wordy, awkward abuses of a conditional clause. On the other hand, they might also be a Jedi mind trick, carefully crafted to manipulate not just our emotions, but also the very fabric of space and time.

Earlier that day, a reporter aboard the papal airliner had asked Pope Francis if North American Catholics could vote for a man who wanted to build an eight-billion-dollar wall along the US–Mexican border and deport eleven million undocumented immigrants. The Pope wouldn't say whether people should vote for Trump or not, but he did say that "a person who thinks only about building walls, wherever it may be, and not building bridges, is not a Christian."

Watch the Pope's full response here

What's interesting to me about this exchange is that when we take a close look at the Pope's and Trump's language, we can see how both were trying to do more than merely say something, or express an opinion, or just "put their thoughts out there." Instead, they used intentional, crafted language to take specific actions, to create new meanings, and to assert their identities in the world. In other words, they used language to do things, make things, and be things.

DOING, MAKING, AND BEING

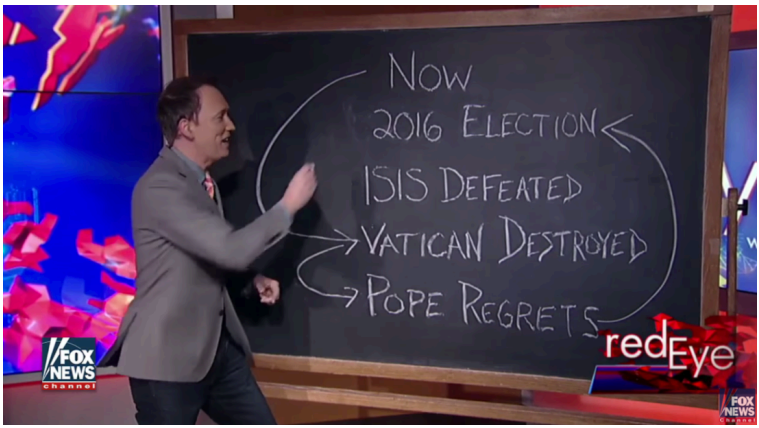
Take the Pope's statement: "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever it may be, and not building bridges, is not a Christian." These words expressed serious doubt about Trump as a presidential candidate, which was bound to affect his support among American Catholic voters. That's a significant action—one with real consequences. The Pope also

clearly defined what it meant to be a Christian (a bridge-builder), versus a non-Christian (a wall-builder). By working to shape the definition of good Christian behavior, the Pope was using language to make meaning. And by choosing to speak up about political issues in the first place, the Pope was affirming his own identity as a religious leader whose views on global affairs mattered. In that sense, the Pope used language to be something in this world.

How about Trump? In his response, he shifted the focus from the Mexican border to ISIS, conflating the two. Mexico, the Vatican, and any ISIS stronghold are thousands of miles away from one another, but Trump visited all three in the span of a single sentence. However improbable, Trump's words were language in motion—an attempt to *do* something. At the same time, by declaring that the Vatican was ISIS's "ultimate trophy," Trump also created a sense of looming danger and an impending threat that wasn't there before. How's that for making something with language? And since Trump was running for president at the time, with every utterance he was trying his best to *be* presidential. In this case, he wanted to show that he was the opposite of those "all talk, no action politicians," and he used language to help him construct that identity.

These aren't the only ways that the Pope and Donald Trump used language to do things, make things, and be things in the world. The closer you look at each of their motivations, audiences, word choices, methods of delivery, and yes, even their grammar, the more you'll discover.

Comedian Tom Shillue used a chalkboard to break down Trump's unlikely voyage through space and time:



Watch the full analysis here

Like Shillue, I'm equal parts flabbergasted and bemused by Trump's use of language. If a student turned in a sentence like this to me, I'd comment, "I'm not sure this makes logical sense." I'd consider it first-drafty, undercooked, and expect the writer to work on clarifying its structure and logic. So it's tempting for me to call Donald Trump a sloppy grammarian, or a logical fallacy on legs. But actually, I think Trump's use of language was both calculated and intentional.

JEDI MIND TRICKS

Consider Trump's intended audience. Trump understood that his supporters—both current and potential—weren't so much interested in elegant sentence structure and internal logic as they were in the threat of terrorism and the promise of power and safety. Trump may have been responding to the Pope, but he was actually addressing an audience of American voters

who already saw immigration and terrorism as connected issues, and didn't mind Trump defying space and time to prove it. While teleporting from Mexico to ISIS to the Vatican and back again, Trump promised a very dismal future if he *wasn't* elected, or a bright, rosy, safe one if he was, and also subtly suggested that the Pope should go back to a more proper Papal activity—saying prayers—instead of meddling in politics.

The Pope, of course, did not agree. When he heard that Trump had called him "too political," the Pope remarked, "Thank God he said I was a politician, because Aristotle defined the human person as *animal politicus*. At least I am a human person." Notice how the Pope made himself sound more credible by quoting an ancient Greek philosopher, while also asserting that he's basically just human, making him sound more humble at the same time? Nice moves, Pope Francis.

While it may come as no big epiphany to hear that public figures like Donald Trump and the Pope use language to take action, create change, and assert their identities in the world, it's probably less appreciated that, in fact, anyone who uses language does the same thing every day. Aristotle called humans "political animals" because we're the only ones who use words, which enable us to communicate ideas about what's good, bad, right, and wrong. And these ideas, he said, are at the foundation of any organized group. In other words, the tool we use to build our society is language. Each of us, every day, is using language to create this world.

Next time you encounter a public beef or disagreement, pause for a moment to observe how both parties use language to do much more than just "express themselves"—how in fact, they use language as a powerful tool to take action, create meaning, and shape identity.

And keep an eye out for Jedi mind tricks. If you can recognize when someone wants you to take a flying leap through space and time in order to believe their point, you'll be better equipped to decide if that's really a trip you want to take.

2. So You Wanna Be an Engineer, a Welder, a Teacher? Academic Disciplines and Professional Literacies

MARLENA STANFORD AND JUSTIN JORY

Many people today arrive at college because they feel it's necessary. Some arrive immediately after high school, thinking that college seems like the obvious next step. Others arrive after years in the workforce, knowing college provides the credentials needed to advance their careers. And still others show up because college is a change, providing a way out of less than desirable life conditions.

We understand this tendency to view college as a necessary part of contemporary life. We did too as students. And now that we're teachers, we still believe it's necessary because we know it opens doors and grants access to new places, people, and ideas. And these things present opportunities for personal and professional growth. We hear about these opportunities every day when talking with our students.

But viewing college simply as a necessity can lead to a troublesome way of thinking about what it means to be a student. Because so many students today may feel like they must go to college, their time at school may feel like part of the daily grind. They may feel like they have to go to school to take classes; they may feel like they are only taking classes to get credit; and they may feel like the credit only matters

because it earns the degree that leads to more opportunity. When students carry the added pressure of feeling like they must earn high grades to be a successful student and eventually professional (we don't think this is necessarily true, by the way), the college experience can be downright stressful. All of these things can lead students to feel like they should get through school as quickly as possible so they can get a job and begin their lives.

Regardless of why you find yourself enrolled in college courses, we want to let you know that there are productive ways to approach your work as a student in college, and we argue they will pay off in the long run.

Students who see formal schooling as more than a means to an end will likely have a more positive academic experience. The most savvy students will see the connections between disciplines, literacy development, professionalism, and their chosen career path. These students will have the opportunity to use their time in school to transform themselves into professionals in their chosen fields. They will know how to make this transformation happen and where to go to do it. They'll understand that disciplinary and professional language matters and will view school as a time to acquire new language and participate in new communities that will help them meet their goals beyond the classroom. This transformation begins with an understanding of how the language and literacy practices within your field of study, your discipline, will transfer to your life as a professional.

Even students who are unsure about what to study or which professions they may find interesting can use their time spent in school to discover possibilities. While taking classes, for instance, they might pay attention to the practices, ideas, and general ways of thinking about the world represented in their class lectures, readings, and other materials, and they can consider the ways that these disciplinary values intersect with their own life goals and interests.

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINARITY IN THE PROFESSIONS

When you come to college you are not just coming to a place that grants degrees. When you go to class, you're not only learning skills and subject matter, you are also learning about an academic discipline and acquiring disciplinary knowledge. In fact, you're entering into a network of disciplines (e.g., engineering, English, and computer science), and in this network, knowledge is produced that filters into the world, and in particular, into professional industries. An academic discipline is defined as a field of knowledge within the university system with distinct problems and assumptions, methodologies, and ways of communicating information.[1] (Think about, for instance, how a scientist views the world and conducts their study of things in the world in ways different than a historian.)

Entering into a discipline requires us to become literate in the discipline's language and practice. If membership in a disciplinary community is what we're after, we must learn to both "talk the talk" and "walk the walk." At its foundation, disciplinarity is developed and supported through language—through what we say to those within a disciplinary community and to those outside of the community. Students begin to develop as members of a disciplinary community when they learn to communicate with the discipline's common symbols and genres, when they learn to "talk the talk." In addition, students must also learn the common practices and ways of thinking of the disciplinary community in order to "walk the walk."

The great part of being a student is that you have an

opportunity to learn about many disciplinary communities, languages, and practices, and savvy students can leverage the knowledge and relationships they develop in school into professional contexts. When we leave our degree programs, we hope to go on the job with a disciplined mind—a disposition toward the world and our work that is informed by the knowledge, language, and practices of a discipline.

Do you ever wonder why nearly every job calls for people who are critical thinkers and have good written communication skills? Underlying this call is an interest in disciplined ways of thinking and communicating. Therefore, using schooling to acquire the knowledge and language of a discipline will afford an individual with ways of thinking, reading, writing, and speaking that will be useful in the professional world.[2] The professions extend from disciplines and in turn, disciplines become informed by the professionals working out in the world. In nursing, for example, academic instructors of nursing teach nursing students the knowledge, language, and practices of nursing. Trained nurses then go out to work in the world with their disciplined mind to guide them. At the same time, nurses working out in the world will meet new challenges that they must work through, which will eventually circle back to inform the discipline of nursing and what academic instructors of nursing teach in their classrooms.

It is important to realize that not all college professors and courses will "frame" teaching and learning in terms of disciplinarity or professionalism, even though it informs almost everything that happens in any classroom. As a result, it may be difficult to see the forest for the trees. Courses can become nothing more than a series of lectures, quizzes, assignments, activities, readings, and homework, and there may be few identifiable connections across these things. Therefore, students who are using school to mindfully transform into professionals will build into their academic lives periodic reflections in which they consider their disciplines and the

ways they're being trained in disciplinary thinking. They might stop to ask themselves: What have I just learned about being a nurse? About thinking like a nurse? About the language of nursing? This reflection may happen at various times throughout individual courses, after you complete a course, or at the end of completing a series of courses in a particular discipline. And don't ever underestimate the value of forming relationships with your professors. They're insiders in the discipline and profession and can provide great mentorship.

Okay, okay. Be more mindful of your education so that you acquire disciplinary and professional literacies. You get it. But what can you do—where can you look specifically—to start developing these literacies? There are many possible responses, but as writing teachers we will say this: Follow your discipline's and profession's texts. In these texts—and around them—is where literacy happens. It's where you're expected to demonstrate you can read and write (and think and act) like a professional.

PROFESSIONAL LITERACY: READING AND WRITING LIKE A PROFESSIONAL

So you wanna be a teacher, a welder, an engineer? Something else? It doesn't matter what profession you're interested in. One thing that holds across all professions is that, although the types of reading and writing will differ, you'll spend a great deal of time reading and writing. Your ability to apply, demonstrate, and develop your reading and writing practices in school and then on the job will contribute greatly to your success as a professional.

You may be thinking, "I'm going to be a culinary artist and want to open a bakery. Culinary artists and bakers don't have

to know how to read and write, or at least not in the ways we're learning to read and write in school." While you may not write many academic essays after college, we can confidently say that you will be reading and writing no matter your job because modern businesses and organizations—whether large corporations or mom-and-pop startups—are built and sustained through reading and writing. When we say reading and writing builds and sustains organizations we mean that they produce all the things necessary to run organizations—every day. Reading and writing reflect and produce the ideas that drive business; they record and document productivity and work to be completed; reading and writing enable the production and delivery of an organization's products and services; they create policies and procedures that dictate acceptable behaviors and actions; and perhaps most importantly, reading and writing bring individuals into relationships with one another and shape the way these people perceive themselves and others as members of an organization.

As a professional, you will encounter a variety of texts; you will be expected to read and respond appropriately to texts and to follow best practices when producing your own. This holds true whether you aspire to be a mechanic or welder, a teacher or an engineer. If you bring your disciplined mind to these reading and writing tasks, you will likely have more success navigating the tasks and challenges you meet on a daily basis.

Listen to these students and professionals talk about academic and professional literacies:

Meet Michele — Renaissance Woman & Computer Science Major

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=34

[More videos in production, coming fall 2018]

CONCLUSION

We hope this reading can transform the way you understand the discipline-specific ways of reading, writing, thinking, and using language that you encounter in all your college courses—even if these ways are not always brought to the forefront by your instructors. We might think of college courses

as opportunities to begin acquiring disciplinary literacy and professional reading and writing practices that facilitate our transformation into the professionals we want to become. Said another way, if language is a demonstration of how we think and who we are, then we want to be sure we're using it to the best of our ability to pursue our professional goals and interests in the 21st Century.

Endnotes

1. The term "discipline" refers to both a system of knowledge and a practice. The word "discipline" stems from the Greek word *didasko* (teach) and the Latin word *disco* (learn). In Middle English, the word "discipline" referred to the branches of knowledge, especially medicine, law, and theology. Shumway and Messer-Davidow, historians of disciplinarity, explain that during this time "discipline" also referred to "the 'rule' of monasteries and later to the methods of training used in armies and schools." So the conceptualization of "discipline" as both a system of knowledge and as a kind of self-mastery or practice has been around for quite some time. In the 19th century, our modern definition of "discipline" emerged out of the many scientific societies, divisions, and specializations that occurred over time during the 17th and 18th centuries. Our modern conception of disciplinarity frames it not only as a collection of knowledge but also as the social practices that operate within a disciplinary community.
2. The basic relationship between disciplines and professions is that disciplines create knowledge and professions apply it. Each discipline comes with a particular way of thinking about the world and particular ways of communicating ideas. An experienced mathematician, for example, will have ways of thinking and using language that are distinct

from those of an experienced historian. The professions outside of institutions of higher education also come with particular ways of thinking and communicating, which are often informed by related academic disciplines. So an experienced electrician will have ways of thinking and using language that are different from those of an experienced social worker. Both the electrician and the social worker could have learned these ways of thinking and using language within a discipline in a formal school setting, although formal schooling is not the only place to learn these ways of thinking and communicating.

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3. Memorability: 6 Keys for Success

Writing that is simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, and story based will stick with your audience longer.

NIKKI MANTYLA

"Jerry Seinfeld set to bring the funny to Salt Lake City" in the Salt Lake Tribune, image credit Robert Altman/ Invision/AP

On a Thursday night in January 2016, Jerry Seinfeld performed solo to a sold-out audience at Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City. Over 2,700 people filled the long sloping rectangle of the main floor and the three rounded tiers of gold-leafed balconies lining its sides. Eighteen-thousand Bohemian crystals glimmered from enormous square chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. From the far back wall, two spotlights followed the legendary comedian back and forth across the stage as he paced inside

their circle, telling his jokes. One of the spotlights smoothly drifted right or left as needed. The other wasn't working so well.

Seinfeld stepped out of the faulty beam numerous times. He ignored it, continuing his set like a pro and doing what he does best: making people laugh. But an underlying tension increased the longer the problem went on. Adults fidgeted in their cushioned seats and muttered to their neighbors. If the jerky spotlight had been staged, Seinfeld would have referred to it by now. Whether the cause was malfunctioning equipment or the ineptitude of an operator, the issue should've been solved thirty minutes ago. It was detracting from the act.

Finally, Seinfeld made a choice to say something. He stopped and gestured at the back wall, asking, "What's the deal with the spotlight? I'm sixty-one years old! How hard can it be? Look, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll face the direction I'm going to walk."

The tangent bounced with Seinfeld's characteristic high- and low-pitched cadence, sending the already amused audience into louder peals. After an exaggerated turn, he slowly lifted his foot and stepped forward, waiting for the spotlight to join him. When the beam lurched again despite his overt cue, Seinfeld threw up his arms like, "Really?" Everyone roared. Tension released into belly-deep laughter. Tears formed, stomachs cramped, lungs gasped. What had been distracting was now hilarious. He'd transformed the malfunction into a successful gag and a memorable part of the show.

As writers, we need to learn such alchemy in order to do things, be things, and make things in the world. Comedians like Jerry Seinfeld are masters of language, and that mastery allows them to make whole careers out of words and gestures that do something special: generate laughs. We can likewise harness the power of language to transform our writing situations into audience gold, whether we are creating impromptu wisecracks or funeral elegies, factual reports or fantastical stories. Any type of writing can be more effective if it catches and holds the

attention of its audience—in other words, if it succeeds at being memorable.

How? Authors Chip and Dan Heath (one brother a Stanford professor, the other a teacher and textbook publisher) give a useful acronym in their book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. They say memorable ideas are

- Simple
- Unexpected
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotional
- Story based

Examining these keys for "SUCCESs" via Seinfeld's spotlight fiasco provides a lens for considering the ways language/writing can be a resource for doing more and being heard and making a contribution that's remembered.

SIMPLE

Consider the simplicity of Seinfeld's response. He stopped. He focused his gaze at the origin of the spotlight. He took a direct approach. And he kept it concise. He could have gone into a drawn-out rant, venting anger instead of appealing to the audience. Instead, he kept his grievance simple and funny.

We can't always be brief, but we can stay focused. Notice how the first four paragraphs of this article give only details relevant to the spotlight story. The anecdote avoids digressions about the weather or other parts of the show or the charity the ticket money supported. It sticks to only what's needed to make the story stick with the audience. We can do the same in any genre.

Selecting and maintaining a simple focus ties everything into one tidy, memorable package.

UNEXPECTED

It's also important to know that comedy thrives on irony—or in other words, the unexpected. The more unpredictable the punchline, the bigger the laughs.

"I'm sixty-one years old!" was unexpected on two levels. First, what did that have to do with a defective spotlight? Juxtaposition, in which you compare things that seem unrelated, can be a great tool for creating irony. Second, in American culture, we don't expect an older person to blurt out his age, which doubled the element of surprise.

But how much does unexpectedness matter outside of comedy? We might be surprised. The human brain is programmed to dismiss what it already understands but perk up when startled by something new. Awareness of that unfamiliar thing might improve chances of survival, so our minds snap to attention. Writers who incorporate the unexpected in strategic ways—with a shocking statistic in a report or a fresh take on a classic recipe or an unheard-of position on a controversial subject—are more likely to hook their audience. Without such surprise, our chances of being memorable are low.

CONCRETE

Masters of language also recognize that all external input

comes in five tangible forms: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. The mind connects concrete input, such as a citrusy scent, to previous knowledge, like Grandma's grapefruit trees, while abstract ideas often vaporize.

By gesturing at the spotlight and emphasizing his turn and step, Seinfeld gave the audience features to see. Written descriptions do that too: gold balconies, crystal chandeliers, adults fidgeting in cushioned seats. The marvel of language is that it can conjure images in our minds even without pictures and let us hear things even when the words are read silently, like how the direct quotes make Seinfeld's voice come alive. The same is true with the other senses. For example, mentioning stomachs cramping and lungs gasping invites us to feel the audience's physical response.

When instructors say, "Show, don't tell," this is what they mean. Telling is weaker because it gives a secondhand report: how it was a classy concert hall where nobody would expect crappy equipment, how Seinfeld griped about the spotlight, how everyone thought it was really funny. On the other hand, showing with concrete details means readers experience firsthand input and draw their own stronger conclusions.

What about when writers aren't telling a story? Regardless of genre, concrete ideas are easier for people to grasp. We might not comprehend a blue whale's thirty-meter length, but tell us that's more than two school buses and we can picture it. It's better to make details tangible.

CREDIBLE

What about the biggest aspect in Seinfeld's favor—his reputation? The audience came because they love him, and they were prepared to laugh at anything he said. But even

people who aren't famous can still use credibility to their advantage.

One way is to borrow fame, as this article does by showcasing a celebrity. Take advantage of any impressive sources. Was the study done by Harvard? Is the quote from a renowned authority? Mention those bragging rights the way this article drops "legendary comedian" into the first paragraph and credits a Stanford professor and a textbook publisher for the SUCCESs acronym. Don't just bury that validity in the citations at the end.

Writers can also buy cred by touting their own expertise: experiences with the topic, relevant places they've worked or volunteered, observations that sharpened their perspective, surveys or interviews they've done, classes they've taken, even their age. Being a sixty-one-year-old über-successful comedian is impressive, and maybe being an eighteen-year-old college newbie or a thirty-five-year-old returning student will affect the audience's opinion too. Weigh possible credentials against the writing situation and include ones that will give it the best boost.

EMOTIONAL

Seinfeld used emotion when he asked the spotlight person, "How hard can it be?" He gave voice to everyone's frustrations, as if speaking collectively.

Projecting emotion is important but tricky. Good writers don't want to overdo it, and they don't want to use fallacious or unethical approaches, such as fear mongering. Done well, emotional appeals can have a powerful lingering effect. We recall how entertaining a comedian was even after we forget the jokes. We relive the wave of pity from a photo we saw of a

shelter dog. We revisit the excitement of a thrilling solution we read in a recent proposal. Emotions last.

Aim for the kind of vibe that best fits the audience and purpose, and find effective ways to solicit those emotions. Choose details that summon the right mood, just as gold leaf and Bohemian crystals convey the classy feel of Abravanel Hall. Pick words that match the seriousness or humor, like how the spotlight "lurched" and everyone "roared." Add colors, photos, or other visuals that correspond, such as Seinfeld's memorably amusing snapshot above—perfect for an article about memorability via comedy.

STORY BASED

Most crucially of all, tell a story. It's one of the best ways to appeal to emotion—and appeal to humans. Think how quickly a sad story can make the audience teary or a silly one can make them laugh. Think how closely people listen when a story is told.

Some people assume storytelling is only for memoirs or fiction writing or movies, but in reality, stories are everywhere. This instructional article employed the story about Seinfeld to make several points, and even Seinfeld's short bit follows a story shape:

HOOK — stops, gestures at the back

CONFLICT — "What's the deal with the spotlight?"

COMPLICATIONS — "I'm sixty-one years old! How hard can it be?"

EPIPHANY — "Look, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll face the direction I'm going to walk."

CLIMAX — exaggerated turn and step

RESOLUTION — spotlight jerks, audience roars

The best story type for each piece of writing will depend on its situation and purpose and audience, but using miniature stories like the spotlight tale can be a great method for highlighting a writer's subject in a memorable way. Writers also use the story-arc sequence—hook the audience, spell out the conflict, outline complications, reveal an epiphany, stage a climax, and grant resolution—in all kinds of genres to engage readers with the tension of waiting for resolution. Audiences love it, just as Seinfeld's audience melted into laughter.

[For more on integrating story techniques, check out "Adding the Storyteller's Tools to Your Writer's Toolbox," "Liven It Up with Anecdotes," or "The Narrative Effect."]

CONCLUSION

The twitchy spotlight never improved during that January

show. Its glow continued to bumble across the stage like an intoxicated firefly. But as far as Seinfeld and his audience were concerned, the situation had been resolved by converting it into humor.

That's the power of language to do things, be things, and make things in the world. That's the power our writing can have when we master language/writing as a resource.

[For even more insight, check out the Heath brothers' book *Made to Stick*.]

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4. Why Fiction?

CLINT JOHNSON

- Authenticity
- Clarity
- Possibility
- Fiction: Far More than Entertainment

Imagine a laboratory where you can test anything without limitation. Anything.

What would happen if a high-ranking politician, say a state governor or even the President of the United States, committed a murder? What if gravity could be turned off? How would human culture change if we ever "cured" death?

Fiction—a story or situation born of the imagination rather than a recreation or documentation of lived experience—is a laboratory in which to test any and all of the above ideas, and infinitely more. Fiction is a realm in which literally anything can be explored, and this makes it a uniquely valuable resource to humans trying to figure out how to exist in the world.

What is important in life? What matters? How should we behave? What should we accept as true or when and where should we doubt what others tell us, even what we experience ourselves? What do experiences in life mean and how might things be different?

Communication is fundamentally about these important

questions. Language is a tool we use to understand, investigate, and persuade others of our thoughts and beliefs about these things that matter to us. Thus, the forms and genres we use to communicate—whether profiles or reports, memos or resumes, tweets or novels or countless others—all provide different ways to achieve goals related to these things we find important.

Yet fiction is unique. Whether employed in a story, or poem, or profile, or apology, or a host of other genres, it is the only way to communicate—and think—unfettered by the limitations of life as we know it. Fiction could thus be argued to be the most rhetorical of all ways to use language: the only consideration in creating a work of fiction is what effect the storyteller wishes to have on their audience.

The value of fiction can be expressed in a simple formula:

Fiction allows for powerful **authenticity**, great **clarity**, and infinite **possibility**.

AUTHENTICITY

A common critical assumption about fiction is that it "isn't real" and thus must not matter beyond its ability to distract or entertain. This assumption is not accurate.

Anything we read or hear is, in a manner of speaking, "not real" as it did not literally happen to us. It may have happened to someone else, but our experience of it is created by the language used by the communicator. That language affects our thinking (or cognition), and that thinking, in turn, determines how what we've read or heard impacts us.

On this cognitive level, which is where audiences experience stories, the "real/unreal" distinction means nothing. According to Susanne Kinnebrock and Helena Bilandzik, both professors

of Communication Studies, "The distinction of fact and fiction … seems next to irrelevant for story experience and effects on the audience. … People learn just as much about their actual world from fictional stories as from factual stories."

So for a reader, a fictional story is just as real as a nonfiction story—assuming each is effectively told. It's amazing that it doesn't matter if the story involves people spontaneously flying into the air, or talking farm animals, or a person no longer aging for no apparent cause. In all cases, the human brain reacts as if the story were real.

In effect, any story we read or listen to is a simulation for our brain. It's a created experience. And psychology is discovering that fiction's simulation ability is far more potent than once believed. In the last decade, research has shown that mirror neurons—neurons that fire both when an animal acts and witnesses an action—respond to fiction. Thus, in terms of your brain's reaction, reading about a fictional action can be as real as performing that action in real life.

We are just beginning to understand the implications of the brain reacting to fictional stories as if they were real, direct experience. One of the most important discoveries of recent research is that fiction makes us more humane where expository nonfiction, such as reports, letters, editorials, and the like, may not. Fiction literally builds our ability to care about other people.

Research has shown that readers of fiction exhibit greater empathy for others than those who read nonfiction (Mar, Oatley, and Peterson). That's right—stories of the unreal help us care about real people more than records of what actually happened. As Newbery-winning author Neil Gaiman puts it, through reading fiction "you learn that everyone out there is a me, as well."

[Fiction also shapes how we understand ourselves. To explore this concept read How Harry Potter Changed My Life.]

This is just one of potentially many hugely influential results of fiction's influence on the human brain.

CLARITY

It's hard to know what matters in life, and even harder to feel confident in that knowledge. So much of what we experience seems to be a product of chance, complex mixed causes, even deception. When we ask others why things happen or what they mean, we get as many different interpretations as individuals we ask. There's a reason why the greatest of all human questions is "What is the meaning of life?" Unfortunately, life is rarely ever clear.

Where reality is cluttered and confusing, fiction can be pristine. Nothing in fiction is included by chance; no element is required just because "that's how it is," as is so common in reality. Instead, everything in fiction is included for a purpose—or so readers assume. Everything means something.

Fiction is a purely rhetorical act. Every word and idea can be chosen for effect. Nonfiction in any form, in contrast, is an impossible negotiation between two competing values: (1) adhering to the "facts," representing what happened as accurately as possible, and (2) crafting the narrative so as to best create the desired effect. But just because something happened does not mean it was important. It doesn't mean that it means anything.

Fiction discards the faulty assumption that if something happened it must matter, enabling the storyteller to preserve only what, to their mind, truly does matter. It clears out all the clutter and chaos, leaving only what the author sees as important in life.

This clarity of fiction is easily seen in the hypothetical

example. A hypothetical example is a fictional example that demonstrates a complex topic in a simple, specific form easily relatable to the audience. It is used not as evidence that something actually happened but to make a complex and potentially confusing concept clear.

This clarity is an essential component of fiction's power as a laboratory, as a method by which to test anything. Philosophy has long used fiction this way under a pseudonym: the thought experiment. Dr. Michael Huemer, a professor of Philosophy at the University of Colorado, explains fiction "provide[s] a means for conceptual controls that often cannot be reproduced in reality." A classic example is Plato's fictitious island nation of Atlantis, a construct the philosopher used to communicate his idea of an ideally structured state.

Regardless of length, all fiction works this way—if it's effectively written. Whether in the form of romance movies defining what is and isn't romantic or parables illustrating moral principles to live by, fiction can make the complex or abstract clear. By shedding the responsibility to accurately represent every facet of reality—whether it be the lived experience of a person or the physical laws of matter—the storyteller gains the ability to distill and focus every concept and word purely for effect. Thus, any principle, argument, or investigation can be communicated with rare and precious clarity by focusing only on what matters.

POSSIBILITY

The famous science fiction author Robert A. Heinlein, using the voice of one of his fictional characters, once said, "Everything is theoretically impossible, until it's done."

All innovation, discovery, and invention is a product not of

what has already happened but what might happen but hasn't yet. Fiction unlocks these possibilities, allowing the human mind to quest out beyond personal experience, history and other cultural records, or even known scientific laws to potentials not yet realized.

As already addressed, fiction's effect on the brain makes it a simulation—a "fake" experience that we react to as if it were real. Just as a fighter pilot trains in a flight simulator before assuming the risk of actual hours in the cockpit, fiction provides the chance to experience an infinite variety of hypothetical experiences in a safe environment. It is similar to the function of dreams. Our mind plays out scenarios to help us figure out how we may respond physically, intellectually, or emotionally in situations we have never experienced.

Fiction is a simulator of infinite capacity. But like in a dream, not every element that is literally possible is important and constructive. These infinite options allow for a sense of newness and originality when simulating essentially common situations. There's an old saying that there are no new stories, only old stories told in new ways.

Consider the story of Robin Hood. How many versions are you aware of across all forms of media? Ten? Twenty? More? Whatever the number, each takes essentially the same story and, with some level of adjustment to characters, setting, and plot, delivers it anew. This invites audiences familiar with the basic story itself—the hero who robs from the rich to give to the poor—to reinforce as well as reconsider their understanding of the tale without boring repetition. Fictitious trappings make the trite potent once more.

Possibilities are only endless in imagination. In fiction, a familiar idea can be made new, a tired issue can be given new vibrancy, and a foreign value can be made relevant for the first time.

FICTION: FAR MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

Critics sometimes claim fiction is merely entertainment. They call it "escapist," a whimsical deviation from the real world and the things that really matter there. It's true that fiction can be an escape, and given what we know about the realities of many human lives it should be obvious how precious any chance to escape can be.

But the true value of fiction lies not in the escaping but in what we bring back from our journeys: new attitudes, ideas, and approaches; weapons to fight what's wrong in life and maps for how to actually build a better world. Positive change requires imagination; it requires going beyond mimicking what is real in the here and now to what could be real in the future. Fiction offers people tools to escape the confining prisons of now.

Albert Einstein, the originator of the theory of general relativity and arguably as great a scientist as has ever lived, is often attributed the following statement: "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales" (qtd. in Winick). But there's ample questioning of whether he actually said this.

[Read an exploration into the origins of the quote on the Library of Congress Blog]

We'll likely never know the answer for certain. But when it comes to the accuracy of the claim, does not knowing the facts behind it matter? Does the fact of it have any bearing on its truth?

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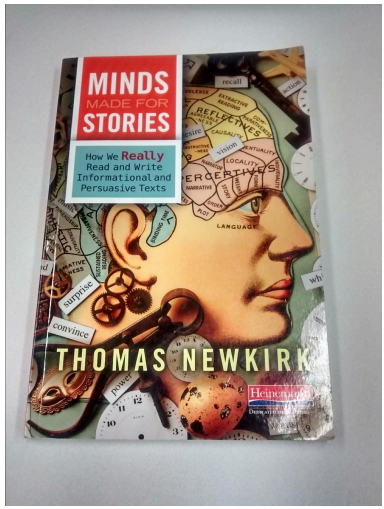
5. “You Will Never Believe What Happened!”—Stories We Tell

RON CHRISTIANSEN



We all tell stories. For humor. For clarifying our view of the world. For asserting our identity. As Thomas Newkirk, a composition scholar, argues in *Minds Made for Stories*, story is an “embodied and instinctive mode of understanding” (23). Telling stories is one way we use language as a resource to create and build relationships. When we use language to recount events in our life, we are deliberately utilizing strategies in order to enact a particular type of response to our words. In effect, again relying on Newkirk, “Narrative is there to help us ‘compose’ ourselves when we meet difficulty or loss.” Literally, we compose (write) ourselves into being while also composing (calming or settling) ourselves into a particular view of the world.

After a long day at work or school, my family informally tells

stories about their day—my wife and I chat before our kids emerge to be fed or a teenager at the kitchen counter hangs out and talks while my wife or I finish up dinner preparation.

Most days I commute thirty minutes from Davis County to the SLCC Redwood Campus. One evening several years ago, I couldn't wait to get home so I could tell my wife about an experience I was still trying to process …

"I was driving on the freeway and a guy started riding my bumper for no reason. I was in the middle lane going five over the speed limit. Can you believe that? What an ass! He wouldn't back off so finally I moved over to the right," I said.

"You should be careful out there," my wife interjected.

"But guess what? The jerk moved over and continued to ride my bumper. I tapped on the brakes. Then—and by this time I was fuming—he pulled alongside me. In my mind I interpreted this as an aggressive move.

"Can you imagine what happened next? He starts pointing at the car not me. I'm still thinking he is being aggressive but then I can tell he is probably pointing at my tire and looks concerned. I pull over and sure enough my back tire is almost completely flat."

"Are you serious?" said my wife.

> "Yeah. Man, I was so stupid."

As the storyteller here, I subconsciously attempted to engage my wife, the listener, by a variety of means. It seems these techniques are learned at an early age and often employed without much reflection. In fact, I wasn't fully aware of the techniques I'd used until I stepped back and analyzed the story for this essay.

One technique I used was to amp up the emotional quality, inviting the listener to come along for the ride: "Can you believe that? … Guess what? … But can you imagine what happened?" I also played with genre by starting off with one kind of story, a can-you-believe-what-a-jerk-other-people-are story, a victim story, but then switched to an ironic tale of misunderstanding where I, the storyteller, turned out to be the jerk.

We are naturally rhetorical beings who attempt to engage those around us through narrative—we shape the events in our life so they have a plot, characters, conflict, and some sort of resolution. This means each of you already has a deep rhetorical understanding of how to engage an audience even if you have never heard the word rhetoric nor ever imagined you were using moves or strategies [see the chapter "What is Story" for more on this].

We also use stories to communicate our values to others. Recently standing in the line with two loaves of bread, some milk, and a carton of eggs, I overheard this conversation between what I assume was a young couple—they had a child with them, probably around two. The young woman led off with this question …

> "Do you remember Diane from my work?"

"Yeah, the one who had two babies in two years, right?"

"Yes. So guess what?"

"She's giving them up for adoption?"

"No, silly … she's pregnant again. But this time she is carrying a baby for some forty-something-year-old woman in California who couldn't get pregnant. She's crazy. That's all I can say. Wacko."

"No way."

"Yes way. And, get this, I found out that the woman from California stopped by the office last week. Barb said you could see her thong when she bent down to pick up her bag. She was wearing designer jeans and carrying some sort of Gucci or whatever purse. I mean can you imagine that? She's just buying a child. It's like going to the supermarket down the baby aisle and picking one off the shelf."

Can you see how this story was shaped by the values of the storyteller and assumptions about the audience's values? Can you imagine how someone with different values or beliefs might have told a very different story about this same

surrogate? Note how the word *surrogate* itself shifts the point of view: a surrogate mother indicates a formalized role created to serve rather than a crazy woman simply trying to make money.

Your turn to analyze:

1. How does the storyteller attempt to engage the audience?
2. What details are mentioned and why?
3. What's left out?
4. What values are communicated by the story?

Stories are our attempts to make sense of the world. We narrate our experience in order to connect with others and validate our own experience and self-worth. We shape our identity through these stories. As Julie Beck, senior associate editor at *The Atlantic*, in "Life's Stories" explains, "A life story is written in chalk, not ink, and it can be changed." Beck then uses Jonathon Adler, a psychologist, to expand on this idea: "You're both the narrator and the main character of your story. … That can sometimes be a revelation—'Oh, I'm not just living out this story, I am actually in charge of this story.'" From this perspective, stories allow us to be actors or agents, constructing our story to fit our sense of how the world works. There's now even a discipline called narrative psychology that explores this notion.

Therefore, when we tell stories to family or friends after a long day, absolute accuracy is not what is valued [see "Is That a True

Story?" for more on memoirs and truth]. Instead, we pick out particular details that highlight how we have constructed the event. In the telling, our own identities are solidified as we re-experience the event, carving out a space for it in our psyche and, hopefully, the psyches of friends and family whom we want to see us in particular ways. This is just one example of how we are already rhetorical beings long before we enter a writing class.

Your turn to create:

1. Name two or three stories you have told to someone in the last few days.
2. Why did you tell the story?
3. How did you attempt to engage the audience?
4. What values were communicated through the story?

Finally, if story serves these vital social and identity functions in our everyday lives, then it is only natural that story would play a significant role in all kinds of writing through engaging our readers, communicating and shaping values, and illustrating how we see the world working.

Stories are important at every level of writing and rhetoric, including:

- In position arguments like Atul Gawande's "Letting Go", in which he frames his entire argument about how health institutions do not know how to negotiate patients' last

days around the story of a young pregnant woman, Sara Monopoli.

- In political debates, such as when John McCain's political campaign in 2008 shaped a brief encounter Barack Obama had with a plumber into a narrative about the little business guy who would be hurt by Obama's tax policies. See a fuller description here: Joe the Plumber stories.
- In reports such as Jonothan Kozol's "Savage Inequalities", in which the systemic poverty of East St. Louis is primarily explored through the stories and words of the people living there.

These uses of story are not incidental; they are the foundation on which the appeals of these rhetorical encounters are built. [See "Adding the Storyteller's Tools to Your Writer's Toolbox" for specific examples of how to use stories in other genres.]

Yet claiming that stories are used in all kinds of writing almost goes without saying, right? I mean we all know, if we pause to think about it, that different genres use stories. A more compelling claim is, as Newkirk argues, that "narrative is the deep structure for all good sustained writing" (23).

So, yes, we all tell stories with a purpose. They are a form of action, of entering and living in the world. Possibly you've never thought about story in quite this way but we assume it's not too surprising. What might be more surprising is that this deep structure of story in our lives can also be found in traditional academic writing, researched arguments, and even scientific studies when there is no obvious "story" or vignette present. For more on this see "Rhetorical Stories." En fin, maybe "academic" writing is not as different as we might imagine from the stories we tell each day to the people we love.

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6. On Building Self-Confidence in Writing

A. J. ORTEGA

- Think About Confidence
- Build Your Own Self-Confidence
- Self-Confidence Within the Writing Process
- Final Thoughts

THINK ABOUT CONFIDENCE

When we are good at something, we are also confident in doing it. Sometimes it is helpful to look at examples of people who are exceptional at something and figure out why they are so confident. As you read this article, you will examine a couple of popular examples of self-confidence, understand how to develop your own, and eventually use it become a more confident writer.

Write

Write down a few things you are really good at. Don't overthink it. Consider all avenues of your life and jot down a few things you do well, or exceptionally.

Watch

One of the most confident boxers was Muhammad Ali. In this short video clip from the documentary *When We Were Kings*, Muhammad Ali speaks at a press conference before fighting George Foreman. Remember that everything we study has context, so here is a little bit of history to preface the clip:

- Almost everyone, from sports analysts and fans, had George Foreman picked to win this fight, called "The Rumble in the Jungle."
- Foreman had 40 fights and almost all were knockouts.
- Foreman entered as the current champion, after defeating Joe Frazier in two rounds.
- Ali was a 4-to-1 underdog.
- Ali changed his name from Cassius Clay for religious reasons and thus refers to himself as such, in the third person, when referring to the past.

Now, with that context in mind, here's the short video (the first 1:20):

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=44

Write

What stood out to you the most? Does Ali sound confident? Does it sound genuine? If so, what exactly in his brief speech demonstrates the idea of confidence?

Critical Thinking

What people typically take away from this, and what is perhaps

most memorable and enjoyable, is the flowery language, funny rhymes, and playful attitude. Most of us think that is confidence. But, if we look closer and study the language, the more introspective Ali is revealed. The confidence is demonstrated when he says things like this:

- "That's when that little Cassius Clay … came up and stopped Sonny Liston. … He was gonna kill me!"
- "I'm better now than I was when you saw that 22-year-old undeveloped kid running from Sonny Liston."
- "I'm experienced now."
- "[My] jaw's been broke, … been knocked down a couple times."

Without those lines, Ali could be characterized as arrogant, pompous, or cocky. But, as we can see through his language, he actually admits his faults and shortcomings. He reflects and makes no excuses for losing a couple of times in his past. In fact, he uses this as fuel to improve and build his confidence. He wasn't born confident. He calls himself "undeveloped" at one point. As we know, he becomes quite developed in a specific skill: boxing. And he won the fight against Foreman in spectacular fashion.

BUILDING YOUR OWN SELF-CONFIDENCE

But what does this have to do with writing? Muhammad Ali was a boxer and this is English class, right? In order to see the connection a bit clearer, we have another video clip. This piece is by a soccer coach. Another athlete. It may seem off topic, but these are people with high-level skills. Soccer is a skill. Boxing is

a skill. And writing is a skill. These are not merely talents or gifts. And, believe it or not, self-confidence is a skill.

Watch

This piece is a bit longer, a TEDxTalk that clocks in at about thirteen minutes but is worth every second. The title is “The Skill of Self-Confidence” by Dr. Ivan Joseph. In it, Dr. Joseph explains that, as a coach, he believes self-confidence can be trained.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=44

Write

Of all the information that was in the TEDxTalk, what was the most helpful for you? Why?

Critical Thinking

While Dr. Joseph says he doesn't use note cards and warns that his talk may go all over the place, he is very well-organized. In some ways, speeches like this are verbal essays. His thesis, or argument, is that self-confidence is a skill that can be developed. He gives us four ways to do this, along with personal examples:

- use repetition (persistence)
- stop negative self-talk (and start positive self-talk)
- build confidence in others (catch them when they're good)
- take criticism or analyze feedback (in a way that benefits you)

As you can see, confidence can be developed and improved. These tips aren't just about soccer or student athletes. This can be applied to a multitude of tasks, goals, skills, or hobbies.

Write

Consider the list from the first writing prompts—the list of things you are good at. How did you get so good at them? Are you confident when you do them? Are you already using some of the methods from the TEDxTalk to develop your self-confidence in those things? (For example, if you listed that you are good at playing basketball, is it because of repetition? Maybe you practice at the YMCA every Saturday. Or maybe your coach corrected your wrist movement shooting a three-pointer and you interpreted the criticism in a way that would benefit you.)

SELF-CONFIDENCE WITHIN THE WRITING PROCESS

First you saw a good example of self-confidence in boxer Muhammad Ali. Then you watched Dr. Ivan Joseph explain that self-confidence is a skill that can be developed, just like any other. Now we are ready to see some of this applied to the writing process. Despite the range of writing genres out there, several of the fundamental steps in the writing process are universal. You can observe this in essayists, poets, screenwriters, songwriters, reporters, and so on.

Watch

For this example, I want to share a video from *The New York*

Times' Diary of a Song series on YouTube. This episode focuses on English musician Ed Sheeran and his writing process as he came up with "Shape of You." I actually don't know a ton about him except his songs are everywhere. He holds all sorts of records for album sales and song downloads, and he's an international star for his music. He's won awards for his singing and songwriting. Even if it is not your type of music, generally, it is undeniable that Sheeran is prolific and successful. And he is, in part, a writer.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=44

Write

In the video, how confident is Ed Sheeran when it comes to songwriting? From what you can tell, is it the same confidence he has as a singer? Does he exhibit any of the methods for building self-confidence from the TEDxTalk? Which ones? How effective do you think they are in his line of work? What about for English class?

Critical Thinking

On top of employing some of the strategies from the TEDxTalk, Ed Sheeran also reminds us of several parts of the writing process:

- brainstorming
- outlining
- drafting
- revising
- editing

Sheeran has brainstorming sessions with his producers and co-writers. He even outlines the song with the beat and uses his vocal mumbling as placeholders. He drafts the song by trying lyrics, trying different lyrics, and then deciding which is better. He does revision through a type of peer review with his collaborators. He edits lyrics based on feedback.

It should be pointed out that this song was written quickly, which is unique. But with all of the practice he has at songwriting, and the confidence he's built along the way, it should be expected that he is faster at writing a song than the average person. In other words, he's put in the work, just like Muhammad Ali or Michael Jordan.

Even still, there are other writing tips to pick up from Sheeran's process. For example, he even steps away from his work to play with Legos, which is imperative to big writing projects. This is why you need to take time on your writing projects—so you can get away and do something else for a while, which sometimes ignites a creative spark, or at least provides your mind a rest.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When learning the writing process, it is important to remember that you can build that skill with practice. Providing an opportunity to practice the writing process is part of what college English courses are supposed to do for you.

Similarly, the skill of self-confidence can also be developed. It isn't an innate skill. It isn't something you were just born with. Now you have examples of self-confidence from figures in sports and entertainment, but you also have some strategies to work on cultivating it for yourself. You can utilize this skill and continue to grow in your writing classes, subject courses, workplace, and beyond.

7. How to Do College

JERRI A. HARWELL

- Community Engagement
- Course Load
- Time Management
- Body Clock
- Procrastination
- Distractions
- The Alphabet Soup
- Professional College Relationships
- Things to Know

You have applied, been accepted, and now you are registered for classes at Salt Lake Community College. Congratulations!

Now what?

You are either registered in ENGL 0900 — Integrated Reading and Writing I, ENGL 0990 — Integrated Reading and Writing II, or ENGL 1010 — Intro to Writing; these courses will provide you with a foundation for success not only in future English classes, but other classes across the curriculum. The reading and writing skills you will learn this semester should serve you well in all your General Education (GenEd) courses and program-specific courses.

As you read this chapter, if you are like many students, you might be wondering how to go to college or what do you do now that you are in college. Realize that not only is there a

learning curve in each of your classes, there is a learning curve for how to do college.

Some students admit to being anxious the night before their classes begin. Besides not knowing how to do college, they wonder if they will see someone they knew from high school, or if they will they make new friends, or have sit by themselves for the next two years at Salt Lake Community College.

If you do not have family or friends who have gone to college you may not have anyone to "show you the ropes." You may wander the campus looking not only for your classroom, but the correct building. Being a little lost in this new environment is normal and it won't last for long.

While this chapter cannot answer all your questions, it can help you acclimate to college and college culture, and outline some basic strategies to be successful in college.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There are things to know and things to do as you begin your classes at Salt Lake Community College. Community college students have been known to be C-C-C students; they go from the *car* to the *classroom*, and back to the *car*. Don't let that be you. The word "community" was used in both sentences intentionally.

Most students want to belong and have social connections. The months of COVID-19 have shown us that.

Any number of current and former students will tell you to find a community while you are here. It may be via the International Center; the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs; the Veteran's Center; or any number of clubs and associations, such as Black Student Union, Asian Student Association, American Indian Student Leadership, The Creative

Writing Group, Global Connections (for refugees), Latinx Student Union, Latter-day Saints Student Association, Pacific Unity Association, Queer Student Association, and many others. [Click here for more about the SLCC Clubs and Organizations.]

Even if you are coming back to school many years after high school or if your college career was interrupted for a few years or many, you belong here and have a role to play in the college community.

These are your "college days." Enjoy them. Besides getting involved in clubs and organizations to meet other students with interests similar to yours, attend dances, activities, forums, and other activities provided by your Student Life and Leadership.

Involvement increases the stake you have in your college education. In classes, students talk about a certain amount of fun that involvement brings to the college experience.

COURSE LOAD

However, don't set yourself up for failure. Glory Johnson-Stanton, Manager of Multicultural Student Success and a former academic advisor for eight years, advises students to not "take on additional responsibilities (club officer, etc.) until you have at least completed your first two semesters with a GPA of 2.5 or above." Prior to that, spend your first year checking out one club a month or by attending Club Rush held in the fall semester.

Additionally, if your high school GPA was below 3.0, Johnson-Stanton advises you to start by going to school part-time; maybe take two classes or six credits. "During your second

semester," she encourages you to "add another class but only if you did well your first semester."

"School can be a lot of fun, but you need to know when to have fun and when to focus on classes," she adds. Socializing is part of college. You may or may not have friends "to hang" with outside of school. Regardless, be open to meeting and talking with a variety of people in your classes.

TIME MANAGEMENT

You will need to manage your time. The college offers free online workshops on time management and how to study. Speaking of studying, set aside time to study for each class, at least 30 minutes to 1 hour every day. Take an online free workshop on time management and how to study.

There's another formula for how much time to spend studying for each class you take. For every 1 hour in class, set aside 2 hours of study time. So, for a 3–credit hour class, you will spend 3 hours in class and then 6 hours a week studying. When you add the 3 hours of class plus the 6 hours of studying, together it equals 9 hours of time each and every week for that one class.

Now assume you are taking 12 credit hours. You will spend 12 hours in class and then 24 hours a week studying. When you add the 12 hours of class plus the 24 hours of studying, together it equals 36 hours of time each and every week for that one semester.

That amounts to almost a full-time job! Not every class will require this much study time. Talk with your instructor the first day and ask.

BODY CLOCK

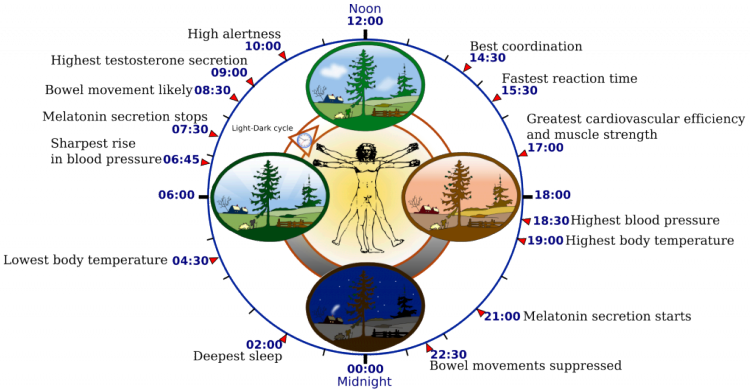

Image from Wikipedia article on circadian rhythm [click image to view article]

Know the rhythms of your body clock; don't try to change your body clock as you begin college. If you have never been one to wake up by 7:00 a.m., don't take early morning classes. Be sure to schedule classes at least an hour after your normal wake up time and allow for travel time to campus. Likewise, if you are not an evening person, avoid evening classes. You will be tired and unable to focus. If you "come alive" late at night, take online classes that allow you to work when you work best. Know and listen to your body clock as you schedule your classes.

Instructors can see when you submit assignments, but submit them at a reasonable hour — for you.

PROCRASTINATION

If procrastination is a problem, watch the following TED Talk — "Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator" by Tim Urban. In it, Urban describes his own procrastination experiences in college, why we procrastinate, and efforts to avoid it.

Even "A" students struggle because of procrastination. Recognizing that you procrastinate is half the problem. Learning how to deal with it is the other half. Yes, you can overcome it.

"Complete assignments on time. Once you are overwhelmed and time is not on your side … YOU BECOME STRESSED," Johnson-Stanton insists.

DISTRACTIONS

"DO NOT take classes with your friends if they are a distraction for you," urges Glory Johnson-Stanton. You will still be able to remain friends, and real friends (as opposed to frenemies) will understand.

Not only are there distractions inside the classroom, there are many distractions outside of class.

> I once had a student who sat outside while meeting with me for a video conference. However, being outside was also a distraction for him when he attempted to study. I suggested that he go to the campus library and look for a seat near a window. I

suggested this so that he could see outside, but not be distracted by being outside. It worked. He let me know the following week that he was able to concentrate better sitting in the library versus being outdoors, but still was able to connect with nature by seeing it through the window. Best of all, he was getting his assignments completed.

I often instruct my students not to study with a cell phone nearby. One student took it to heart and put his cell phone in another room when he studied. After a few days he came back to me to report how much better he was able to concentrate; he also got more done in less time. He said he didn't realize how distracting the phone was until he studied without it.

Research shows it can take about 23 minutes to get back the same level of concentration after an interruption (Griffey). While you may think those three hours of studying were productive, they were not if you were interrupted two or three times.

Sometimes your cell phone is how you access Canvas or an online dictionary, use a calculator, etc. Those are beneficial uses and are not considered distractions. Emailing, texting, tweeting, surfing the web, or watching a Netflix series while trying to study is a distraction.

Because those last few activities are easy to do at home, home may not be the best place to study. Take time to learn

what works best for you — studying on campus, at home, with a study group, or other.

THE ALPHABET SOUP*

This class is OER. Head over to AAB and drop into the SWRC. Hang out in the ODMA. Get help with your math homework in the STEM Center. SAT classes begin weekly. What does it all mean?

Students Joseph D. N. and Joey D. N. tell students it is important to learn the "alphabet soup" as they call it. "College has its own language," according to Joseph D. N. You have to learn the language while you're learning the course content.

*The Acronym Guide — in order of appearance
ENGL — English
OER — Open Education Resource
AAB — Academic and Administration Building
SWRC — Student Writing and Reading Center
ODMA — Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs
STEM — Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (or sometimes Medical)
SAT — School of Applied Technology
LGBTQ — Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
ATMs — Automatic Teller Machines

PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE RELATIONSHIPS

Get to know your professors. Although they may seem intimidating, remember that every professor or instructor had a day when it was their first day in a college class. Yes, they once sat in a college class, just as you are doing.

Joey talks of his relationship with his business class professor. It made all the difference with him being comfortable in college and with college classes. “I finally met someone who cared,” he says.

Get to know your instructors and allow them to get to know you. They may become a mentor who will help guide you through the maze of attending college. Perhaps they can relate to you being here from another country, being an English Language Learner, or being away from home for the first time. In the future, you might even be able to use them as a reference for scholarships or college applications.

THINGS TO KNOW

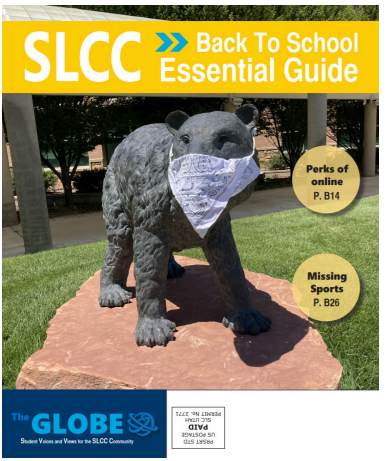

Image credit: THE GLOBE and photographer Amie Schaeffer.

Read the campus newspaper — *The Globe*. Seriously. Especially read the fall semester's back-to-school edition. It may sound old school to read a print newspaper, but this edition is packed full of information to help new students and returning students navigate college.

These are just some of the campus resources you should be aware of: SWRC, Demke STEM Learning Center, Food Pantry (you can't focus and concentrate when you're hungry or worse, your children are hungry), Employment Office, Academic and Career Advisors, Veteran's Center, Dreamers Center, ODMA, LGBTQ Center.

Learn where the library is, the food court, the ATMs on campuses.

Know where the satellite campuses are so you don't have to travel so far from your community.

"KNOW YOUR LIMITS ... SCHOOL, WORK, LIFE BALANCE." – Glory Johnson-Stanton

Sources

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8. What I Wish I Could Tell My Past (Student) Self When First Attending SLCC

CASSANDRA GOFF

- Registration
- Course Designations
- Leaving a Course
- Being a Student
- Your Power
- Student Discounts
- Tuition
- Canvas
- Passing College
- Talking to Your Instructor
- Time Management and Study Habits
- Timeline
- Transferring
- Traditional Education
- That's All!

Before we dive in, I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself and this piece. In this chapter of my life, I teach English/

Writing with the Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) Department of English, Linguistics & Writing Studies.(You may even be one of my students!) I recently graduated with my degree and let go of my "student" identity after being a student on-and-off for the past eight years.

The scary and stressful moments comprising my student experience have yet to leave my memory, so as an instructor, I like to reserve one of the first class sessions every semester to talk shop with my students. I'd like to do the same here. I'd like to share a few things I've learned throughout my eight years of being a student, which I wish I would have known when first attending college. Stay with me. I realize how hectic life can be as a student and how valuable your time is, so I don't want to waste your time here. All of the information listed down below I believe to be beneficial for students to know. I'll even explain why and how I learned some of these things as a student myself. I think, sometimes, the college could do a better job at being transparent with students about some of this information, so I try to pull back the curtain a bit when appropriate.

A pivotal scene in MGM's 1939 classic movie THE WIZARD OF OZ

When I was first attending college, I remember feeling lost, confused, and overwhelmed with how much information was being thrown at me. The orientations (mandatory, first-time students, transferring, returning) felt like drinking water from a fire hose, to use a common idiom. And during my first few semesters, I felt like I had missed out on acquiring an inherent knowledge that instructors, advisors, librarians and other campus community members assumed we all shared. After talking with other students, I soon realized that they had gained some of this knowledge from friends or family members. I had to fill in the gaps of my knowledge from separate resources as a first-generation student. It was difficult for me, as someone with little background information about college, to acquire all the relevant discourse, knowledge, and community needed for the success I wanted to achieve academically. As I transferred between and through instructions about five times, I ended up learning a lot about how to navigate higher education.

(I will be situating this information in the context of Salt Lake Community College, but if you plan to attend or are currently attending a different institution, some of these points may still apply.)

REGISTRATION

Registration is a daunting and messy process. There are so many variables to take into consideration while working through the catalog and registration portal to create a schedule and enroll in courses (including but not limited to: semester, general education requirement qualifiers, course designation, level, course time and day of the week, course medium, instructor, and fees). Generally speaking, orientations aim to explain many of these things, but if you were anything like me, the value of orientation was never really emphasized so you probably tuned out (or were so preoccupied thinking about how to restructure the budget that month because you had to take the day off work to attend orientation). I'd like to briefly go over a few points of registration that are incredibly important.

I remember one of the first moments in which I felt entirely overwhelmed and frustrated by college. I was sitting on some thick beige almost-shag carpet of a bedroom floor. Some of the printed orientation materials that had been handed to me earlier that day were spread out next to me, but my body was slanted towards the laptop I was attempting to work on. I opened the portal for registration, clicking around a very confusing website trying to find the course catalog. I found the buried link that led me to the catalog where I could search through courses. I was quickly met with different course designations, numbers, dates, times, fees, and a slew of other course variables. I sat

there starting at the screen as rushes of panic jolted through me. Eventually, I unfroze myself long enough to turn to my mother and ask, “What do I do?” She sat down and tried to figure out all the different acronyms with me, as we attempted to piece together a schedule, but we ended up failing that night. I remember thinking to myself, “If I can’t even figure out how to get into a class, how am I ever going to make it through college?”

COURSE DESIGNATIONS

Courses are generally categorized by subject. For example, I teach ENGL 2010; ENGL stands for English. That one is pretty easy, but some of the course designations don’t necessarily make sense, so I always recommend checking the entire course name. Courses are then categorized by number. For example, in English the general education requirement for all students is to complete ENGL 2010 or higher.

Generally, the number designations correspond to the level of “difficulty,” even though I hesitate to use that term. Usually, courses build on one another and the higher the number, the more background knowledge is needed. (This might be most easily explained through K–12 education. As a student, you probably wouldn’t want to jump from 4th grade math into 7th grade math. There’s a ton of material covered in 5th and 6th grade math that you’ll need to understand in order to work through some formulas introduced in 7th grade math. Same

idea. Students should understand material from ENGL 1010 before learning new concepts in ENGL 2010.)

> Pay attention to these course designations and numbers. One of the mistakes I made as a student was underestimating the importance of the sequenced number system. After passing ENGL 2010, I enrolled quickly into an ENGL 2900 course. Within the first few class sessions, I realized I was in way over my head: terms and concepts I had never heard of were glossed over quickly in class discussions. I ended up dropping that course and re-enrolling a few semesters later, after I had been through other courses that walked me through the material I needed to understand. The point here is, if you just passed ENGL 2010, it might not be a great idea to jump directly into ENGL 2900. You absolutely could, but it might be scary.

LEAVING A COURSE

When enrolling in courses, make sure to be familiar with the add/drop/withdraw/audit terms. Drop/withdraw/audit are all terms related to a student's level of involvement within a course throughout the semester. (Remember to discuss each of these options with an academic advisor for consideration.) A student is enrolled in a course when that course is added to the student's schedule. By default, students are added to a course

for the full duration of the semester and will receive a letter grade influencing their GPA.

Drop

Students have the option of dropping a course within the first few weeks (depending on the academic calendar) of the semester. There is no official penalty for dropping a course. If a student drops a course, they will be removed from the course and it will not show up as an enrollment on their transcript. The student does not have to pay tuition for that course.

Many students use this option to test out different courses, myself included. For the first week or two of every semester, I would enroll for as many courses as I could and attend the first (or second) class session of each, to view the syllabus for each course and get a feel for the instructor. After the first few sessions, I would drop the courses that I didn't personally find interesting, seemed like too much of a commitment, or felt like my personality would conflict with the instructor's.

Withdraw

Withdraw functions similarly to "drop," where students can withdraw from a course and not have to attend

the remainder of the semester. However, with the "withdraw" option, students generally lose their tuition as the college will not issue a refund for a course which a student withdraws from. However, the benefit of withdrawing is that the course will not impact a student's GPA. A "W" will show on the student's transcript instead of the letter grade.

Generally, this option is good to consider if you don't think you will earn the grade you desire by the end of the term, and if you're worried about your GPA. Withdrawing can be a really strategic and incredibly helpful option for many students, again, including myself. I took advantage of the withdraw option a few times. For example, about halfway through one of my semesters, my job at the time offered me a promotion around the same time we needed some extra labor. I ended up working 40+-hour weeks while also trying to attend three courses. It didn't work out very well. I realized I realistically could pass only one course that semester so I withdrew from the other two.

Audit

Lastly, audit. Audits are for students who would like to attend classes but not receive credit for the course. Students who are auditing courses attend lectures but do not have to turn in the coursework, generally. If you are in school working towards your degree, do not audit a course.

During one semester when I was still feeling uncomfortable navigation registration, I noticed a checkbox I had the option of clicking. Next to the checkbox, there was the word “audit.” That was a new term to me, and I didn’t fully understand what it meant. So I clicked the box, indicating that I wished to audit the course. That’s not necessarily something you want to do as a student, I found out later that semester from my Communications instructor.

BEING A STUDENT

If you’re feeling like being a “student” doesn’t accurately describe you, you’re not alone.

When I was attending courses at Salt Lake Community College, I was considered a student. It was an identity label that was thrust onto me by essence of paying tuition. I resisted that identity for a long time. It wasn’t until I realized that I could leverage my positionality of being a non-traditional student that I began to see myself within that label and accept my role within the college community. I soon found other students like me, who were

unsure about how they felt about their non-traditional student label. We were able to connect and form a small sense of community.

YOUR POWER

I always encourage students to take ownership over their "student" label and institutional identity. There is power in being a student. The most important and substantial changes that occur on campus and within this community emerge from students. You are important here. If you don't believe me, and if you haven't already, take a moment to read over the Student Code. I often find that most of my students either haven't read over that document and/or didn't realize it existed. That document is there to protect you as a student, more than anything. We (instructors, advisors, librarians, organizers, and other staff/faculty members) are quite dedicated to our students. We are here to help you with your educational experience as best we can.

STUDENT DISCOUNTS

There are so many different student discounts out there. I always recommend to my students that they make a habit of asking any and every place they shop or visit if they provide

a student discount. I also try to keep a running list of active student discounts, so please feel free to check out this Google Doc.

> I mentioned that I learned how to leverage my institutional identity as a student throughout my eight years of attending college. One of the most frequent ways I did so was with student discounts. Any time I was checking out with a cashier, handing my card over to be swiped, or clicking "continue to checkout" on a website, I'd inquire about a student discount. It's as simple as asking if there are any available. (I even had employees tell me that they didn't have a student discount, but because I looked like I needed it (whoa, looking back now I guess that was kind of rude) they gave me a different discount.)

TUITION

Part of your tuition goes towards many student services provided here on campus. You're already paying for many services, so you might as well use them! As a student, you have access to many free or low-cost services. Some of them are definitely worth checking out, even if it's only to see what's available to you. All the people staffing these services and offices are extremely happy to interact with students.

As I tried to make a habit to check out the things I was paying for throughout the years of paying tuition, I was frequently met with excitement from humans who wished students would take advantage of their services and offices more. "You already pay for this with your tuition," a librarian once told me as I was trying to access an article on a database through the library's website. The article was behind a paywall and I thought I would need to pay for it out of pocket in order to use it for an assignment. After that interaction, I decided to check my tuition bill to see what else I paid for every semester. If you haven't looked at the itemized break down of your tuition bill, I'd recommend doing so.

CANVAS

One of the things your tuition helps pay for is Canvas. Canvas is its own entity. Canvas is a Learning Management Software (LMS) owned and operated by Instructure, not by Salt Lake Community College or any other institution. Sometimes, it seems like Canvas is owned and operated by SLCC (especially because there's a SLCC Canvas Help Desk). It's not. (Maybe you already worked with Canvas in high school. If so, it may look a little different as instructors personalize their SLCC courses.)

Many of your instructors are trying to learn and navigate Canvas too. I have questions about Canvas all the time myself,

so I can't always answer student questions about Canvas. Luckily, Canvas does have 24/7 tech support for both students and teachers. There should be a phone number on your Canvas Dashboard to call for help (there's also a chat option). The tech agents there are happy to help you with any of your problems.

PASSING COLLEGE

I know the "show up for classes and turn in all assignments" advice sounds simplistic, and perhaps unrealistic, but that's the advice I give to all students now. Show up for your classes and listen to your instructors, because oftentimes they'll tell you exactly what you need to do in order to pass the course. In addition, turn in each and every assignment, ideally meeting the assignment expectations. I tell my students to read assignment descriptions in-depth a few times before submitting an assignment. In other words, if an assignment description asks you to respond to question 2d from the assigned textbook, make sure you're reading 2d and not 2b. This happens more frequently than you might imagine. In a separate chapter of this textbook, Jerri Harwell mentions something similar.

> Someone once told me that all I needed to do to pass college and get my degree was "show up to all the classes and turn in the assignments." Well, that sounded simple. Throughout my undergraduate education, I was really envious of the students who could show up for only a few class sessions and still

pass exams. I felt like I needed to attend every class session and turn in every assignment in order to get the grades I wanted for myself. I didn't realize until after I started teaching that I was an anomaly.

TALKING TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Be familiar with your instructors. There are so many reasons to curate good relationships with them, like helping to determine what to call them (professor/instructor or Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs. or first name/last name or "Teach" — because yes, there are important differences for all of those (pro-tip: check the syllabi to see how your instructors introduce themselves)). I always recommend that if you have a question about anything in your courses, especially if there is confusion on an assignment description or paper expectation, email your instructor. If you as a student can get clarification on things that might be confusing or unsaid (like what formatting style is expected for a written paper), it will not only help your learning, but your grade as well. The last thing I'll mention is, depending on your life goals, it might be a good idea to maintain good relationships with your instructors in case you ever need a letter of recommendation or professional reference.

When I was a teenager, I received the advice

"introduce yourself to your instructors on the first day of class" (probably from one of my high school teachers). I took that advice quite literally and on the first day of every semester for the first two years of my college education, I waited to be one of the last students in the classroom so I could introduce myself personally to the instructors. Some of my instructors were very surprised by that action, but they always remembered who I was.

TIME MANAGEMENT AND STUDY HABITS

As an instructor, I like to spend one of my first class sessions answering questions from students about Salt Lake Community College, being a student, and/or the course. (Honestly, those discussions are the main inspiration behind this chapter. See, students make change!) Some of the common questions/comments I receive from students are about study habits and time management. My immediate response is always "figure out what works best for you — what works for me isn't necessarily going to work for the student sitting next to you, and what works for them won't necessarily work for you."

However, there are a few broad tips & tricks I've picked up over the years that I'd like to share.

Keep Your Brain Healthy

Figure out your brain's preferred environment. Start by considering when your brain feels most active (perhaps, check in with your rest/wake (circadian) rhythms). I know, sometimes, working and studying when your brain is most active isn't possible because of different work or life schedules. If that's the case, consider the environment in which you're working or studying.

Personally, I know I'm a night owl. My brain works most efficiently in the evening, so I tend to schedule most of my important work and studying after 4pm. I try not to work or study in the morning, because my brain isn't on yet. (On the opposite side of that though, I know people that like to wake up between 4 and 6 in the morning to get some of their work and studying done.)

& Happy

Play with your study environment to figure out what makes your brain happiest. Try working in vastly different environments while incorporating variables to see what works best for your brain.

Personally, I know I like to have a silent space where I can put my headphones on and "tune in" to my work while listening to very specific playlists. In addition, I like to be warm and cozy; I have to be wearing long sleeves while writing or studying. I like to have some space where I can have my laptop open, with additional physical material to reference next to me. I don't tend to work well in minimal space. I've learned what works best for me through many trials and errors, attempting to study in different environments and work with various variables. I have narrowed in on what makes my brain happy. I recommend doing the same.

& Efficient!

Figure out your learning style. If you can figure out what type of learner you are, it's easier to narrow in on study habits that will be most helpful.

For example, I know I'm a visual/auditory learner, so I've picked up some study habits best suited for my learning style. I'll use different highlighting and note-taking techniques. I'll have Google voice information to me as I try to remember something specific. Even if you can figure out which senses your brain primarily learns from, that will help you

narrow in on your effective study habits.

TIMELINE

There are two rather concerning myths in academia: the two-year and four-year degree. We are finding that students generally attend college for at least one year longer than what their "average" degree path might be (Lewin). This is all to say, if you can complete all the courses needed for your desired outcome within the anticipated timespan, that's fantastic. But if you can't, don't stress over it. The trend lines are showing us that it will be more common to take longer than anticipated for degree completion.

Personally, my four-year degree took me five years to complete. During that fifth year, there were moments in which I found myself trying to rationalize why it had taken me so long to complete what other students had already completed, even though I had completely valid reasons for needing extra time. Luckily, the members in my community were (and still are) incredibly supportive and continually reminded me that I was part of a growing trend in academia.

TRANSFERRING

If you are considering transferring, I'd recommend looking into some transfer-student resources. There are some scholars working hard to try to alleviate transfer shock for students. If it's possible to talk to one of us (perhaps there's an email listed on a faculty resource page related to transfer-student resources), I'd highly recommend it.

After attending Salt Lake Community College, I transferred to the University of Utah in order to complete the degree needed for my current position (with our Writing Studies Scholars program). I experienced what is referred to as "transfer shock" within some educational research (Hills; Ishitani). The term is oddly fitting as I felt like I was in shock the entire semester; the buildings were different, the people interacted strangely, the community held opposing values, the different expectations of students felt jarring. It was really difficult to transfer institutions. I bring this up not to discourage any student from transferring between and through whatever institutions desired or needed, but to illuminate that students are not alone in feeling like it's a difficult experience.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Unfortunately, we are still recognizing and learning that college was originally intended for "traditional" students — those who could devote much of their lives to being a student, focusing entirely on education without distraction. College was not designed for non-traditional students — students who work full- or part-time jobs, students who have a variety of family and friend relationships to attend to, students whose primary focus, time, and attention isn't school. Students like me! If you feel overwhelmed because you took the 9 credit hours sometimes required for financial aide and have obligations outside of school, (again) you're not alone. In fact, I believe the majority of students are working to balance school, work, and life. It's okay to feel overwhelmed, under pressure, anxious, and stressed.

(It's also okay to fail. Personally, I failed a few different times over the course of my eight years being a student. Sometimes, that was literal, as I received an "F" in a course or two. Sometimes, I felt like I failed because I didn't meet the goals I set for myself or I let other people down in various ways. I failed, and yet someone still allows me to have a job where I can stand in front of a classroom.)

THAT'S ALL!

Wow. That was a lot of information. None of which replaces the information you get as a student in orientation (if you still have those materials, I'd recommend reviewing them briefly). The really scary word count on this document might be a good indication of how difficult navigating college is. I really encourage everyone to keep that in mind. Being a student is hard. Teachers — please take a moment to explain any or all of these things with your students if it seems like they need it. Students — please don't be afraid to ask for what you need, even if it's an explanation on what the number two means in your ENGL 2010 course. Many of us (teachers, advisors, librarians, staff members) are surrounded by this jargon and discourse each and every day. We forget that "retention" and "turn your assignment in through canvas" and "visit the library" are terms and phrases that might need some explanation. And students, I wish you luck achieving your goals here at Salt Lake Community College.

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9. Tell It True

BERNICE OLIVAS

Dear students,

So, you are writing a narrative. And it is asking you to write about yourself and let people read it. And it feels awkward and weird and you cannot imagine when you might use any of the rhetoric, narrative, writing stuff in real life. I remember feeling that way. I remember hating writing about myself and wondering why we had to learn things like scene and dialogue tags. I was a working-class kid, the daughter of a migrant worker. College was rough. I worked while I took classes, and I had kids while I took classes. But with support from my community and the faculty I worked with, I eventually finished a PhD program, and now I am teaching students like you.

Here is what, after 11 years of school, I finally understood. Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools I used to succeed. I realized that I needed to tell a good story because humanity shares a common truth — people love a good story. Especially the people who give out scholarships, or accept applications to programs, or accept applications to study-abroad opportunities. I learned to tell my story in a way that I was proud of my past, my people, and my journey. Just as importantly, I also learned to tell my story so that my readers wanted to be part of my success.

You know how we all have that uncle or aunt who is the family storyteller and they always seem to get what they want from everyone? It is because storytelling is compelling. Narrative is human connection. Knowing how to tell a story so that human connection translates into persuasion will serve you as you work your way through the two-year college, if you move on to a four-year college, or if you start applying for jobs. Why? Because people want to give scholarship money,

admittance, and jobs to people they feel like they know, to people they understand, to people who make them want to be part of the story.

Tell the story right and an application committee will remember the "boy who slept in his car for two years because it was the only way he could afford to be part of the Robotics Club" despite his less than perfect GPA. They will not remember the many, many students who "have always wanted to build a robot." Tell it right and they will want to meet the "boy who dumpster dived to build his robot" even though his resume was not as flashy as they others. Tell it right and they want to *give money* to "the boy who won that competition with his trash-robot," because storytelling is an incredibly powerful tool. So, here is what I am saying: give narrative a chance. Be brave in your storytelling, be honest, be proud of who you are and where you come from. Tell your story true.

Sincerely,
Dr. Bernice Olivas

10. Exposure.Edu: Dirty Little Secrets

Writing about our past experiences requires reflecting on them and accepting them for what they are—human experiences. Exposing our true identities may feel less than cathartic at times because of the shame and guilt we carry. We hold back for fear of external judgment from our readers, but when the past meets the present, we find the opposite. The real conflict is an internal struggle with our judgment of self.

BETH BAILEY

I've been staring at white space for a few days now. The problem isn't that I can't write. It's Anna. Ten years ago, I killed her, but she's still here, demanding that I recognize that she's not going anywhere. She's persistent that way.

Sometimes we call upon the muse. Sometimes the muse calls upon us.

In late 2001, I enrolled in an introductory fiction writing course at a small community college just north of Atlanta. It was my first semester back after flunking out nearly a decade before, and I sat there twice per week and ate pudding, not for the taste, but because it was the only item at the student center that didn't crunch. I stared at the in-class assignment, a prompt which required me to write about internal conflict. "Write what you know," Schachner said. I swallowed another spoonful and journaled a few things I knew and others I thought I knew.

- I haven't been on more than three dates with one person since Geoff broke my heart five years ago.
- I need to be married by next year or I'll never have kids.
- I can't tell my parents or friends I'm here because I faked a college graduation. I won't even be in a "real" math class for three more semesters.
- If I get drug tested tomorrow, I'll be fired.
- A few weeks ago, terrorists hijacked airplanes and flew them into the World Trade Center.

I settled on the only one that didn't make me look or feel like a pathetic loser: 9/11. As a flight attendant, I knew I could tell the story. In fact, I had a lot of airline stories. What I didn't know was that 1. The stories would never be viewed as fictional even though I wrote them in third-person point of view, and 2. Over the next ten years, that third person, Anna, would expose everything on the list and far more.

PALINDROME ANNA: EMPLOYEE #150051

Coming and Going

Palindromes are words, numbers, or phrases that read the same forward or backward. The word is derived from the Greek roots “again” and “direction.” Palindromes aren’t new. In fact, they’ve been found in archaic texts in multiple languages. While often used as code language or brain teasers, different forms are often present in literature, movies, and music, too. Linguists who study palindromes often view words as images and with practice can view words and sentences forward and backward with the same fluency. It’s like reading through a dyslexic lens.

In the post-9/11 airline world, fire extinguishers were no longer for fighting fires. Oxygen was no longer for medical emergencies. Freshly brewed coffee and Cokes were no longer complimentary beverages. They were all potential weapons against people who were no longer passengers. I needed a character in a navy blue suit with starched white cuffs extending just beyond the blazer sleeves and a ponytail at the nape of her neck, earrings no bigger than dimes, and black socks that rose from a minimum of a ½-inch heel and hit mid-shin. She didn’t wear nail polish, and she was taught to wear minimal makeup by a Mary Kay specialist after ditching from a mock airplane into a pool.

I gave Anna my Delta Employee Number, 150051, before I named her. During the first year, she was Grace, Bree, and Bryn. They felt as awkward as a first date with no spark. I thought I found the perfect name for a flight attendant when I called her Gypsy, but like the others, I broke it off after a story or two.

The palindrome name of Anna wasn't intentional, but whether coincidence or fate, there was an instant connection.

SAGAS

Beginnings and Endings

Anna peeked around the Boeing 757 mid-galley wall from her cabin jump seat and practiced the "but-for" test. *Are you eyeing him because he looks Middle Eastern, or are you suspicious because of his actions*? Her eyes shifted to the passengers seated at the exit rows. Twelve broad shouldered males with puffed chests and furrowed brows were certainly "able and willing." Seatbacks were upright, tray tables were stowed, and there was no luggage at their feet. They weren't slumped left or right or awkwardly restrained by neck pillows. There were no bare feet creeping up the bulkhead walls or cheeks pressed against windows. Running shoes had been paired with slacks. They were united, almost locking elbows atop armrests. They were ready to roll. Anna received notes from two air marshals who looked like imposters in sport coats several sizes too large and another from the gate agent about the non-rev pilot in plainclothes at 27C. The marshals stared at pages within books to avoid seatmate interaction, but the pilot, like Anna, scanned the cabin continually. Typically exhausted, fear kept them awake. Anna slipped him the seat assignments of the marshals. "I just wanted to let you know your dog is on board," she said.

MGM

Takeoffs and Landings

Apparently, a voyeuristic peek into an unfamiliar industry in crisis or even not in crisis is intriguing to some. It's like a peep show in Vegas, complete with track lighting and filthy carpet. When the passengers settled into the new normal of "safety and comfort" and strike-anywhere matches were banned, a pubic hair on a soap dish and another on the fitted sheet in a random Holiday Inn in Allentown, Pennsylvania, were suddenly exciting. Readers wanted to see the captain do a cannonball into a hotel pool shaped like Alabama in Montgomery. They likely never ate airline food again after Anna wiped potato salad off her shoe and placed it on a first-class tray after forgetting to secure the meal carts for takeoff. They partied in Shannon, Ireland, during a mechanical delay. They smoked weed in a tiny bathroom at the St. Francis in San Francisco. They went to brothels, bathhouses, and pharmacies. They met prostitutes and perverts. They played Farmville in the secret world hidden beneath Concourse A in Atlanta. They saved George Jones' life. They might have dreamt about hotel fire alarms. They rode jump seats to forty-nine states, countless countries, and six continents.

Anna wasn't meant to stick around, but when I gave her a voice, she knew what to do with it. She had an eye for detail and her experiences drew readers in. Initially, she made my life easier. She earned high scores and praise. I liked that she was preserving my travels through creative journaling in the process. It felt like cheating, but if she could do a better job than I could, then that was my own subgenre of fiction: *distanced nonfiction with no threat of exposure fiction*. Anna became my co-pilot and my muse.

REFER

Pass or Fail

During my Senior Seminar course at Georgia State University, I received some harsh feedback that was difficult to chew on. "Tell it like it is, and it is," Russell said. "Remember, we've seen your peer reviews. You're not doing any of the things you're telling them to do. And, is that pudding?" It was my third course with Russell, and he had gotten to know Anna pretty well.

"Yes. And, I hate pudding," I said. "It's the only snack that doesn't make noise." It wasn't like it was comfort food. I wanted to cry in the silent blob of brown. I wanted him to move on to the kid who wrote about the two tennis-playing lesbians having sex in front of the fireplace.

I knew what he meant, but it wasn't until then that I realized I was writing scenes, not stories. I had the background and experience, but that wasn't enough. I was avoiding the *story*. Anna was *distancing* herself from the actual story. The classic definition of story goes something like this: a character wants something, sets out to get it, faces obstacles of outer and/or inner variety, succeeds or fails, and is changed by the experience (Payne, 2010).

Anna was born from a prompt on conflict, and wiping potato salad from her shoe and putting it on a first-class tray didn't count. The eye for detail and the voice couldn't make up for the lack of story. At that precise moment, I knew what she wanted. She wanted the closest exit. The failure hit hard. Russell didn't say, "I know this is you, and I know you have stories because

we all do." Instead, he punctured the one story where I had done all the things required: I set out to get a degree a decade after flunking out. I hurdled 9/11, failed relationships, Delta bankruptcy, and narrowly escaped being laid off. I came clean to my parents and friends about the graduation lie, and I managed to buy a home and graduate. I was changed by the experience, but the new decade was filled with even messier experiences. I studied the craft for six years, and it felt like Russell threw me into a gutter filled with chocolate pudding.

I've been staring at white space for a couple months now. The problem isn't that I can't write. It's Anna. Ten years ago, I killed her, but she's still here, demanding that I recognize she's not going anywhere. She's persistent that way.

The past is always in the present.

NOON

Past and Present

I can typically write a damn good essay in two hours, but only if it's within my comfort zone. Want me to teach you how to write more concisely? Want me to teach you how to peer review? Those are two-hour, comfort-zone essays. I could write an essay on how to ride a bike, and the bike would have streamers, a

basket, and gears or no gears, but if you think anyone learns to ride a bike by reading an essay, then give your kid the essay, a bike, and have the camera ready. When he or she crashes, you can say, "What happened? Didn't you read the instructions?" The kid can read the instructions fifteen times, but in the end, you'll still have to run alongside a hundred times and push until you can't feel your arms and legs, and finally, at some point, they'll remember to pedal and won't faceplant into the gutter and weep.

The white space is my gutter. It feels like an early morning walk of shame down Main Street. I have grocery-store feet, and one eye is bigger than the other. Maybe it's the big fight I had with my husband last month when he said 95% of what I said wasn't important. *Fire*. *Right Engine*. Maybe it's the big fight I had with him shortly after we married when he snuck and read my novel while I was on a trip. *Fire*. *Left Engine*. Maybe it's the fight we had in the JFK airport when he met one of the characters, a pilot who I previously dated. *Terrain*. *Terrain*. Maybe he's never sure which one he's going to get. It's getting more difficult to tell us apart.

AIBOHPHOBIA

In May of 2008, I arrived at Queens University of Charlotte. Most writers had stories to tell and they knew how to tell them. I had scenes. The stories were there, but I didn't know how to tell them, why I needed to tell them, or if I even wanted to tell them. The goal was to have work published, and plans went into action early. I made it in without Anna, but I needed her quickly. I had a novel to write.

For the first six months, I worked with Elizabeth Strout, who had just won the Pulitzer Prize for *Olive Kitteridge*. On the

first day, she returned feedback on the stories I submitted in my application packet. I received two "mehs." They were kind mehs, but there were multiple issues that I didn't know how to resolve. After all, I had a series of ghosts floating through the netting of a dreamcatcher.

I was scared to bring Anna back. Sure, her escapades worked well enough for undergraduate writing, but to reveal her to a Pulitzer Prize winner seemed entirely ridiculous. Anna wasn't the literary type. In fact, she was a traveling shit show. She drank too much and took too many pills. She sabotaged relationships. She sabotaged entire decades. She was impulsive and often shared things I wasn't comfortable with. She was wildly inappropriate. Anna was not only not likable. She was a total asshole, and I was embarrassed by her.

I was desperate, though. And, she had been as dependable as aces and eights when it came to creative details and scene setting. I just needed her to settle down and act literary. I needed her to fake it like the rest of us. She'd already screwed up most of the decade. Plus, it was Strout. Elizabeth Strout. *Write what you know. Tell it like it is. Just don't make me look stupid or undesirable. This is important.*

RADAR

Ups and Downs

I introduced Anna to Strout and my peers on our first submissions, but she wasn't alone. There were four flight attendants from her training class and a pilot.

- Jeb was Anna's roommate. He was gay and HIV positive.

- Mia's husband committed suicide while she was on a trip and he was caring for the kids.
- Kate had been trying to get pregnant for ten years. Her husband was cheating on her with multiple women.
- Heather was obsessed with appearance. She was anorexic and aged gracefully through surgeries.
- Sean was a pilot they all knew from flying South America. He found Anna's body when I killed her.

I thought my plan was brilliant. I could alternate characters and that would shift some of the weight off of Anna. She still didn't really know what her motivation was, but the others did, so I knew I had at least four stories according to the definition. I also needed some emotional distance from her. I didn't want to think about her stories much less share them. I needed to view her as a character separate from myself. Everything seemed safe.

It went quite well for a couple chapters. Then, my characters (friends) all freaked out. They didn't want to be there, in print. It was a struggle to get them to share details they knew were going on pages. They didn't want to be exposed any more than I did. It didn't matter that they were disguised or that no one knew the characters were based on them. It didn't matter that they weren't sitting in the classroom. We hadn't even left the ground, and they panicked. It put more weight on Anna. I couldn't write their stories like I could hers. I felt the growing pains, but still thought I was pulling it off.

By Chapter 13, I was emotionally exhausted. In small doses, I could handle her stories, but they were like a full cargo jet trying to take off out of a driveway when combined. It had been far from a cathartic process, and I was done. I don't think she really wanted to die, but I don't think she really cared if she lived, either. So, I killed her in Chapter 14. I thought it was my best writing ever. For the first time, she failed me. The details

were lovely, though. There was even a Gideon Bible on the nightstand.

SAGAS

Beginnings and Endings

Anna was already dead when security opened the door to her room in Quito. The mirrors were steamed and water flowed through cracks between tiles and settled on the marbled floors. Several dozen bright-colored roses with unopened petals, wrapped loosely in brown paper, were propped against her suitcase. Her pressed uniform hung above her polished shoes, a pair of socks tucked within.

"Anna?" Sean stood in the doorway as the security guard disappeared around the corner. He removed his hat as he entered. He didn't hear the water until he heard the absence of water. "Anna?"

The guard spoke Spanish into a walkie talkie. He held up his hand and shook his head as he backed away. Anna's eyes were closed, and her hair floated above her sunken body. Sean turned his head, frightened by her naked state. A slight breeze slipped between the individual hairs on his arms, and through the window, the Virgin de Panacillo watched in stoned stillness.

TENET

Forward and Backward

"You can't kill Anna," they said. "Are you okay?" Lauren Groff, my thesis advisor, and my pod members had all etched similar comments on the chapter.

I felt naked. "My plan was to kill Anna all along," I said. "You know it wasn't suicide, right? I'm fine." Anna was my character. It was my novel. Of course I could kill her. For the next three months, I took "defending a thesis" to an entirely different level. It was my favorite chapter, and I had looked forward to killing her since I worked with Strout.

"It's selfish," Groff said. "The other characters would be furious."

"It's a tragic flaw," I said. "How literary is that?" Anna's path to self-destruction wasn't hidden. She even passed out on a curbside couch on the corner of 10th and Juniper. Who were they to write the story?

"She's the character we relate to most. Are you sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine," I repeated over and again that last semester. I wasn't fine. I was humiliated, addicted to pills, and angry. Anna told it how it was, and it was. According to Susan Shapiro, if family members are angry, and people are worried, you've written something well. The other characters hadn't done their jobs, though. I wanted my readers to worry about them, not me. I had unintentionally exposed twenty years of reckless behaviors—my reckless behaviors—and over four hundred pages of them.

She could have died on any page in that novel, but the readers didn't get that. I wrote what I knew, and they knew I wrote what I knew. I could have died writing any page of

that novel. I never admitted it because I was so embarrassed. Instead, I tried desperately to convince them that she was a fictional character. I was the fictional character. I wanted the closest exit.

"Maybe kill one of the others?" one reader suggested. I couldn't do that. They had motivation. Anna didn't.

"If you're that hell bent on killing her, you need to do it in chapter 1, like *The Big Chill*" was offered up. In a writer's world, that means an entire restructure of four hundred pages. It meant I would have to write the entire novel backwards. She was the realistic one to kill. I thought killing Anna was the climax of my novel, but it became the climax of my writing for a long period of time. I was in a gutter filled with Anna's bathwater.

SOLOS

Inward and Outward

Until now, I haven't made eye contact with the novel. I couldn't process why Anna had to live. I was also unsure about revisiting the stories that highlighted not only things in my personal life I'm ashamed of, but also the failures in my writing. It forced me to ask myself some tough questions. Why did my readers love Anna? Why did I hate Anna? The answers mingle: Anna is anyone. Anna is me.

Her experiences are human experiences, and as humans, we're more alike than we're different. In my case, I had the "Self" that I wanted to show: professional, put together, capable, desirable. I had the "Self" that I wanted to hide: impulsive, reckless, self sabotaging, filled with resentment. My

internal struggle with Man vs Self morphed into Man vs. Man in Chapter 14 because of my unwillingness to acknowledge my path toward destruction. I was fine. I had detached completely from Anna in order to portray myself as something I wasn't.

My readers were much more forgiving of Anna's flaws. They saw her as real. They didn't need to see things end perfectly for her, but they needed to know she would be okay. Page by page, beginning with 9/11, I judged everything she did for the next ten years. I never cut her one ounce of slack. I bullied her continually. I never gave her credit for her willingness to be the voice I needed, her vulnerability, or her resilience. She wasn't who I wanted her to be, so I killed her.

I've been staring at white space for a few months now. The problem isn't that I can't write. It's Anna. Ten years ago, I killed her, but she's still here, demanding that I recognize she's not going anywhere. She's persistent that way.

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

AHA

Introvert and Extrovert

I see myself in the white space. The stories in the reflection

required forced effort and some resilience. They required acceptance and forgiveness. There have been uncomfortable silences on top of uncomfortable silences. It felt like peeling the layers of an onion. A navy blue uniform was the outermost layer that represented my identity as I wanted others to see me, but not my true self. As an extrovert, sitting in the quiet space with the introvert within was as frustrating as learning a new language. I had to view my stories of pain, guilt, shame, regret, and fear through a dyslexic lens that would allow me to view them for what they were: normal, human experiences. At the core, I found Anna, and I was no longer embarrassed by her. In fact, I was proud of her. It took ten years for me to recognize why I couldn't kill her. I'm glad she persisted. Somewhere in the whiteness, I realized I was finally pedaling.

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11. Let's Talk

What can English Language Learners do to make college easier?

BEN FILLMORE

Many years ago, as an undergraduate student, I was attending the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Guadalajara, Mexico. It was fantastic! The college culture was alive, and I was studying with students from all over the world. However, speaking, reading, and writing in a foreign language was still very difficult for me. Even though I was encouraged by almost everyone around me to try and speak only in Spanish, I constantly found myself drifting towards the English speakers. Why was this the case?

Trying to speak only in Spanish was exhausting and at times embarrassing. In class one day, I gathered up the courage to raise my hand and answer a question in front of the class. I did my best; it wasn't good, but I thought it would pass. After stumbling through what I had to say, I was greeted with blank stares and snickering. I then said, "Estoy muy embarazada." Thinking that I had said that I was embarrassed, what I actually said was "I am so pregnant." Laughter erupted from the rest of the class. Not only did I use the wrong word, I failed to conjugate the adjective as well. Literally, I said I was a very pregnant woman. I didn't say a word in class for weeks.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THIS WAY? LET'S TALK

I have never forgotten that moment in Guadalajara and how it made me feel. Now, I recognize the same pattern happening with my students. I have been an ESL (English as a Second Language) instructor for thirteen of my fifteen years of teaching. The majority of my students have always been ELLs (English Language Learners). I like to say, "Spin the globe, then place a finger on it to stop it from spinning and I bet I have taught someone from there." A bit dramatic, right? However, it's not too far from the truth.

I have always taught in higher education; that is, my students are adults. It's said that there is a language-acquisition window, somewhere around puberty, give or take a few years. After which, our ability to learn a new language declines. This goes hand in hand with language ego or language anxiety. As adults, we have developed an insecurity around the social pressure to know everything. This includes learning another language. As a teacher, I have heard many times, "My English is not very good." This is most often followed by a very silent student who struggles to participate in class. However, as we talk privately it is never the case.

SO, WHAT'S THE DEALIO? HERE'S HOW I SEE IT

As a child, language acquisition is a natural, relatively easy process. Children are sponges when it comes to learning language. However, as adults, we don't want to appear unintelligent in front of our peers. One small embarrassing

moment can lead to the resistance of trying again. I think we have all been here to one degree or another.

So, as students, how can we make the transition from our first language (L1) to our second language (L2, which in this case is English) any easier? According to Jamie Harrison and Hong Shi, both from Auburn University, in a study from 2016, there are a few steps we can take to get the most from our teacher's instruction and experience as college students (Harrison and Shi, 2016). Their approach is two fold: What can teachers do to help our students and what can our students do to help themselves. In this article, I will address students and do my best to provide a bit of advice on how to make this transition easier.

As a student:

1. Be visible to the teacher and to other students: no wallflowers.

> When I was a child just entering first grade, my father told me on the first day of class to walk right up to the teacher, introduce myself and sit in the front row. This always made me visible to the teacher and let the teacher know that I was serious about their class. I have always been an extrovert, so this was never a problem for me. However, not everyone is an extrovert.
>
> Here is the flipside: according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a wallflower is "a person who from shyness … remains on the sidelines of a social activity [such as being in class], or a shy or reserved person." In order to diminish the stress level on the first day, don't go into class as a stranger to the teacher. Reach out to your teacher before class begins with an email or phone call.

2. Initiate relationships with classmates and teachers: courage.

This one is a little tough for some new students. Remember that everyone in your class is a relatively new student, and no one wants to look foolish. However, this can be an opportunity for an ELL to present themselves as a friendly, ready-to-meet-other-students kind of person. I will agree, wholeheartedly, that this is not easy. This takes courage, to say the least, but the payoff will be incredible. I have learned over the years to see a group of strangers as potential friends and colleagues. The hard part is taking that first step. Remember that you can make more friends with words than silence.

3. Always be yourself.

Throughout my educational, professional, and social life, I have learned that it is always best to be who I am. I look back to high school and wonder what I was thinking. I had to have the right pants. I had to hang out with the right people. I had to agree with ideas and people that I had little in common with. It was exhausting. When I was able to rid myself of this need, I was able to be my true self in any situation. This gave me a boost to my confidence that I had never had before. Being able to express myself in public was liberating and empowering. Additionally, I was able to ask for what I needed to be successful in class.

4. Know that who you are is enough and that you deserve respect.

As an ELL your task is twice as challenging, if not more, than any student that already has mastered the English language. You have a unique perspective on language learning, education, and life in general. Share your experiences with classmates and teachers, and be ready to talk about them; they are important. The more you communicate with your teachers and fellow students, the more comfortable you will feel in class. Demonstrating your willingness to participate in conversations shows those around you that you are trying to accomplish the complex goal of learning another language.

5. Prepare prior to class.

Have you ever been caught off guard in a situation where you were called upon to answer a question in class that you had not prepared for? As a teacher, I see this in every class. The second I ask the class a question, it becomes obvious who is ready and who isn't. Immediately, there are a few hands in the air, ready to answer the question at hand. Then, there is the other half of the students who, all of a sudden, need to check their watches to see what time it is, or very closely inspect their shoes.

6. Be ready to participate.

In my experience as a student and a teacher, this may

be the best advice I can provide. The more a student can prepare for class, the better. Being prepared will help students feel less stress while in class because they will know ahead of time what will be discussed in class or during group work. This goes for any student. A native speaker may be able to "talk" their way out of being called on in class, but it is much more difficult for any student still learning English. Therefore, be prepared.

In conclusion, being visible to the teacher, initiating relationships, being yourself, and being prepared are just a few strategies that can help lessen language anxiety and boost your confidence. Due to the fact that we are all individuals, and we all learn in different ways, not all the advice above may be applicable to you, but it sets out a few simple guidelines to help avoid appearing pregnant in Guadalajara.

All love, and best wishes,
Sincerely,
B.R. Moose

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PART II

RHETORIC: HOW WE EXAMINE WRITING IN THE WORLD

Rhetoric provides a method for studying the work that language and writing do.

12. On Rhetoric

CHRIS BLANKENSHIP AND JUSTIN JORY

- Rhetoric Is Communicative
- Rhetoric Is About Discovery
- Rhetoric Is Generative
- Rhetoric Is Systematic
- Rhetoric Is Transferable

rhetoric [ret-er-ik]

Rhetoric is a discipline built on the notion that *language matters*. It's a discipline that's been around for over 2,500 years, and at different times, people who have studied it have been interested in different things. While their interests have led them to focus on different aspects of rhetoric, here at SLCC there are several common characteristics of rhetoric that we value.

[1] RHETORIC IS COMMUNICATIVE.

It's about conveying ideas effectively in

order to promote understanding among people.

I.A. Richards, an early 20th-century philosopher, defined rhetoric as "the study of misunderstandings and their remedies." Language is messy. It is difficult, contextual, and based on individual experience. We use language and privilege particular languages based on who we are, where we come from, and who we interact with. In essence, communicating with others is complicated and fraught with potential misunderstandings based on our experiences as individuals. Rhetoric gives you a way to work within the messiness of language. It helps writers think through the varied contexts in which language occurs, giving them a way to—ideally—effectively reach audiences with very different experiences.

[2] RHETORIC IS ABOUT DISCOVERY.

It's about inquiring into and investigating the communication situations we participate in.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in any given case the available means of persuasion." Often, the word "persuasion" is emphasized in this definition; however, the concept of "discovery" is also key here. In order to have ideas to communicate, we have to learn about the case—or situation—we're commenting on. Kenneth Burke likened this process to a gathering in a parlor, where you arrive with a

conversation already in progress. You have to actively listen to the conversation—carefully observe the situation you will participate in and the subject(s) that you will comment on—finding out the different participants' positions and justifications for those positions before you can craft an informed opinion of your own. Rhetoric is a tool that helps you think through and research the situation as you prepare to communicate with others.

[3] RHETORIC IS GENERATIVE.

It's about making things.

Jeff Grabill, a contemporary writing teacher, asks, "What are people doing when they are said to be doing rhetoric?" In response, he argues that rhetoric is a kind of work that creates things of value in the world. In other words, rhetoric creates attention to the world around us and particular people, places, and ideas in it. Paying attention to others around us helps us identify and make connections with others and their ideas, needs, and interests, and ultimately this can deepen our relationships with others. Importantly, connecting with others leads to action that alters the physical world around us, leading to the production of art and music, protests and performances, and even new buildings and spaces for people to conduct their lives. Understanding that rhetoric makes things can provide a reason to care about it and motivation to practice it.

[4] RHETORIC IS SYSTEMATIC.

It's about methodically communicating, discovering, and generating with language.

One characteristic that influences each of the previous three is that rhetoric is systematic. It provides both readers and writers with a purposeful and methodical approach to communicating, discovering, and generating with language. It provides a set of skills and concepts that you can consistently use in order to critically think, read, research, and write in ways that allow you to achieve your communication goals. It's important to realize, though, that rhetoric is not a one-size-fits-all formula. It's not a series of steps that you follow the same way every time. Every communication situation is different, with different goals, contexts, and audiences, and thinking rhetorically is a flexible process that allows you to adapt to, as Aristotle put it, "any given situation." You can think of rhetoric like a toolbelt. When using your tools, you don't always use a tape measure first, then a hammer, then a screwdriver. In fact, you don't always carry the same tools to different jobs. Depending on the job, you use different tools in different ways and in different orders to accomplish your task. Rhetoric is the same way.

[5] RHETORIC IS TRANSFERABLE.

It's about successfully applying

systematic ways of using language to new situations.

Perhaps the most important part of rhetoric, and why we teach it in the writing courses here at SLCC, is that it's transferable. Rhetoric isn't just a tool that you use in English classes; thinking rhetorically is a way to methodically approach any writing situation that you may run across in your academic, professional, or personal lives. You use rhetorical analysis in the chemistry classroom to dissect complex equations and then to communicate that knowledge to others, just like you use it to decipher what a TV commercial is attempting to make you believe about a given service or product. You use persuasion to pitch business ideas just as you use it when constructing a resume. Considerations of audience are vital for Facebook posts as well as job interviews. Understanding genre helps you to create effective lab reports as well as office e-mails. Learning to think and write rhetorically can impact every area of your life. Rhetoric is everywhere that language is. And language is everywhere.

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13. Language Matters: A Rhetorical Look at Writing

CHRIS BLANKENSHIP AND JUSTIN JORY

- Rhetoric: Your Tool Set for Understanding Language
- A Rhetorical Look at Language in Three Contexts

Language matters.

Few would argue that this is a radical claim; in fact, it's probably so obvious that most don't stop to consider *why* or *how* it matters.

For instance, to call a person or group "radical" is to presume their beliefs are extreme and to ask others to as well. Or think about any building on your campus. It may seem like a strange place to go when talking about language, but that building is the product of language. E-mails led to proposals, proposals led to budgets, budgets led to plans, and plans led to the construction of the building. Or think about any resume for any job opening. Within that text is language that encourages readers to view the writer as educated, experienced, and skilled in particular ways that are suited to the job expectations. In

other words, it's language that allows the writer to be—or at least appear to be—the best candidate for the job.

In each example above, language is generative—it creates something. In one instance, it generates a way of understanding, and thus a way of interacting with an individual or group and their beliefs. In another, it facilitates collaboration that eventually creates a new space for teaching and learning. And in the last, it constructs a professional identity, which can lead to a new job and a better salary.

The fact that language is generative is why it's worth paying attention to; it's a resource we can use to do things, make things, and be things in the world. In your writing classes at SLCC, we will spend time exploring this perspective on language. Ultimately, we believe that by being more mindful of others' language and more deliberate about your own, you can become a more effective communicator. And this is true whether you already consider yourself a strong writer or not.

RHETORIC: YOUR TOOL SET FOR UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE

Ask anyone who studies rhetoric what it is, and they'll tell you it's difficult to define. This is because rhetoric has been around as a discipline of study for over 2,500 years, and at different times people who study it have been interested in different things. Most basically, though, rhetoric is a discipline built on the notion that *language matters*. People who study rhetoric and those who practice it believe that what we say and how we say it is worthy of study, and they use concepts from the discipline to systematically research the impact of language in society. We'll spare you the nitty-gritty details. What we want you to know about rhetoric here is that it provides a set of tools

you can use to raise your awareness of language and to be more deliberate about your own language practices.

But how does it work?

Like any other discipline, rhetoric has a vocabulary that helps us think and talk about its subject matter: language. Three concepts that will help you think about language and texts in your writing classes at SLCC are *audience*, *purpose*, and *context*. While these are by no means the only rhetorical concepts you'll learn about, they provide a place to begin.

To think rhetorically about audience is to ask particular questions about the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the people whom texts are written for:

- Who is the audience?
- What do they know or not know about the issue?
- What are their relevant experiences?
- What stance(s) might they hold?
- What's the best way to reach this audience?

To think rhetorically about purpose is to ask particular questions about the motivations and goals that lead writers to produce texts:

- What issues, events, or problems led the writer to take action?
- What is the writer's response?
- How does the text support this response?
- What is the goal of this text?
- What does the writer want his audience to do, feel, or believe?

To think rhetorically about context is to ask particular questions about social, political, historical, ideological, institutional, and cultural factors that shape the way writers and audiences experience a text:

- Has any action been taken on this issue recently?
- What laws or social norms may influence the perception of the text?
- What limitations might the context place upon the writer's arguments, evidence, or medium of composition?

At SLCC, we believe a defining characteristic of effective writers is their ability to be flexible, to adapt to the demands of the task before them, and this requires an attention to language that rhetorical thinking makes possible. Mentioned above are examples of the questions that rhetorically savvy writers use to adapt their language in ways that achieve their goals for

communication. These questions can be useful in nearly every communication situation. The following scenarios represent different "everyday" situations where attention to language matters and knowledge of rhetoric can assist writers in responding in ways that allow them to achieve their goals.

A RHETORICAL LOOK AT LANGUAGE IN THREE CONTEXTS

Academic

After graduating high school, Robbie finds a good job that pays well and is close to home. He works in this job for several years but after applying for a promotion he is told that the position requires a college degree. He decides that after investing so many years with the company he will take up the challenge and earn this degree. Robbie's company specializes in growing organic produce, so he decides that biology might be a good major to help him advance in the company. He starts to investigate the biology program at the local college. On the biology department's website, he finds this description of the major:

> The study of life is the study of chemical processes. A major in biology trains you in the experimental techniques used to probe the structures and functions of biologically important molecules. This degree provides students with a rigorous general background in the field of biology to prepare for graduate or

professional school or science-related jobs requiring Bachelor's-level training. Our students address basic biological principles using both plant and animal model systems. Much of a student's work in our department is focused on answering physiologically relevant questions by using the latest cell and molecular-based biological approaches. The curricular requirements in chemistry, mathematics, and physics have been selected to optimize students' future opportunities. The degree provides a rigorous background in fundamental biology and similar areas and prepares students for professional or research-oriented careers and graduate work in a selected area of biology.

After reading this description several times, Robbie still doesn't have a good sense of what he would be learning in this major or how it might allow him to learn more about topics important to his company. He looks further on the website, but all he finds is a list of courses available; some, like BIO 2030: Animal Behavior, sound interesting, but others, like BIO 3400: Plant and Animal Model Systems, just seem confusing. Robbie really wants to attend this college because it is close to home and is affordable. However, based on this description, he's not sure whether this is the right major for him or whether it is even the right college.

We argue that rhetoric can help Robbie find his answer. Rhetoric begins with observation. In this case, it is noticing things about the language that is leading Robbie to a feeling of uncertainty. Perhaps the most obvious observation about the text is the difficult, disciplinary language. For example, there are a number of terms and phrases that would be unfamiliar to someone like Robbie who is outside the field of biology:

"plant and animal model systems," "molecular-based biological approaches," "physiologically relevant questions." There are also terms and phrases that may not be unfamiliar but remain vague without specialized knowledge. For instance, what does it mean to "probe the structures and functions of biologically important molecules"? Or, what exactly is "fundamental biology" and what are the "similar areas" that this degree provides a rigorous background in? Where does Robbie's interest in organic produce fit in these descriptions?

From this careful attention to the language of the program description, we can see that there is a disconnect between Robbie's knowledge and the knowledge necessary to understand this text.

Why does this disconnect exist in the first place? Thinking rhetorically about audience, purpose, and context can give us further insight into this rhetorical problem. For instance, many colleges across the United States do not expect students to declare a major until their second year; therefore, the specialized language in this description is likely intended for an audience of students who have already taken introductory courses in biology and will have more familiarity with the specialized terms. Therefore, the purpose of the program description is not to persuade people to join the major but to explain the degree to students who are already biology majors, perhaps helping them interpret and synthesize their experiences in the program.

By looking at this text in context, we can see that the gap is not a deficiency on Robbie's part but exists because he is not the intended audience for the description. Robbie hasn't started college yet and he is not a biology major. However, knowing this does not help Robbie answer his question about whether the biology major is right for him. To bridge this gap, Robbie would have to move from reading rhetorically to writing rhetorically by thinking about audience, purpose, and context as a writer would.

In this situation, a fitting response would be to write an e-mail requesting more information. Many colleges have a faculty member who serves as an undergraduate advisor for their majors, who would be an appropriate audience for this purpose. Such a response could look like this:

> Dear Professor Smith,
>
> My name is Robert Jones, and I'm considering enrolling in Local College as a biology major next semester. I have worked at a local company specializing in organic foods for many years and have recently discovered that I need additional education to advance my career within the company. After reading through your department's website, I'm not sure if the biology major at Local College is the right one to help me advance in my profession. Does this degree let me specialize in a way that would fit with my career goals? Any information that you can send me about your program would be helpful and very much appreciated.
>
> Thank you for your time,
>
> Robert Jones

We can see several rhetorically savvy language choices in this e-mail. It establishes credibility with the intended audience by showing that the writer has already begun an initial investigation of the major. By showing that he's already done some research, it establishes that he needs new information,

which is not readily available on the department's website. The language of the e-mail is quite formal, which suggests the writer understands the professional context of the communication. Together, establishing credibility through research and using formal language suggests that the writer is proactive and interested, and this demonstration of rhetorical awareness can help him build a relationship with a potential teacher and mentor, Professor Smith.

This is an example of how, with rhetorical thinking, you can make language work for you.

Personal

Marcela recently graduated from high school and has just started her eighteen-month religious mission in South America. Every Monday afternoon Marcela and her fellow missionaries are encouraged to write letters and e-mails home to their friends and family. Marcela usually only has one chance a week to write correspondence and has to write to multiple people, leaving less time than she might like or need to think about and craft her correspondence. Marcela's first e-mail is to her mother, her strongest supporter and the person she most wants to maintain contact with.

Hi Mom,

We made it to Brazil in one piece! Everyone has been really nice and helpful. Our apartment is nice and me and Sister Jones have been working together a lot. The first couple of days were really tiring but a really great experience! Brazil is such a beautiful place, but I miss

home a lot. Is everyone doing okay? Say hi to Gizmo for me and give dad a kiss. I love you!

Love, Marcela

The next day Marcela receives a response from her mother.

Hi Pumpkin,

I'm so glad you made it safe and that everyone has been so nice and helpful! Where is Sister Jones from? I'm glad the experience has been great. What kinds of things have you been doing? Have you had any good conversations with locals? I know it's early but have you met with any investigators yet? I saw on the news there was an earthquake in Bolivia. It makes me worried about you!

Let us know how you're doing.

Love, Mom

When Marcela receives her mother's response, she expects to get an update on what's happening at home but instead finds only questions about what she's been doing in South America instead. She loves hearing from her mom, but she doesn't feel

as connected to home as she wants because the e-mail from her mom was nothing but questions for Marcela. The next week when she starts to write her reply, she's not sure whether to spend her limited time answering her mother's questions or asking her own questions that will get her the updates that she needs to feel less homesick.

Thinking rhetorically can be a useful way for Marcela to understand this disconnect in communication. In her first e-mail, Marcela's rhetorical purpose for writing is to give her mother an update about her arrival in South America. Her mother's response indicates a similar expectation from the e-mail but shows a desire for more specific detail in order to more deeply understand Marcela's experiences. Context is equally important. In her mother's response, there are questions about the mission itself and her success reaching others to talk about their faith. These human interactions are the key reason why these missionaries spend one-and-a-half years of their lives away from their families.

Marcela's reaction to her mom's e-mail reveals that she also, as an audience, has expectations about what this weekly correspondence will accomplish. While she recognizes the importance of her mission, it's the first time she's been away from her family for this length of time. She wants these e-mails to be her link back to home so she can feel she's still connected to her family, friends, and the place where she grew up. The response from her mother provides little information to help her to feel connected to home.

Thinking more intentionally about the different purposes and audiences in the correspondence can help Marcela write more effective e-mails home. Such an e-mail could look like this:

> Dear Mom,

Things are going great here! We're settled now and got to talk to two different families so far. One of the daughter's names is Mary, and she loved it when Sister Jones and I sat with her to read 3 Nephi 14:25 (I know you'll know this one!). Sister Jones was in theater at her high school in Seattle, and she's helping me get more comfortable talking to groups of people. We've also been talking to people about the earthquake to start our conversations. It's been all over the news, but we didn't feel it here and some of the families thought it was funny we thought it was such a big deal. We're going to see Mary's family again next week, so maybe I'll have some good news about her in the next e-mail!

Is everything good there? Is Jeff doing okay in school? I know he was worried about math this year without me to help him out. Have Mr. and Mrs. Gunderson found a new babysitter yet? I hope Sophia doesn't miss me too much. Say hi to them for me when you see them at church!

Let me know how everyone's doing! It makes me feel closer to home when I can hear all about what's going on there.

Love, Marcela

We can see that this e-mail includes much more detail than Marcela's first e-mail. These details help both of the audiences

(Marcela and her mom) get what they want and expect from the e-mail correspondence. She answers the direct questions her mother asked; for example, the sentence that mentions high school answers the question of who Sister Jones is while also providing details about how Marcela's missionary work is unfolding. To give her audience cues about what she wants from the weekly correspondence, Marcela's e-mail includes more explicit questions about people back at home and a direct request for more details. Through addressing both Marcela's and her mother's purposes for the correspondence, and the context of missionary work, this new response demonstrates greater rhetorical skill because it is responsive to audience expectations and needs.

Civic

Recently, on his way home from work, Jason noticed signs in his neighbors' yards for Proposition 12.

- Don't Regulate How We Recreate. Yes on 12.
- Just Say No to Prop 12.

Usually, he doesn't pay attention to signs like this but he's noticed a lot of them. On his way to meet his friends for dinner he notices a group of protestors outside the courthouse downtown who are also holding signs about Proposition 12.

- Don't Regulate How We Recreate. Yes on 12.

- Where there's smoke there's fire! Yes on Prop. 12.
- Fight Crime, Not Fun. Vote for Prop 12!
- Legalize Don't Penalize. Prop 12 ✓
- High there? High here! Vote yes on 12.
- No Victim, No Crime. Make 12 happen.

The signs don't tell Jason much about the proposition. His friends aren't sure what it's about either, so one of them pulls out a phone, does a quick search, and announces that Proposition 12 is a vote to legalize recreational marijuana in the state. Immediately, Jason's friends are enthusiastic supporters, but Jason isn't sure whether or how he should vote.

The immediate gap is in Jason's understanding of the issue. While a quick internet search tells him that Prop 12 is about marijuana legalization, he still has very little information about why people would support or oppose legalization. Like Robbie and Marcela, Jason can develop a better sense of the situation by thinking rhetorically about the texts he's seeing. At first glance, the signs simply seem to be supporting the proposition, but if we read them more critically we can see the values expressed through the language they use. For instance, "No Victim, No Crime" suggests the author of the sign wants the audience to think that activities that only affect the individual shouldn't be considered crimes by the government. And, as another example, "Don't Regulate How We Recreate" suggests the author wants the audience to view marijuana use as a form of normal personal recreation, which downplays any move to tie it to dangerous or deviant behavior. In both examples, the authors value individual rights over government regulation of those rights, particularly when there is no harm done to others.

However, in viewing this situation rhetorically, we can also see that all the texts so far present only one perspective on the issue-at-hand. Jason hasn't noticed any signs that opposed Prop 12, and he therefore needs to research this perspective to be able to make an informed decision about his vote. Again, rhetorical thinking is a useful way to investigate topics of interest. Even a simple Google search, when done mindfully, can be rhetorical. For example, after thinking about the messages of the signs above, if Jason is most interested in the idea of individual rights, he could type "proposition 12 individual rights" or even "proposition 12 harm to others" into a search engine. While looking through the results he could choose to read statements written by people who oppose the opposition that specifically address the issue of individual rights as it relates to Prop 12. This would help him get a sense of the rationale behind their objections, which can also give him a better understanding of the values that support their reasoning. While using online research to learn more about the issue, he might also notice the people and organizations who associate themselves with each position. He might also consider what he knows about his neighbors who have signs in their yards. This information provides another way for him to determine how to cast his vote.

Though Jason is not writing a response like Robbie or Marcela are, he is still using rhetoric to act. In his case, he's thinking rhetorically in order to learn about a key issue in his state. When he meets with his friends next, he can fully participate in the conversation, contributing ideas and possibly even trying to persuade them of a different point of view. When he goes to cast his vote on a proposition that could lead to social and cultural change in his state, he can be confident that he's making an educated choice.

CONCLUSION

All three of these scenarios show how careful attention to language and the contexts that surround it can help individuals understand the communication challenges they experience and effectively respond to those challenges. In the writing program at SLCC, we use rhetoric as a way to investigate, understand, and use language. Working with language is difficult and it's messy. It's a skill you have to learn and practice; rhetoric gives you a framework to make that process easier. It's a method that you can use systematically as a way of revealing and handling the complexity of language. In short, rhetoric is a tool to make language work for you.

Though it may not always be apparent in your courses, rhetorical thinking transfers across contexts. You can use it to understand writing tasks in other college courses, on the job, and in your personal life. Where there's language, there's potential for rhetorical thinking. It's the rhetorical thinking that we want you to take with you from these courses. And this is why rhetoric matters.

14. The Rhetorical Situation

JUSTIN JORY

- Profile
- Elements of the Rhetorical Situation
- A Visual Model of the Rhetorical Situation
- Additional Resources on the Rhetorical Situation

PROFILE

The term "rhetorical situation" refers to the circumstances that bring texts into existence. The concept emphasizes that writing is a social activity, produced by people in particular situations for particular goals. It helps individuals understand that, because writing is highly situated and responds to specific human needs in a particular time and place, texts should be produced and interpreted with these needs and contexts in mind.

As a writer, thinking carefully about the situations in which you find yourself writing can lead you to produce more meaningful texts that are appropriate for the situation and responsive to others' needs, values, and expectations. This is

true whether writing a workplace e-mail or completing a college writing assignment.

As a reader, considering the rhetorical situation can help you develop a more detailed understanding of others and their texts.

In short, the rhetorical situation can help writers and readers think through and determine why texts exist, what they aim to do, and how they do it in particular situations.

ELEMENTS OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Writer

The writer is the individual, group, or organization who authors a text. Every writer brings a frame of reference to the rhetorical situation that affects how and what they say about a subject. Their frame of reference is influenced by their experiences, values, and needs: race and ethnicity, gender and education, geography and institutional affiliations to name a few.

Audience

The audience includes the individuals the writer engages with the text. Most often there is an intended, or target, audience for the text. Audiences encounter and in some way use the text based on their own experiences, values, and needs that may or may not align with the writer's.

Purpose

The purpose is what the writer and the text aim to do. To think rhetorically about purpose is to think both about what motivated writers to write and what the goals of their texts are. These goals may originate from a personal place, but they are shared when writers engage audiences through writing.

Exigence

The exigence refers to the perceived need for the text, an urgent imperfection a writer identifies and then responds to through writing. To think rhetorically about exigence is to think about what writers and texts respond to through writing.

Subject

The subject refers to the issue at hand, the major topics the writer, text, and audience address.

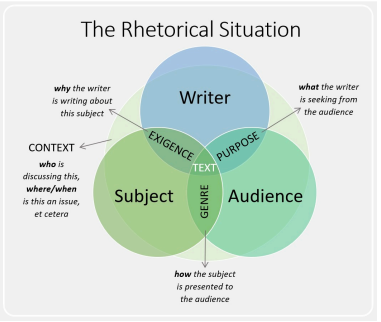
Context

The context refers to other direct and indirect social, cultural, geographic, political, and institutional factors that likely influence the writer, text, and audience in a particular situation.

Genre

The genre refers to the type of text the writer produces. Some texts are more appropriate than others in a given situation, and a writer's successful use of genre depends on how well they meet, and sometimes challenge, the genre conventions.

A VISUAL MODEL OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

- "The Rhetorical Situation: Writing Doesn't Exist in a Vacuum"—video published by the Student Writing Center

at the University of Maryland-Baltimore

- "The Rhetorical Situation"—entry published on Wikipedia.com

15. Audience

JUSTIN JORY

- Profile
- What Others Say About Audience
- Frequently Asked Questions When Thinking About Audience
- Additional Readings on Audience

audience [aw-dee-intz]

PROFILE

Audience is a rhetorical concept that refers to the individuals and groups that writers attempt to move, inciting them to action or inspiring shifts in attitudes and beliefs. Thinking about audience can help us understand who texts are intended for, or who they are ideally suited for, and how writers use writing to respond to and move those people. While it may not be possible to ever fully "know" one's audience, writers who are good rhetorical thinkers know how to access and use

information about their audiences to make educated guesses about their needs, values, and expectations—hopefully engaging in rhetorically fitting writing practices and crafting and delivering useful texts. In short, to think about audience is to consider how people influence, encounter, and use any given text.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT AUDIENCE

Audience can refer to the actual and imagined people who experience and respond to a text. In their essay, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford explain the difference between actual and imagined audiences, what they call addressed and invoked audiences.

Addressed audiences are the "actual or intended readers of a text" and they "exist outside the text" (167). These audiences are comprised of actual people who have values, needs, and expectations that the writer must anticipate and respond to in the text. People can identify actual audiences by thinking about where and when a text is delivered, how and where it circulates, and who would or could encounter the text.

On the other hand, invoked audiences are created, perhaps shaped, by a writer. The writer uses language to signal to audiences the kinds of positions and values they are expected to identify with and relate to when reading the text. In this sense, invoked audiences are imagined by the writer and, to some degree, are ideal readers that may or may not share the same positions or values as the actual audience.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AUDIENCE

- Who is the actual audience for this text and how do you know?
- Who is the invoked audience for the text and where do you see evidence for this in the text?
- What knowledge, beliefs, and positions does the audience bring to the subject-at-hand?
- What does the audience know or not know about the subject?
- What does the audience need or expect from the writer and text?
- When, where, and how will the audience encounter the text and how has the text—and its content—responded to this?
- What roles or personas (e.g., insider/outsider or expert/novice) does the writer create for the audience? Where are these personas presented in the text and why?
- How should/has the audience influenced the development of the text?

ADDITIONAL READINGS ON AUDIENCE

Audience, an entry in the Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms, by Richard Nordquist

Consider Your Audience, an entry in Writing Commons, by Joe Moxley

What to Think About When Writing for a Particular Audience, entry in Writing Commons, by Amanda Wray

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Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 35, no. 2, (May, 1984): 155-171.

16. Exigence

JUSTIN JORY

- Profile
- What Others Say About Exigence
- Frequently Asked Questions When Thinking About Exigence
- Additional Readings on Exigence

exigence [ek-si-jen(t)s]

PROFILE

Exigence is a rhetorical concept that can help writers and readers think about why texts exist. You can use the concept to analyze what others' texts are responding to and to more effectively identify the reasons why you might produce your own. Understanding exigence can lead to a better sense of audience and purpose, as well: When you know why a text exists, you will often have a clearer sense of to whom it speaks and what it seeks to do.

The rhetorical concept of exigence, sometimes called exigency, is attributed to rhetorical scholar Lloyd Bitzer. In his essay, "The Rhetorical Situation," he identifies exigence as an important part of any rhetorical situation. Bitzer writes, exigence is "an imperfection marked by urgency … a thing which is other than it should be." It is the thing, the situation, the problem, the imperfection, that moves writers to respond through language and rhetoric. Bitzer claims there can be numerous exigencies necessitating response in any situation but there is always a controlling exigency—one that is stronger than the others (6–8).

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT EXIGENCE

1. In contrast to Bitzer's idea of exigence, which suggests writers and texts *respond* to exigence and that exigence is, perhaps, pre-existing to language and rhetoric, Richard Vatz argues that writers and texts *create* exigence for audiences (159). How might this perspective change the way you look at writing?
2. Jimmie Killingsworth states that writers may be moved to write "by something another writer has said," "by a discovery" of something, "by an event requiring interpretation and reflection," or "by an attitude the author would like to change" (27). Of course, there are many more exigencies. The more detailed account of the exigencies influencing writing in any given situation the better.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT EXIGENCE

- What has moved the writer to create the text?
- What is the writer, and the text, responding to?
- What was the perceived need for the text?
- What urgent problem, or issue, does this text try to solve or address?
- How does the writer, or text, construct exigence—something that prompts response—for the audience?

ADDITIONAL READINGS ON EXIGENCE

Exigence, entry in the *Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms*, by Richard Nordquist

Introduction to Exigence, a student-developed website with applications, by Taylor Brooks

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Killingsworth, M. Jimmie. *Appeals in Modern Rhetoric: An Ordinary Language Approach*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2005.

Vatz, Richard. “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 6.3, 1973: 154-161.

17. On Genre

CLINT JOHNSON

- Genre Is a Form of Social Action
- Genre Is a Product of Situated Cognition
- Genre Is Both Stable and Dynamic
- Genre Can Be Translated

genre [jon-ruh]

Genre is a concept that comes from understanding how language becomes meaningful in context. Essentially, it is a tool that helps us use language by grouping it into categories or types. For example, a list is different from a report, which is different from a romantic story, which is different from a tweet. Each genre is different in form but also in how, when, and why it is used. This is because each genre exists for specific reasons, to do particular things in the world. By studying genre, we improve our ability to learn and then use forms of communication effectively in various situations.

At Salt Lake Community College, we often use theories of rhetoric to understand the work language does. A rhetorical view of genre teaches the following:

[1] GENRE IS A FORM OF SOCIAL ACTION.

It's about knowing how to effectively participate within a community.

Writing professor Carolyn R. Miller changed how people understand genre by defining it as "typified social action." Language binds communities together. Within communities, people have values, goals, questions, and concerns that are often similar, and they use language to negotiate these wants and needs. In this mass of interaction, many situations occur over and over, whether it's challenging a parking ticket, telling a scary story, or proposing marriage. Genre provides ways to understand and respond to these "recurring" situations. Think of how you write to help you shop (probably a list) compared to how you communicate your educational and work experience when applying for a job (probably a resume). When faced with a recurring situation, others have made choices in their communication that helped them achieve their goals of acting in and upon the community. By knowing what others have done that has worked in the past, we are better able to make choices in communication that result in the social actions, and reactions, we want.

[2] GENRE IS A PRODUCT OF SITUATED COGNITION.

It tells us how people think in situations

that recur in life.

People from different cultures often respond very differently to similar situations and subjects. An American is likely to think differently about the responsibilities of government than a Kenyan or North Korean. These differences exist not only in what we think, but how we think. A German student may be encouraged to analyze and evaluate a statement by a professor while a Chinese student may be charged to memorize, understand, and recite the statement. These socially influenced ways of thinking, what genre theorists Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin (formerly of the University of Utah) characterize as "a community's ways of knowing, being, and acting," can be understood as genres. To understand genre is to understand what and how others in our communities think about subjects and in situations, which helps us determine our own positions and communicate more effectively.

[3] GENRE IS BOTH STABLE AND DYNAMIC.

It offers familiar ways to communicate while also changing to fit new circumstances.

Genre, at its most basic, can be understood as a form that a text takes. This form can be used over and over and provides a frame of reference to help us communicate. Learning to write a Facebook post by using appropriate length, tone, and links

makes it easy to communicate a huge variety of ideas so that they will be read, and hopefully liked and forwarded on, by Facebook readers. Knowing the genre makes communication in that situation easier. You know what people expect in your writing and how to give them that. However, genres are always changing. The new Facebook Quote Plugin allows people to easily highlight and quote sections of a text while the Save Button allows them to save content from a page onto their own with one click. Genre changes as the goals, desires, challenges, and even technologies used by the community change. Failing to learn those changes to the genre can limit our effectiveness when using that genre in a community. This paradox, that genre provides stability to communication while still changing, caused contemporary writing teacher Catherine Schryer to characterize genre as "stabilized-for-now." Genres are useful as we learn them, but we must continue to learn about their changes or they become less effective tools.

[4] GENRE CAN BE TRANSLATED.

Some things we understand about a genre in one situation can help us communicate in another.

One invaluable thing about rhetorical knowledge is that it can be transferred from one situation to another. Genre works the same way—kind of. What we learn about one genre in a specific situation can often help us learn to communicate effectively in a similar but not identical situation. However, doing exactly the same thing we've done previously rarely works when writing in new genres. Instead, we need to

"translate" our knowledge. This is similar to how Spanish must be translated for an English speaker to understand what is said. Literally translating every word in order from Spanish to English creates confusion because the languages are different. Instead, the meaning communicated in Spanish is considered and rebuilt using the unique nature of English.

Similarly, our knowledge of genre gained from previous experience provides us with principles, strategies, and notions about writing that we can use to examine new genres and see how some things we know apply there. Reports you write in your history class won't be exactly the same as reports you write in your English class. However, certain things you learned about writing a report in English class—such as the importance of documenting sources and avoiding a style that makes you seem biased—may also be important in reports for your history class. By translating our genre knowledge when we're challenged with writing in a new situation, we're able to learn new genres more quickly. This helps us communicate effectively in new situations.

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18. Counterargument

JIM BEATTY

- Introduction
- Definitions
- Examples
- Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

In public, argumentative writing situations, it is important to display an awareness of the fact that there is more than one legitimate way to approach serious social issues. Writers do this by employing "counterargument," sometimes referred to as "anticipating objections." This allows writers to acknowledge the complexity of their topic while still maintaining a strong perspective of their own. This strengthens readers' sense of the writer's ethos (credibility/reliability) and provides key support for the writer's thesis.

Counterargument should occur early in a paper. In shorter college essays, it should ideally come in the first or second body paragraph. Doing its job of "anticipating objections," a counterargument that occurs right after the thesis statement addresses common objections to the writer's perspective before they are fully formed in the reader's mind. For topics

that need more explanation and context than others, counterargument can be effective placed after that background information. If counterargument occurs late in the paper—especially in the last paragraph or two, it has the effect of saying, "I just made all these great points, but I could be wrong." Never end an argument with the notion that it might not be valid.

DEFINITIONS

There are three main strategies for addressing counterargument:

Acknowledgement: This acknowledges the importance of a particular alternative perspective but argues that it is irrelevant to the writer's thesis/topic. When using this strategy, the writer agrees that the alternative perspective is important, but shows how it is outside of their focus.

Accommodation: This acknowledges the validity of a potential objection to the writer's thesis and how on the surface the objection and and thesis might seem contradictory. When using this strategy, the writer goes on to argue that, however, the ideal expressed in the objection is actually consistent with the writer's own goals if one digs deeper into the issue.

Refutation: This acknowledges that a contrary perspective is reasonable and understandable. It does not attack differing points of view. When using this strategy, the writer responds with strong, research-based evidence showing how that other perspective is incorrect or unfounded.

Note that all three methods involve acknowledging the

existence and reasonableness of contrary perspectives on the writer's topics.

EXAMPLES

Let's see how these three strategies could work in practice by considering the thesis statement "Utah public schools need to invest more money in arts education."

Acknowledgement: One possible objection to the thesis could be: "Athletics are also an important part of students' educational experience." The writer could acknowledge that athletics are indeed important, but no more important than the arts. A responsible school budget should be able to include both.

Accommodation: Another possible objection to this thesis could be: "Students need a strong foundation in STEM subjects in order to get into college and get a good career." The writer could acknowledge that STEM education is indeed crucial to students' education. They could go on to argue, however, that arts education helps students be stronger in STEM classes through teaching creative problem solving. So, if someone values STEM education, they need to value the arts as well.

Refutation: The most common objection to education budget proposals is that there is simply not enough money. Given limited resources, schools have to prioritize where money is spent. To argue against this, the writer will have to do some research. Direct refutation must be backed up with verifiable facts. In terms of research required, refutation takes the most work of these three methods. To argue that schools do have enough resources to support arts education, the writer would need to look at

current budget allocations. They could Google "Salt Lake City school district budget" to find a current budget report. In this report, they would find that the total budget for administrative roles in the 2014–15 school year totaled $10,443,596 (Roberts and Kearsley). Then they could argue that through administrative reforms, a small portion of this money could be freed up to make a big difference in funding arts education.

CONCLUSION

Too often, writers employ counterargument in a way that makes them sound contradictory or unsure of themselves. Employing one of these three strategies to address possible objections, however, makes counterargument serve as powerful evidence that helps prove the thesis statement. When used correctly, counterargument strengthens both the writer's logos (logic) as well as ethos (credibility/reliability). Effective use of counterargument leaves readers with the impression that the writer is a fair-minded, thoughtful participant in public, argumentative writing—one who readers are likely to trust.

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19. Rhetoric & Genre: You've Got This! (Even If You Don't Think You Do ...)

TIFFANY ROUSCULP

- Rhetoric & Genre Pop Quiz
- Understanding New Words
- Complex Rhetorical Analysis

It's your first day of your first semester of college. You settle into an uncomfortable seat in a fluorescent-lit room, glance around at other students hypnotized by their phones, and wait for the teacher to begin. The LCD projector hums above as it warms to display the syllabus and the teacher begins to talk:

"Welcome to English Composition. In this class, you'll learn about rhetoric. We will learn how to use genre to navigate different writing situations ..."

Hmm. You thought this was a writing class.

Rhetoric? Genre?

Am I in over my head?

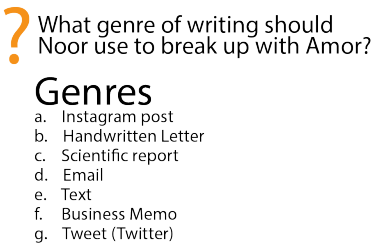
Not to worry. You're totally fine. You're in the right place. These terms, *rhetoric* and *genre*, are words that may be

unfamiliar to you, but you already know a lot about what they represent.

Rhetoric and genre are, at the same time, very simple and very complex concepts. There are other excellent readings in the Open English@SLCC collection that share their complexities with you, like Lisa Bickmore's "Genre in the Wild" and Lynn Kilpatrick's "Definitions, Dilemmas, Decisions"; but for now, let's start simple. Let's start with what you already know.

RHETORIC & GENRE POP QUIZ

Your friend, Noor, has been in a romantic relationship with Amor for the past two years. A few months ago, Noor moved to another city and, after trying to have a long-distance relationship, has decided to break up with Amor. Noor wants to break up in writing because they are scared that they won't be able to go through with it in person (or over the phone) because Amor will talk them out of it. Noor still loves Amor and wants this to be as painless as possible for both of them.



If you answered B or D, you are in agreement with nearly everyone else who has ever or who would ever take this quiz. (If you answered E, you're probably from Generation Z, but

let's see what you think by the end of this reading. You might change your mind.)

That was a pretty easy Pop Quiz. And your response shows that you already are quite skilled at using rhetoric and genre. Sometimes encountering new words (i.e. vocabulary), like those found in a syllabus, can make you feel insecure or unsure of your abilities. That's normal. There are steps we can take to move past those feelings so you can get started learning.

UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS

First, let's look at those words.

rhetoric [REH · tr · uhk] Middle English: from Old French via Latin from Greek, 'art of speaking or writing effectively'

At its most basic, in terms of reading, writing, and

English composition classes, rhetoric is the analytical study of communication. In composition, that communication tends to consist of print, digital, visual, and sometimes audio documents and texts. (Rhetoric is also used to study spoken texts as well, but that tends to happen more in communication classes.) Rhetorical analysis asks you to examine texts in terms of *purpose*, *author*, *audience*, and *context* (or *situation*).

genre [ZHAAN · ruh] early 19th century: French, literally 'a kind'

Genre is one element of rhetoric. Genre, in its most basic meaning, means "a type, or kind" of text. Texts can be described as, or categorized into, genres. The effectiveness or appropriateness of a specific genre of text depends on the situation in which it is occurring.

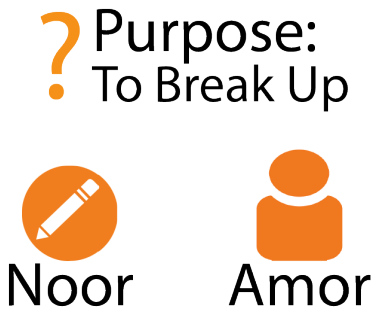
Next, let's take these definitions to analyze how you came to your decision about what genre Noor should use to break up with Amor.

COMPLEX RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

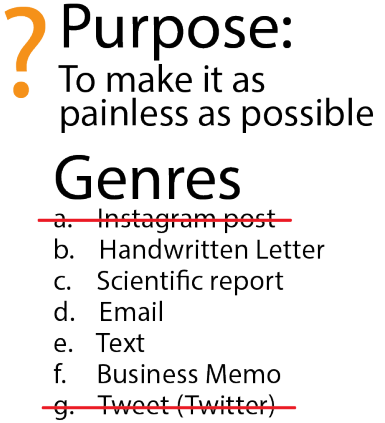
You may not believe this, but your brain conducted a **complex rhetorical and genre analysis** to come to your decision. It may have only taken a second or two, but you and your brain sorted through all of the **elements of rhetoric** to make a pretty solid decision on which was the most appropriate genre.

Here's what your brain did, though not necessarily in this precise order.

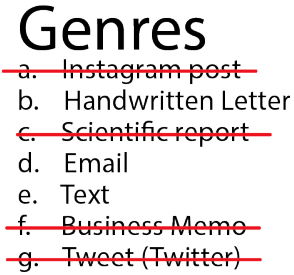
Considering the entire **situation**, your brain noticed who the **author** was (Noor) and who the **audience** was (Amor), and what kind of relationship they had: romantic, long-term, now long-distance, and they still love each other. You noticed that the **author** had a specific **purpose** for writing: to break up.



Then, your brain noticed that the author had another **purpose** (to make it as painless as possible). With this in mind, your brain eliminated public **genres** (Instagram posts or tweets) because it would be cruel to do something so private and emotional with another audience watching.



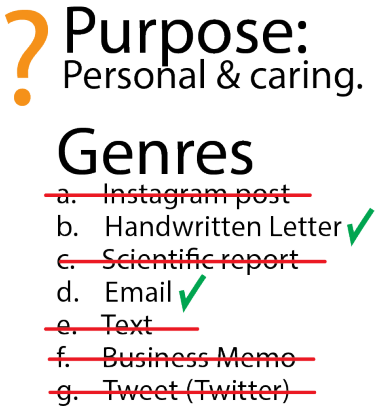
Your brain probably paused for a moment when it noticed the scientific report and the business memo **genres** because they were unexpected; you may have thought they were funny or strange, but then discarded them as realistic options.



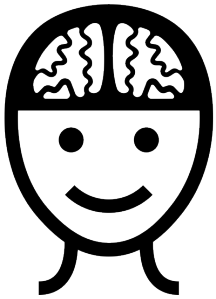
With three genres left, your brain re-analyzed the **author's purpose** to look for possible ways to eliminate any of them. You noticed that the **author** was afraid that the **audience** would try to argue against the break-up. Knowing that having a real-time conversation is more likely in texting than through email (and impossible in handwritten letters), your brain turned to the final two options.

So which one? A handwritten letter or an email?

Your brain likely went through another round of **rhetorical analysis**: A handwritten letter may have felt more personal and caring, which would have been a good choice considering one of **author's purposes**. But, a handwritten letter, in this digital era, could come across as more distant, which could feel cold and uncaring. Your brain may have wanted more information about the **author** and the **audience**, but the **situation** didn't provide it. Because of this, you may or may not have come to a strong decision on which **genre** was best to use.



Your brain did all of this, and it did so very, very quickly. Your brain is an extraordinary rhetorical and genre analysis machine.



Created by Icon Island
from Noun Project

The terms **rhetoric** and **genre**, and others that often go along with them, can feel intimidating when you encounter them, and it will likely take some time for you to feel confident using them to analyze texts, and to produce your own. Until you get there, remember that your brain is already doing **rhetorical analysis** work, all the time, whenever you are in a situation that involves communication.

Your task is to pay attention to it. Take notice when you make a decision about your writing based on who you (**author**) are writing to (**audience**), or why you are writing (**purpose**), or the circumstances of your writing (**context/situation**), or what "type or kind" of writing you thought would be best to use (**genre**). You make dozens (or hundreds or thousands!) of large and small decisions each time you write, regardless of whether it's an essay for a college class, a text to a friend, or a late-night journal entry to yourself. Your brain is doing the work. Watch closely and you'll see.

Rhetoric? Genre?

You've got this. You really do.

20. Unpacking the Process of Rhetoric

TIFFANY BUCKINGHAM BARNEY

- Rhetoric Is a Process
- Use Rhetorical Devices
- Elicit Rhetorical Appeals
- Deliver a Rhetorical Argument
- Another Term to Unpack: Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetoric is confusing. There. I said it. That elephant has been in every room of every English class focusing on rhetoric I've participated in, whether that be as a student, an observer, or an instructor (although I'm certainly happy to address that elephant in my classes). The problem with rhetoric is that it is just so much to unpack. Much like Mary Poppins's bag that seems to contain anything and everything, some of which are seemingly impossible to fit inside, the idea of rhetoric has so much discussion going on inside that it seems that bag will never be unpacked, and maybe it won't, but for our purposes—for your purposes in a basic English class—let's keep things simple.

RHETORIC IS A PROCESS

Although it can appear magically full of the impossible-to-comprehend, the overall notion of rhetoric can be simplified by breaking it down into the smaller terms associated with it. When doing so, it helps to look at the terms' relationships with one another and consider it a process.

Just like any other process, there is a desired outcome for using rhetoric. Think of it: the desired outcome of cooking a meal is a meal, of hair restoration is a full head of hair, of making TikTok videos is … yeah, who knows the desired outcome of those? In the case of rhetoric, according to Aristotle (the guy who opened the bag in the first place) the desired outcome is persuading the audience. Persuasion, in a rhetorical sense, means more than convincing. Benjamin Solomon, another Open English author, claims that "all good writing is persuasive." In his piece, "The Persuasion Effect: What Does It Mean to Write Persuasively?" Solomon connects Aristotle's idea of persuasion to the idea of writing intentionally.

That act of persuading is a natural process. Aristotle didn't just make up some random process and expect writers to use it; he explored a process and described it. The process was already happening; he explained it. Now, let's jump ahead a couple thousand years and explain it in the 21st century by unpacking some of the terms one piece, or one step, at a time.

Use Rhetorical Devices ⇛ to Elicit Rhetorical Appeals ⇛ to Deliver a Rhetorical Argument

USE RHETORICAL DEVICES ⇛

You use **rhetorical devices** regularly without even realizing it. When you tell a friend a story or answer a question in class with reasoning you're using the rhetorical devices of **storytelling** (narrative) to talk to your friend and **reasoning** to answer the question.

Other terms used in place of **RHETORICAL DEVICE**
≈
literary device
rhetorical technique
figure of speech
rhetorical strategy

They're so commonplace that overused **metaphors** and **idioms** have a whole subcategory called **cliché**. Examples of idioms gone cliché: the cat's out of the bag; you can't have your cake and eat it too; don't judge a book by its cover; I didn't just fall off the turnip truck—okay that's probably only a cliché at my house just because it's so funny.

Just like you use rhetorical devices regularly in speaking, you are likely to use them in writing without even realizing it. However, clichés are frowned upon in academic writing for the most part, but as they say, even a stopped clock is right twice a day. (Was that another cliché?)

The list of rhetorical devices is not exhaustive because we use so very many different ways to get our point across. Of course, Wikipedia has a list of rhetorical terms, most of which are rhetorical devices and, as with all things Wikipedia, people are adding to this all the time. Like a dictionary though, including everything is quite the task.

One of the skills of an accomplished writer is to use rhetorical devices purposefully. Some of my favorite children's authors use metaphor rather heavily along with multiple other rhetorical devices (each worth a quick Google search). We'll use children's authors since we all know they're the best, because come on, personification?! Who doesn't love the lion, Aslan, talking to the children? We'll also use children's authors because one type of rhetorical device is literary device and, although those show up in other forms of writing, they really just scream out in fiction literature. The visual symbolism of Harry Potter's scar is imagery that's difficult to miss.

Scholastic versions of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, first published 1997–2007

CHILDREN'S FICTION:
EXAMPLES OF RHETORICAL DEVICES

HARRY POTTER SERIES BY J. K. ROWLING	THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA BY C. S. LEWIS
metaphor	personification
allusion	irony
symbolism	framing
metonymy	euphemism
synecdoche	allegory
rhythm	imagery
tautology	hyperbole
humor	alliteration
imagery	metaphor
parallelism	paradox

C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia, first published 1950–1956 (image from NarniaWeb.com)

USE RHETORICAL DEVICES ⇛ TO ELICIT RHETORICAL APPEALS ⇛

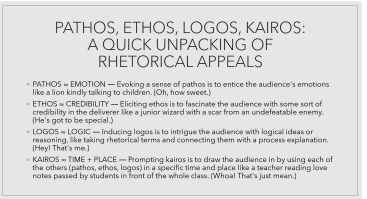
Use rhetorical devices like metaphor or personification or symbolism to draw out different senses in your audience. Those senses are **rhetorical appeals**.

This list is exhaustive. The three main rhetorical appeals are words you may have already heard: **pathos**, **ethos**, and **logos**. There's a fourth rhetorical appeal that's sort of the third wheel of rhetoric or fourth wheel because there's already three. Oh! It could be the fifth wheel because it's so useful. It's **kairos** and it's not discussed every time rhetorical appeals are. All of these are referred to as appeals because each of them refers to a different way the audience was influenced.

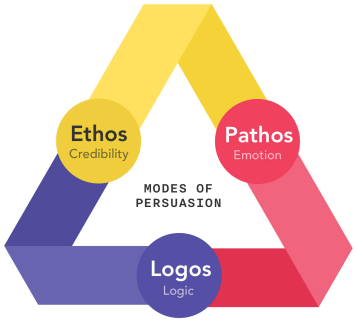
Other terms used in place of **RHETORICAL APPEALS**

≈

ethos, pathos, logos
modes of persuasion
persuasive strategies
rhetorical strategies



The rhetorical triangle is the common image to display the three rhetorical appeals. Notice the spare tire (kairos) is missing here and in every rhetorical triangle because it has to do with the application of the other three. Reading love notes makes students embarrassed (pathos) by the teacher (ethos) for not spending class time on class work (logos). Doing it in front of the class, during class, is what fueled it all (kairos). Maybe kairos should just be a huge flame all over the triangle.



Click this image to read more about the rhetorical triangle in "Ethos, Logos, & Pathos: Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion" on Boords.com

Keep this triangle in mind to keep the idea simple. Rhetorical devices are used to bring about these three appeals (and also bring into play the fourth).

USE RHETORICAL DEVICES ⇛ TO ELICIT RHETORICAL APPEALS ⇛ TO DELIVER A RHETORICAL ARGUMENT

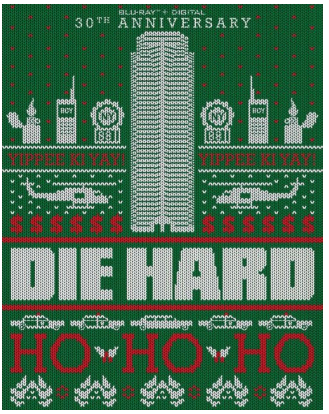
Other terms used in place of **RHETORICAL**

By using rhetorical devices to draw out those rhetorical appeals in the audience, the author delivers the overall **rhetorical argument** of the piece.

Rhetorical argument is not the same as the disagreement at last

year's Thanksgiving about whether *Die Hard* should count as a Christmas movie or not. Having an argument and delivering an argument are two different things.

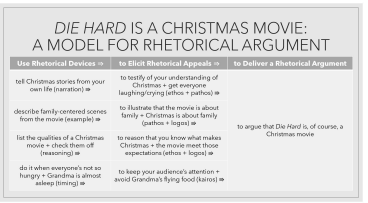
ARGUMENT
≈
argument
case
lesson
explanation



30th anniversary Blu-ray cover of the 1988 movie

Arguing, in the sense of rhetoric and according to Aristotle (remember, the guy who opened the bag), is convincing your audience or using the art of persuasion to convey ideas. So, write an entire essay or give an entire speech about the Christmas qualities of *Die Hard*, but stop yelling the same thing over and over and definitely stop throwing mashed potatoes.

The rhetorical argument is really the main idea of the speech: *Die Hard* is, indeed, a Christmas movie. It's the idea the author is trying to convey or what the author is trying to persuade the audience to believe. This is the overall goal accomplished by speaking or writing and it's done by appealing to the senses of pathos, ethos, logos, and that other wheel (or flame), kairos.


DIE HARD IS A CHRISTMAS MOVIE:
A MODEL FOR RHETORICAL ARGUMENT

Use Rhetorical Devices ⇒	to Elicit Rhetorical Appeals ⇒	to Deliver a Rhetorical Argument
tell Christmas stories from your own life (narration) ⇒	to testify of your understanding of Christmas + get everyone laughing/crying (ethos + pathos) ⇒	to argue that *Die Hard* is, of course, a Christmas movie
describe family-centered scenes from the movie (example) ⇒	to illustrate that the movie is about family + Christmas is about family (pathos + logos) ⇒	
list the qualities of a Christmas movie + check them off (reasoning) ⇒	to reason that you know what makes Christmas + the movie meet those expectations (ethos + logos) ⇒	
do it when everyone's not so hungry + Grandma is almost asleep (timing) ⇒	to keep your audience's attention + avoid Grandma's flying food (kairos) ⇒	

All of the above is accomplished by using language tools and, therefore, using rhetorical devices. The speech is likely to use more rhetorical devices than those listed in the table, but the table is a good start. Notice too that rhetorical devices can evoke more than one rhetorical appeal. All of them, however they're laid out, should lead to the same end argument.

This is just one way to accomplish the overall task of convincing a crowd that *Die Hard* is a Christmas movie. Other rhetorical devices could be used in different ways in order to elicit the rhetorical appeals and therefore make the argument.

So, here's the lesson, in order to effectively argue that *Die Hard* is a Christmas movie or to effectively argue anything for that matter one should...

Use Rhetorical Devices ⇒ to Elicit Rhetorical Appeals ⇒ to Deliver a Rhetorical Argument

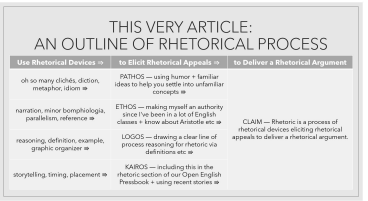
ANOTHER TERM TO UNPACK: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Now a few terms from our bag are unpacked and neatly folded ready for use: **rhetorical device**, **rhetorical appeals**, and **rhetorical argument**. This is not the end of the explanation of rhetoric. Remember Mary Poppins keeps pulling more remarkably large items out of her bag? There's another set of terms associated with rhetoric under the category of rhetorical situation that's unpacked in a different Open English article by Justin Jory, called, rather unsurprisingly, "The Rhetorical Situation." Also, another Tiffany, Tiffany Rousculp, introduces

the terms rhetoric and genre rather simply in her Open English piece, "Rhetoric & Genre: You've Got This! (Even If You Don't Think You Do ...)." There are a myriad of other terms associated with rhetoric, several of which are somewhat interchangeable.

Another term that will come up in basic English classes is **rhetorical analysis**. Now that you understand (well, hopefully) the process of rhetoric, it can be easier to write your own analysis of how another author used the process effectively or not. You, the audience, could write a rhetorical analysis of the Harry Potter series, The Chronicles of Narnia, a teacher reading a private note in front of class, someone else's speech of why *Die Hard* is a Christmas movie, or just skip the speech and analyze the movie itself. In each of these cases, you, as the audience, and now the author of the analysis, would evaluate whether the author/educator/speaker/movie maker effectively used rhetorical devices to appeal to the audience's sense of pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos to deliver the message or not.

This very piece, written by me, used the process of rhetoric.



THIS VERY ARTICLE:
AN OUTLINE OF RHETORICAL PROCESS

Use Rhetorical Devices ⇒	to Elicit Rhetorical Appeals ⇒	to Deliver a Rhetorical Argument
oh so many clichés, diction, metaphor, idiom ⇒	PATHOS — using humor + familiar ideas to help you settle into unfamiliar concepts ⇒	
narration, minor bomphiologia, parallelism, reference ⇒	ETHOS — making myself an authority since I've been in a lot of English classes + know about Aristotle etc ⇒	CLAIM — Rhetoric is a process of rhetorical devices eliciting rhetorical appeals to deliver a rhetorical argument.
reasoning, definition, example, graphic organizer ⇒	LOGOS — drawing a clear line of process reasoning for rhetoric via definitions etc ⇒	
storytelling, timing, placement ⇒	KAIROS — including this in the rhetoric section of our Open English Pressbook + using recent stories ⇒	

You, the audience, are welcome to do a short rhetorical analysis of my piece on paper or in your head. (After all, I already did the outlining of ideas for you in the table above.) Essentially, a rhetorical analysis is asking the questions:

How does the author of the piece you're analyzing ...

Use Rhetorical Devices ⇛ to Elicit Rhetorical Appeals ⇛ to Deliver a Rhetorical Argument

... and how successful are they? How successful was I? That's up to you, the audience.

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21. Story as Rhetorical: We Can't Escape Story No Matter How Hard We Try

RON CHRISTIANSEN

- Rhetorical Story
- Story as Meaning Making
- Academic Argument as Autobiographical
- Narrative as Argument: A Personal Example
- Rhetorical Moves: The Story … of This Essay
- Itch and Scratch: A Practical Strategy
- An Argument About End of Life Care: Sara's Story
- Argument Is a Journey
- The Final Movement

Years ago my best friend from high school accused me of being confessional. Decades later the accusation still bothers me. In part, probably, because there is an element of truth to it. But also, and this is why I bring it up, because I think the accusation oversimplifies and discounts the role that story plays in our lives. To confess is to tell a story about ourselves. Confessional stories may include a particular moral framing,

but nevertheless, a confessional story is a narration of our lives for a particular purpose, in this case, redemption or catharsis. To narrate our lives is to admit to a point of view and to ground our arguments in the lived experience of who we are. It is to push back on the so-called objective view, which holds that we can carefully reason through a position without our own motives interfering.

Speaking of motives, let's take a look at the motives of writing teachers—both of teachers who embrace narrative and those who shun it as not sufficiently academically rigorous. Certainly, the role of story in writing classes has been debated vigorously off and on for many years. Did you know that writing teachers disagree about what kinds of writing they should use or teach, even if they (sometimes? often?) act as if there is a consensus? Seems writing teachers may be regular people after all.

A fuller sense of this debate came back to me recently when I attended a CCCC's panel (a national conference for writing teachers) about teaching narrative in the writing classroom. During the panel, Irene Papoulis confessed how, in her first year of teaching, she lied about her actual beliefs about using stories in her writing classrooms. She bemused, "I find it amazing to think that so many years later I still strive to argue for storytelling as a form of analysis, and I still carry a nagging sense of shame about that, a murmur of 'you're touchy-feely, you're not rigorous enough.'"

Rigor.

This is an important word. Teachers are sometimes engaged in a debate, maybe even a contest, concerning how rigorous their courses are in comparison to other colleagues. I suspect that, in fact, throughout your already lengthy academic careers, a lot of extra work, sometimes busy work, has landed on your lap because a teacher of yours was trying to prove herself a rigorous teacher.

Unfortunately, rigor is often defined, unknowingly at times, as that which students simply do not like: if students like a

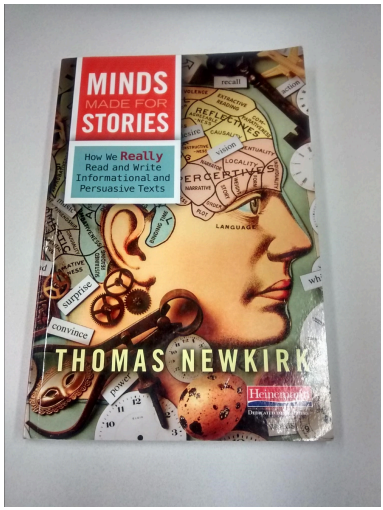
curriculum too much, we teachers, looking in from the outside, may assume the instructor is just having fun and really not teaching much at all.

I have much anecdotal evidence that students choose to write stories when given a chance. For many years I taught an assignment called the "Open Genre" where at the end of the term students could choose any written genre to study and then produce. By far most students chose fiction. I think this makes sense as we are constantly immersed in stories. Movies, arguably our most prolific art form, are stories. Video games, which make more money than even movies, are stories. Both have a basic plot where there are characters who face some challenge and then come to some sort of resolution.

Maybe stories are talked about less in writing classes because they are too fun.

RHETORICAL STORY

When some argue that writing classes focused on story or narrative are not rigorous, they are in effect arguing that story is not rhetorical. Rhetoric is a code word for rigorous. A rhetorical analysis … now that sounds rigorous and academic. Personal narrative … sounds squishy, personal, even wimpy.



Of course, these characterizations oversimplify. In *Minds Made for Stories: How We Really Read and Write Informational and Persuasive Texts*, Thomas Newkirk argues that "there is a conflict between the ways we treat narrative in school (as a type of writing, often an easy one) and the central role narrative plays in our consciousness" (5). If this claim has at least some validity (it's also worth noting that Newkirk is a composition scholar who directs the New Hampshire Literacy Institutes), then it's odd that many writing teachers are apologetic about their narrative assignments. But regardless of Newkirk's claim, the discipline of writing has often viewed narrative writing as insufficiently rhetorical, something to be done at the beginning of the semester to connect students with writing and get them started. But just as with any type of writing, creating an effective story requires a deliberate set of decisions that attempt to spark a particular response in readers.

And these decisions are rhetorical.

STORY AS MEANING-MAKING

Not only is storytelling rhetorical, from a broader perspective, story is the method by which we understand the world and our place in it. No amount of emphasis on the so-called academic

or the rhetorical or argumentative will ever move us away from story. Newkirk contends that "narrative is a form or mode of discourse that can be used for multiple purposes … —we use it to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to express. It is the 'mother of all modes,' a powerful and innate form of understanding" (6). [See Clint Johnson's chapter "What Is Story?" for more on story as a mode.] Therefore, story is not simply rhetorical because writers make decisions about it.

It is rhetorical because story is embedded in all writing, regardless of form or genre.

ACADEMIC ARGUMENT AS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

In arguing that academic writing can be (and already is) narrative based, I'm arguing that academic writing is not nearly as objective as we often like to imagine. It is autobiographical. I'm also arguing that much of the academic writing I've done, which explicitly relies on narrative, is just as valid as any other type of academic writing. That is, my writing is revealing the truth of Thomas Newkirk's argument that "[my] theories are really disguised autobiographies" (3). If we are indeed narrative beings, then surely we do not simply shut off the narrative machine the minute we start writing an academic or argumentative text, even if we may pretend that we do.

To explicitly make connections to one's life in an argument piece does not make it a less valid or less objective argument. It merely makes explicit what is always functioning in the background.

NARRATIVE AS ARGUMENT: A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

While taking an upper-division literature course with the theme of the Wall (as in THE wall that divided Berlin after World War II) in the '90s, I made an autobiographical move in my last paper for the class. We had been exploring how we define ourselves through the Other. The first part of my paper was traditional literary analysis applying this idea to the novels we had read. But in the second half of the paper, I reflected on how I define and label my professors. As I was at BYU, a private university owned by the LDS church, professors, for me, generally fit into a few Mormon types: overly didactic older prof; younger, more liberal female prof; testifying churchy professor, etc. Yet this particular class was taught by Gerhard Bach, an American literature professor who generally taught in Germany. He was a visiting professor and … not a member of the LDS church. His identity disturbed my naïve sense of order in the universe. "For two semesters I've been fascinated with understanding Dr. Bach's soul—why is he such a good teacher? What makes him such a good Christian (a person I respect), so understanding and non-judgmental … without the gospel of Christ I hold so dearly?" I wrote.

I cringe as I reread these words now, especially the word "soul." It sounds too intimate, too familiar for a paper turned into a *professor*. And yet that's where my thinking was at the time. I was merely being honest, maybe even confessional. At this moment in my paper, I narrated the happenings of the class. I was using literary devices and theories learned in class to figure out my own position and perspective within the English course and within life as an active Mormon.

By sharing this example in this essay, I've admitted to past beliefs I'd rather keep hidden from students. In fact, I'm a bit ashamed that I wrote that sentence, which to me now clearly

demonstrates my narrow view of people who are not LDS. But this is part of my story. For many years, I was an active LDS member who served an LDS mission and went to BYU, and who was wrestling to figure out myself as a writer. In fact, before Bach's class, I'd never received an A grade on a paper. I often say I learned to write in Bach's class, and I believe a big part of why was Bach's willingness to make the writing we did meaningful in real and present ways. We shared our writing with the class each week and then discussed the papers. This immediate audience allowed me to make that personal turn in my paper and to invoke my analysis of the class and this particular professor.

I received an A on that paper so it seems my professor still found an argument in my personal story. These lurking autobiographies are, I believe, just below the surface of most of the arguments we make. As I have admitted, the very argument I am making in this essay actually supports how I see myself as an academic—it argues that my confessionary and autobiographical academic work counts as much as traditional-sounding objective academic writing.

All arguments are autobiographical.

RHETORICAL MOVES: THE STORY … OF THIS ESSAY

My colleague, Clint Johnson, and I teach in the Online Plus program together. During the 2016–'17 school year we were thinking about how best to teach narrative writing and how best to persuade our colleagues that narrative writing forms the backbone of all good writing. This is a challenge. While discussing these ideas, Clint and I have written pages and pages of notes. We've read many different articles. And we've

gotten feedback on our OER texts from a number of people. Even after all of this, I was a bit lost as I tried to make the argument I'm making here that narrative is a part of all effective writing. Lost until Allison Fernley, a long-time colleague and friend, mentioned the book from which I've quoted above, *Minds Made for Stories*. I quickly scanned a few pages from the book online and ran across this line: "narrative is the deep structure of all good sustained writing" (19). I immediately ordered the book on Amazon. This was the missing link. We already had a lot of good sources on how important story is in our lives and how they shape our minds, but we did not have any sources directly arguing that even argumentative essays, at least the effective ones, also rely on a narrative structure.

And again, the move I just made in the last paragraph was to tell the story of my research. The progression of our ideas and filling this hole in our research demonstrates the contours of this debate. It is easier to make an argument about how to use narrative in the writing classroom than it is to argue that story or narrative is foundational for all writing. The first claim doesn't really even need to be made, as we all recognize short vignettes or stories in all types of writing, but the second claim has tension (Newkirk) because other writing teachers could certainly disagree and back up this disagreement with studies and reasoning. However, the story of our research, in this case, is a form of evidence in and of itself.

"ITCH AND SCRATCH": A PRACTICAL STRATEGY

Ok, so let's tackle this second claim: narrative is the deep structure of all sustained writing. Newkirk demonstrates how

effective, informative, and argumentative essays are necessarily grounded in a good story. For example, Newkirk outlines his ideas in chapter three, aptly named "Itch and Scratch: How Form Really Works." In one sense the chapter title gives away the entire thrust of the chapter—writers must create an itch that readers want to scratch. Kind of an interesting way to think about the purpose of writing, isn't it?

He builds off this main claim by citing writing experts like Peter Elbow (grandfather figure for writing teachers), who says that "Narrative is a universal pattern of language that creates sequences of expectation and satisfaction—itch and scratch" (qtd. in Newkirk 38). He also fleshes out why all effective writing is narrative in structure. He explains that instructors can "help students unlock the dramatic structure of ideas and information—and they can exploit this drama in their writing" (39). And that "good arguments feel dramatic, and sometimes, when they speak back to common sense and accepted wisdom, they can be exhilaratingly liberating" (45).

That's right … writing can be exhilarating and liberating when we see our arguments through the lens of story.

AN ARGUMENT ABOUT END-OF-LIFE CARE: SARA'S STORY

> Sara Thomas Monopoli was pregnant with her first child when her doctors learned that she was going to die.

This is Atul Gawande's first line in "Letting Go," an essay about end-of-life care. The first four paragraphs outline the basic narrative of Sara's diagnosis: lung cancer, 34, non-smoker, chemotherapy options but no cure. Not until the fifth paragraph does Gawande offer any analysis and even it is quite

subtle: "Words like 'respond' and 'long-term' provide a reassuring gloss on a dire reality. There is no cure for lung cancer at this stage."

As a reader, I begin to feel an itch. I'm already caught up in Sara's story and not only do I want to know how it turns out, I'm already thinking about the ethical issues involved in end-of-life care. Gawande continues to narrate Sara's story for several paragraphs, detailing the failed attempts at treatment, and then he asks the problematic question—scratching the itch that the reader has already been thinking about even though it has not been stated explicitly.

This is the moment in Sara's story that poses a fundamental question for everyone living in the era of modern medicine: What do we want Sara and her doctors to do now?

For nine paragraphs, Gawande cites research on cancer treatment, health care costs, and historical examples of how our early founding fathers died. Then there is a brief vignette about one of his own patients (Gawande is a surgeon): he is sitting with the patient when asked by her sister if the patient is dying. He is unsure. This unanswered question again creates an itch: how do we know in this world of technology when we and our loved ones are actually dying? But Gawande does not immediately answer the question. Instead, he launches into a more lengthy vignette about visiting the patients of Sara Creed, a hospice nurse. We get to know several people in hospice care and their various circumstances and the ethical dilemmas raised by their conditions. There's dialogue with the patients:

> "How's your pain on a scale of one to ten?" Creed asked.
>
> "A six," he said.
>
> "Did you hit the pump?"
>
> He didn't answer for a moment. "I'm reluctant," he admitted.
>
> "Why?" Creed asked.

"It feels like defeat," he said.

Most of these vignettes contrast with the earlier story of Sara Monopoli because these are much older patients. Yet Gawande uses these stories to help us see the grave difficulty that doctors, nurses, and patients have when trying to decide the best options for end-of-life care.

At this point, Gawande returns to the story of Sara Monopoli, a story which serves as the narrative arc holding together the research and other shorter vignettes. It's now Thanksgiving five months after the initial lung cancer diagnosis. None of the treatments have worked and at this point, Gawande thinks, Sara's doctor should have begun a conversation about end-of-life care, but didn't. As readers, we know that Sara and her family do not want her to die in a hospital, but we are starting to realize that is exactly what will happen. Gawande uses Sara's story to allow us to inhabit a family negotiating the difficult ethical questions about treatment and quality of life. We rush, as if reading a nail-biting short story, to get to the next bit about Sara, yet we must also read about studies, research, and other short vignettes to get there. We are propelled forward, hoping to itch the scratch.

It's a fairly long article so Gawande has space to cite more research, discuss a successful medical program that allows patients to stay in hospice while receiving some treatment, and write several other vignettes. And then he makes what seems to be his overall claim:

> But our responsibility, in medicine, is to deal with human beings as they are. People die only once. They have no experience to draw upon. They need doctors and nurses who are willing to have the hard discussions and say what they have seen, who will help people prepare for what is to come—and to escape a warehoused oblivion that few really want.

Gawande's claim comes near the end of his essay. Sara's story has given us a structural space in which to store the research and analysis offered. The claim retroactively to pulls together the overall ideas. Structurally, the individual stories do not matter as much as the overall narrative arc: Sara's story. The structural power of the piece comes from the interweaving of story with reasoning, evidence, and vignettes.

ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY

Gawande's essay and Newkirk's claims set up a damning critique of the way much of argumentative writing is taught. Newkirk writes, "We can undermine critical thinking by treating the thesis … as the key to an effective argument" (45). Say what? I thought the thesis was the most important element of an argument, right? The thesis creates tension, as discussed above, and narrows the focus. But … in Gawande's essay, the focus is communicated through story and subtle analysis. And while Newkirk doesn't dismiss the thesis, he argues that too often we, as writing teachers and students, get too focused on placing it in the right spot rather than thinking carefully about how we will communicate the journey it took us to uncover that thesis.

Note the word "journey"—a journey is a story, like Frodo's journey to Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings*. Someone too focused on the placement of the claim in Gawande's essay may miss the forest for the trees. They may only see argumentative

writing as a claim followed by three points, counter-arguments, and a conclusion. They would miss a beautifully painful narrative arc that begins and relies on Sara Monopoli's story until the very last lines:

> "It's O.K. to let go," he said. "You don't have to fight anymore. I will see you soon."
>
> Later that morning, her breathing changed, slowing. At 9:45 a.m., Rich said, "Sara just kind of startled. She let a long breath out. Then she just stopped."

THE FINAL MOVEMENT

I am arguing, along with Newkirk, that when we write we are asking our readers to come along with us on a journey. Even if this movement is not mentioned explicitly and even if it is not accomplished with literal plots, there is movement: a movement from one insight to another, the movement of inquiry. When we do not engage our readers in this movement, we lose an opportunity to allow them a window into our meaning-making process.

Midway through "Letting Go," Gawande recounts how Sara Monopoli came to him about a secondary thyroid cancer which was, unlike the lung cancer, operable. Even though Gawande knew the lung cancer would kill Sara long before the thyroid cancer, he confides that he was unable to follow his own advice:

> After one of her chemo therapies seemed to shrink the thyroid cancer slightly, I even raised with her the possibility that an experimental therapy could work against both her cancers, which was sheer fantasy.

> Discussing a fantasy was easier—less emotional, less explosive, less prone to misunderstanding—than discussing what was happening before my eyes.

This event could have been hidden within the layers of traditional argumentation. Yet, because Gawande makes visible the movement of his inquiry, we not only recognize him as a surgeon and an expert in end-of-life care, but as a flawed human being trying to make sense of difficult problems.

While we can try to escape our own stories when we make arguments, we most certainly don't have to, nor should we.

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22. Monstrous Rhetoric: The Beasts We Feed

ANN FILLMORE

- Do Monsters Really Exist?
- What Creates a Monster?
- Monsters Serve Many Purposes.
- Monsters Adapt to the Needs of a Situation.
- What Do Monsters Reveal?
- What Can Monsters Teach Us?

> "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you."
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

I love monsters. I love scary stories and monster movies. I love classic monsters and contemporary monsters. Spine-tingling stories are a part of our history and are passed down from generation to generation as folklore and pop culture. Humans are fascinated with monsters, but why? What is the connection? What makes a monster?

The word *monster* is a derivative of the Latin word *monstrum*, which is defined as "that which reveals, that which warns" (Cohen 4). This definition sparked my interest since I teach rhetoric and writing, and I ponder such things. And, I found myself asking, "What do monsters reveal to us? What can monsters teach us?"

In the article "Monster Culture: Seven Theses," medieval scholar Jeffrey Jerome Cohen presents several criteria (theses) about what makes a monster. His work not only captivated my attention but has helped me to appreciate how monsters can be an effective tool for understanding rhetoric and discourse today. "How?" you might ask. Because monsters show us that language matters.

DO MONSTERS REALLY EXIST?

Yes. What is a monster? It depends on the audience.

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Monsters exist in many forms. They can be literal or metaphorical and can manifest as people, places, things, and even ideas. Monsters are "outsiders" that symbolize the fears, taboos, and values of a culture. They emerge as "a construct and a projection" of the cultures who creates and perpetuate them (Cohen 4). Therefore, a monster is a part of folklore that represents different things to different people. For example, when I think of a dragon, I think of a scaly, fire-breathing creature that burns villages (like Smaug in the book *The Hobbit*). However, in China, dragons represent good fortune and luck.

By examining how people use language to do things, be things, and make things in the world, we gain insight into a culture. Cohen argues that all monsters are, in fact, "texts" and that we can more fully understand a culture by "reading" its monsters. Monsters, old and new, are a reflection of their audience during specific moments in time. Therefore, "every monster is in this way a double-narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be, and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (13).

WHAT CREATES A MONSTER?

We do.

Monsters are rhetorical. A monster lives in the way we tell its story. It's all in the delivery; as we can see from the example above, those who fear dragons draw on a diction that generates emotions of fear, whereas societies who value dragons employ a discourse to portray creatures of wisdom and nobility, worthy of celebration. Language matters.

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Modern examples are not difficult to find. Think of how people discuss current issues. For instance, climate change is a beast that ravages the landscapes, flora, and fauna, resulting in extinctions and extreme natural disasters worldwide. Some frame climate change as a conspiracy (climate change is not the monster, but those who claim so are) and others argue climate change as fact (climate change as the monster).

We can also see this in how people manipulate language to frame Covid-19 as political. For some, it's a monstrous pandemic, a tragic circumstance that has devastated global economic, health, and social systems. For others, the virus was an act of carelessness or mal intent by the Chinese. They choose to cast blame at this nation with terms such as "Chinese virus" and #kungflu. The spread of pejorative language has lead to a racializing of the virus and a profiling of individuals of Asian descent. And who says language doesn't matter?

MONSTERS SERVE MANY PURPOSES.

Every culture has distinct values, customs, and ideals, and

monsters are often used as a rhetorical tool for enforcing the norm. One move often associated with monsters is the use of fear because fear can shape behavior and attention to more desired actions. For example, parents in the U.S. lay on the pathos (an appeal to emotions) in order to "encourage" their kids into behaving during the holiday season. Parents threaten that Santa is always watching and won't deliver presents if a child's name is on the naughty list. In this narrative, we see that the monster (yes, Santa) is used to warn children against "crossing the line" and to behave in a manner that is expected. The story brings consequences to life for children and serves as a useful behavioral tool for parents because it gives them control and power.

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What does this monster tell us about American culture? It reveals many things if we "read" into it. One could see that though Christmas is a traditional Christian holiday, it has morphed into a commercial holiday. One could infer that children are part of this consumerism and parents leverage merchandise and happiness (Christmas morning) for control. It could also prompt us to examine why certain behaviors are considered "naughty" or "nice" in American culture and how these norms developed. It could also illustrate that children in the U.S. are highly emotional, and that pathos can be an effective rhetorical tool for manipulation. To be fair, Santa is also a "monster" who brings cheer, celebration, and reward. In this way, we can see the purpose of the double narrative for children and parents.

MONSTERS ADAPT TO THE NEEDS OF THE SITUATION.

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Monsters never truly die. Cohen claims that a monster can survive "cultural shifts" and that monsters are continually adapted and revised to meet the needs of the situation. In this way, a monster can "return in slightly different clothing, each time to be read against contemporary social movements" that give them "new life in a modern rewriting" (Cohen 5).

Monsters possess the ability to escape only to return at a later date (another opportune moment) to haunt again. Think of the movie franchise Friday the 13th. How many times will Jason Voorhees return from the dead to torture the poor camp counselors at Camp Crystal Lake? Even his masks have endured cultural shifts to more effectively scare contemporary audiences.

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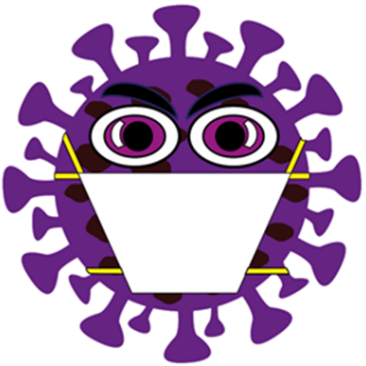
Likewise, language endures, and the stories we write will live on (and be revised) long after we are gone. For example, during the late 1600s, witches were feared, tortured, and killed in Colonial America. Puritans considered "black magic" to be an evil abomination of God. Their accusatory language caused mass hysteria in Salem,

Massachusetts, and consequently, resulted in punishment, torture, and execution of women and men. However, in modern times, we have reframed the narratives to meet the shifting cultural landscape. We depict witches and wizards as beings (not quite humans, but not quite monsters) who fight evil and social injustice (think Harry Potter). Authors have created a successful pop culture of witchcraft and magic to be entertaining, heroic, and lucrative in print, television, and cinema (*Hocus Pocus*, *Maleficent*, *Bewitched*, *The Craft*, *The Magicians*, etc.) Doing so moves the audience to envy their magic and relate to the human challenges the characters face.

As Cohen puts it, cultural shifts are all about timing: "The monster is born at [a] metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment — of a time, a feeling, and a place" (4). For example, think of the way we've seen language give "new life" to the face mask in the U.S. What was once a simple device used for protection (and seldom talked about) has been recast to tell a story of political affiliation and protest during the Covid-19 pandemic. For some, the face mask is considered a monster with devious intentions to take away our rights. For others, the face mask is a hero that intercepts dangerous germs and keeps people safe. This double narrative shapes meaning, identity, and action (to wear or not to wear?). How will we feel about face masks in the future? Only time will tell.



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WHAT DO MONSTERS REVEAL?

Humans are the real monsters, and language is our weapon.

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Monstrous rhetoric is used to justify law, policy, and punishment (Cohen 11). For example, the enslavement of Africans and their descendants was argued as "crucial" for physical labor, and vociferous supporters argued that emancipation could lead to economic and social collapse. When we erase the violence from the narrative, we fail to convey the true story: the devastation of family separation, the pain of stripping away names and identities, the denial of basic human rights, and the frustration and grief the slaves endured as they were forbidden from using their heritage languages. The fragmented history of slavery has lead to stories being lost, and those that we have are whitewashed (told by white people with the intent to conceal).

Along the same line, Cohen argues that a walk through the history books shows us how deceptive rhetoric (written strategically by those with power) frequently dehumanizes those who are different, labels and "others" them as monsters, and serves as a scapegoat to justify "cultural, political, ideological differences and biases" (7). Many people have chosen to portray Native Americans as uneducated, anti-Christian savages; black people as criminals; and Muslims as terrorists. Women, immigrants, and people of color are underrepresented and marginalized, which leaves a fragmented history of civilization.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Michel Reynders

One doesn't have to stretch very far to think of the Holocaust as another example. In his book titled, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), Adolf Hitler wrote, "Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it? If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body — often dazzled by the sudden light — a Kike." (*Kike* is an offensive word for a Jewish person). The Nazi propaganda poster with the Jewish star reads, "Whoever wears this symbol is an enemy of our people."

In his article "Fighting Words: What We Can Learn from Hitler's Hyperbole," Dr. Michael Blain paints a dismal picture of how Hitler used "fighting words" in his speeches and propaganda in order to convince German youth to exterminate millions of Jewish people. Blain argues,

> The violence and cruelty so characteristic of our species is rooted in the resources of hyperbolic [exaggerated] language. Hitler seems to have turned his "maggot" aphorism into a strategy to achieve his political objectives. He turned the Jews into racial "monsters," and, in fighting Jews, he became "monstrous." … The Jews and Slavs were described as the murderers of everything the German masses identified as good, true, and beautiful. The Nazis talked themselves and then the German people into a war of revenge against "murderous" enemies, a war to determine who would govern Europe for the next thousand years. Hitler

> conceived the goals of the Nationalist Socialist movement in millennial terms. (258)

Indeed language matters, and it can literally kill people.

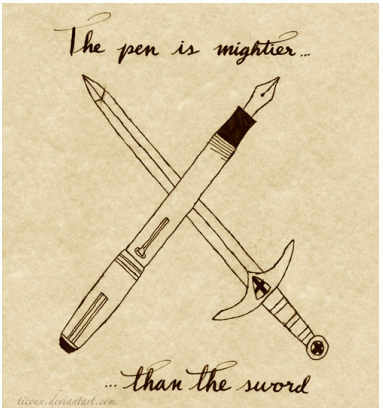
WHAT CAN MONSTERS TEACH US?

Monsters offer an opportunity for reflection, revision, and action. Cohen's final message to readers is that we should embrace our monsters as a learning opportunity because they "bring not just a fuller knowledge of our place in history and the history of knowing our place, but they bear self-knowledge — *human* knowledge — and a discourse all the more sacred. … These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. … They ask us why we have created them" (20). The monster "seeks out its author to demand its d'etre [reason for being] — and to bear witness to the fact it could have been constructed otherwise" (12).

Monsters require a rhetorical analysis, and rhetoric is "a way to investigate, understand, and use language" to analyze our monsters. This is not easy work. As SLCC English professors Chris Blankenship and Justin Jory write in their article "Language Matters," "Working with language is difficult and it's messy. It's a skill you have to learn and practice [and] rhetoric gives you a framework to make that process easier. It's a method that you can use systematically as a way of revealing and handling the complexity of language."

Monsters exemplify the narratives we live, and we have many different stories to tell. We all have monsters in our lives that haunt us. It's an inescapable part of being human. And, we cannot forget that we are the narrators of history. As such, we

will need to make very important choices. As SLCC professor Charlotte Howe says in her article "Writers Make Strategic Choices," "If we want to be heard, understood, and perhaps even agreed with, we must make choices, develop strategies, and enact decisions that go beyond simply deciding what we want to say. We must choose the occasion — find just the right moment — to speak."



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Language matters. We can choose to be ethical, credible, and responsible with our messaging (ethos). We can choose to use inclusive language. We can choose to respect and acknowledge diversity. We can choose not to spread false or biased information. We can choose to accurately represent evidence. We can choose to "reevaluate our cultural assumptions … , our perception of difference, [and] our tolerance towards its expression" (Cohen 20).

Remember that monsters exist in many forms. And, what feeds them?

We do.

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Word-cloud monster image created by the author on wordart.com.

23. A Food Critic's Guide to Rhetorical Analysis

TIFFANY BUCKINGHAM BARNEY

- The Student Writer as Food Critic
- A Recipe for Rhetorical Analysis
- Recipe Directions: The Order of Analysis
- Bon Appétit

A rhetorical analysis is somewhat like a critique written by a food critic. Not the casual critic who says things as deep and meaningful as "That was super yummy this time." No. Something more sophisticated—more along the lines of Anton Ego, the seemingly sesquipedalian rhetorician of cuisine.

Anton Ego from Pixar Wiki, Fandom

Okay, maybe not necessarily as fancy and piercing as one would picture the fictional critic who can shut down entire restaurants with one review, but definitely one who is educated enough in culinary art to take the time to account for their enjoyment,

appreciation, and understanding of the food—or rather, the enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding that the chef elicits in the audience: the eater.

A food critic wouldn't discuss whether the meal is right or wrong, but whether or not the preparation and presentation of the meal were appealing to the guests, delicious to eat, and satisfying. Was the turkey prepared successfully by using a barbecuer or deep fryer or smoker or oven? How did that affect the flavor? How did the meal taste? Was it delivered in a timely manner in a location that worked well? Did it supply the nourishment and satisfaction the host was trying to provide and that the audience, the eater, expected?

Likewise, a rhetorical analysis is not about whether the topic itself is right or wrong, but about how successfully the author of a piece delivered the topic. How well did the author use rhetorical devices ⇛ to elicit rhetorical appeals ⇛ to deliver a rhetorical argument? This process is explained more in another Pressbooks article written by yours truly titled "Unpacking the Process of Rhetoric." A rhetorical analysis analyzes the rhetorical choices and success of another author's work. Essentially, was *the way* the piece was written effectual in convincing the reader?

THE STUDENT WRITER AS FOOD CRITIC

Much like the casual food critic who comments on the yumminess of the food, an analysis can be given by anyone and is sometimes referred to as a review or an evaluation. A rhetorical analysis, however, is written by an evaluator of the rhetoric, in this case the student writer, who assesses the author's effective use of rhetorical devices ⇛ to elicit rhetorical

appeals ⇛ to deliver a rhetorical argument. (See what I did there? Repetition is a rhetorical device.)

An educated food critic can taste the oregano, identify whether something is pan fried or deep fried, notice the pairing and the presentation of the dish, and can comment on how those choices changed the outcome of the meal; a rhetorical analyst can identify the emotion evoked (pathos), the mastery displayed (ethos), the reasoning presented (logos), and *the way* in which the writing evokes those appeals and uses them to deliver the argument.

So, the rhetorical analyst or student writer will, essentially, give an argument about *the way* the author presented the (rhetorical) argument and (rhetorically) appealed to the audience.

A RECIPE FOR RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The questions then arise of how does one evaluate *the way* an author persuaded the audience using rhetoric? What tools and ingredients ought to be considered?

A food critic who is educated in culinary craft carefully consumes a meal, taking note of why the food was made and

for whom with an exploration of the ingredients and the methods used to create the meal while analyzing the smells, the flavor, the texture, and the presentation of the food and judging its overall triumph (or not) in the eater's mouth.

A rhetorical analyst carefully reads a piece, taking note of the purpose and audience with an exploration of the rhetorical devices used to create the piece while analyzing the rhetorical appeal to the audience and judging its overall success in the audience's thoughts.

Rhetorical Staples

Staples in a kitchen are basic ingredients that cooks always have in stock because they store well and are used in a lot of recipes. Things like flour, sugar, rice, and beans can be the basis for many recipes, even if the eater is the chef or is only imagined. (What? Keep reading ...)

Rhetorical staples are the elements in every piece of writing. All writing is done for a purpose and all writing has an audience, even if the audience is the writer or is only imagined. (Oh ... we're drawing parallels again.)

Purpose

> Meals are prepared for different reasons. The purpose of the cooking changes the process and outcome of the cooking. Imagine the difference between the cooking done for a fancy dinner party versus the preparation done for a quick bite before getting back to work. One would likely include a menu and an extensive shopping list with long hours in the kitchen creating an elegant meal for the first, while the latter would likely include a

rummage through the pantry or a trip through a drive-thru gathering just enough sustenance to get through the rest of the day.

Pieces are written for different reasons. Indicating the purpose of the piece and sharing that in the rhetorical analysis helps set up the thesis for the analysis. Imagine writing a term paper for an advanced course versus writing a note to a friend. The purpose of the piece changes *the way* the piece is written, which changes the criteria for the success of the piece. The rhetorical purpose of a piece is part of the rhetorical situation which a colleague of mine, Justin Jory, submits "refers to the circumstances that bring texts into existence." Jory writes more on other elements to consider in the rhetorical situation in his aptly named piece "The Rhetorical Situation."

ANALYSIS OF PURPOSE — Julia Child's Book Mastering the Art of French Cooking

Julia Child via History.com

Julia Child set out to write about cooking French cuisine and did so by taking notes as she taught her friends in an unorthodox fashion: renting a kitchen and bringing in guest speakers. She used these notes to put together her first recipe book, but was mortified to hear that her publisher didn't accept her first version because it wouldn't appeal to the modern housewife. After a good night's sleep, she got up and set out to simplify her work to make it more accessible to the average cook. From this point on, Child's purpose for writing changed. Her intention to "make cooks out of people" was clear and in the meantime she fulfilled a secondary purpose of bringing the joy of French cuisine to the American table. The iconic recipe book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was born.

Changing the motivation for writing her recipe book made Child a household name when discussing cooking. By 1963 she had her own cooking show, The French Chef, and became one of the most famous and renowned cooks of all time.

Meryl Streep as Julia Child via Britannica.com

SIDE NOTE: That fame was carried on to a new generation with the release of the movie *Julie and Julia* in 2009. Meryl Streep plays a determined and lovable Julia Child. That same year, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* finally became a bestseller.

Audience

Meals are prepared for different audiences (diners). Chefs make different choices of ingredients and

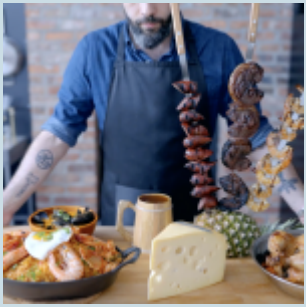
preparation methods for different consumers. There are some people who love exotic foods and are interested in trying something different regularly. The challenge then, for a chef, is to wow the eater. Others, usually around five or six years old (and sometimes, boringly, into adulthood), are very limited in their willingness to consume new foods, having their own specific set of staples usually including macaroni and cheese and chicken nuggets.

Writing, likewise, is done for different audiences, thus driving the author to change the content of the writing in order to engage the reader. Imagine writing a letter to the Queen of England versus writing a note to your friend in class. In these cases, it's not only appropriate to change the register (the variety of language specific to a situation) in which the message is written, but to change the mode as well. After all, texting the Queen of England is probably not that usual for us common-folk. The audience of a piece can be either real or imagined. English classes often use imagined audiences to give writing a specific flavor. Again, my colleague Justin Jory has a cleverly named piece in this Pressbook titled "Audience," which addresses this idea of actual and imagined audiences.

ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE — Andrew Rea's YouTube Hits Basics with Babish and Binging with Babish

Last-minute Thanksgiving via basicswithbabish.com

Andrew Rea of *Basics with Babish* appeals to his audience of the home cook by modeling very basic cooking concepts in his recipes. He uses a mixture of very basic recipes and very complicated recipes as well, all the time using basic kitchen supplies. Rea is very aware of his audience and speaks to them as though they were friends sitting in his kitchen learning as they watch. He appeals to his audience by keeping this friendly tone and staying very realistic about the capabilities of his viewers using sarcasm and cheeky remarks throughout.



The Chef's Choice Platter via bingingwithbabish.com

He extends his audience by adding the series *Binging with Babish* where he takes the recipes or foods from movie/tv scenes and attempts to make them and try them in his own kitchen. This invites viewership from more than just the home cook, now the movie/tv

aficionado as well. He still speaks to the audience with the same friendly and somewhat irreverent flare, and maybe even more so because this larger audience is clearly interested in humor since most of the foods sponsored here are from comedies and it's rather funny that he's attempting some of them at all. Beefing up his humor is a successful way of speaking to his audience and keeping the interest of cooks and non-cooks alike..

The Meat of the Analysis

The meat (or Beyond Meat for those veggie lovers) is the center entrée and therefore the main focus of the critic's analysis. After a food critic has taken into consideration the purpose and audience of the meal, major consideration must be given to the individual dishes and *the way* they were prepared and, of course, the smells, flavors, and feelings incited by the food.

The next most significant part of a rhetorical analysis addresses the rhetorical work the author did, including the rhetorical devices chosen and how those evoke (or don't evoke) the rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos to persuade the audience.

Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical devices are where it can get nicely messy,

thus giving the author of the rhetorical analysis a lot of freedom and choice. Picking out a few of the many rhetorical devices (or strategies or techniques) the author used and acknowledging them (by name or not) gives the evidence needed to further the argument of whether the author appealed to the audience and made the point.

The food critic is aware of the chef's use of many different ingredients, tools, and methods to create the different comestibles. The critic is familiar with the way in which the chef prepared the dishes, but there is no exhaustive list of these means because there are so many of them. Of course, Wikipedia is attempting such a task with the beginnings of a list of food preparation utensils. (Check it out; have they added an avocado slicer or tofu press yet?)

In a similar fashion, authors use many different rhetorical devices for achieving their goals—so many that a list of all rhetorical devices is difficult to find or create as well. Of course, Wikipedia is additionally attempting to gather all rhetorical devices in one place (see also the Wikipedia entry for stylistic devices), so there's a start, but there are so many, many different ways to use language to make a point that it's difficult—even impossible—to identify every way a human could put together language. Because of this, sometimes rhetorical devices are simply described by rhetorical analysts, rather than specifically named.

ANALYSIS OF RHETORICAL DEVICES — Seinfeld Episode "The Soup Nazi"

Photo: NBC via Vulture.com

The Soup Nazi from *Seinfeld* season 7, played by Larry Thomas, is known to all in Seinfeld's New York as making the best myriad of soups around including wild mushroom, cold cucumber, corn and crab chowder, crab bisque, mulligatawny, and more. Spike Feresten, the writer of the Soup Nazi character, uses charactonym to give pseudo-symbolic meaning to the character through name (although this is a nickname assigned by fictional customers). The Soup Nazi is characterized as an unfriendly chef and server who is both talented and intimidating with an intensity and loftiness for his product and talent. He carries the philosophy that he is sharing his product and talent with those who are worthy. This is depicted by his stature, demeanor, disapproving glare, and tone of voice. The character is

nothing less than passionate about his work with little regard to the consumer.

The writing of Feresten and the acting of Thomas together create a personality with a disdainful tone. This is illustrated by the haughty attitude displayed in his interaction with customers. He uses a strong and clear voice to yell at customers, "Next!" This is intensified when customers are not only unappreciative, but also disrespectful when the Soup Nazi yells, "No soup for you!" The use of *ass*onance in this phrase is not only indicative of the repeated pattern of vowel sounds, but the term for the rhetorical device itself is a clever reference to the Soup Nazi's opinion of the customers or even the customers' opinion of the Soup Nazi.

RHETORICAL DEVICES ANALYZED:
charactonym, characterization, depiction, tone, assonance

(Did ya see? One of these devices is not regularly referred to so I described it in the paragraph and gave it a name in the list.)

Rhetorical Appeals

Discussing the rhetorical devices is coalescent with discussing the rhetorical appeals the author evokes in the audience. How does the author persuade the audience? How does the author appeal to the different parts of the audience's self?

Along with all the different concepts a food critic considers when writing the piece, the most important is how the food is received by the eater. Smell, flavor, texture, and presentation are intrinsic to the critique. These are crucial to every critique of every type of food regardless of the purpose, audience, ingredients, methods, or tools used. Did the food appeal to each of these important food senses in the consumer? Did the eater enjoy the meal?

Similarly, rhetorical appeals are crucial to every rhetorical analysis. Pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos are intrinsic to the analysis. Did the writing appeal to each of these important modes for persuading the reader? These appeals are crucial to every analysis of rhetorical argument regardless of the purpose, audience, and rhetorical devices used. There is a lot of rhetoric out there about the different appeals, but for a very simple and straightforward explanation of the rhetorical

appeals, go to “Ethos, Pathos & Logos: Aristotle’s Modes of Persuasion.” (See what I did there? I used rhetoric to describe rhetoric.)

ANALYSIS OF RHETORICAL APPEALS — Character Sookie St. James from Gilmore Girls

Melissa McCarthy as Sookie St. James via fanpop.com

Amy Sherman-Palladino’s long-running *Gilmore Girls* has a distinct writing style and several steady cast members. Sherman-Palladino does much of the writing on her own and, in doing so, keeps a consistent tone and high level of wit and play on vocabulary.

One of the most beloved characters, the chef of the Independence Inn and later the Dragonfly Inn, Sookie St. James, is played by Melissa McCarthy whose performance and command of the character embraces the clever writing of Sherman-Palladino and brings rhetorical appeal to the show in more ways than one.

Sookie's character brings an element of happiness to the show appealing to the audience's sense of pathos. Time and time again Sookie is hit with bad news of some sort from her best friend, Loralai, but gives a very real sense of empathy and positivity combined. Always smiling and looking on the bright side, Sookie captures the hearts of viewers.

This happy-go-lucky attitude is established in Sookie's honesty and honorability. Her character is one of credibility, giving a sense of reliability as a great friend. Although she's clumsy in the kitchen, she's an expert at her trade and believably so. This sets this specific character and therefore the story up with a sense of ethos that speaks to the audience's need for credibility in the script.

The credibility carries on with other aspects of Sookie's character. Sookie's way of living is practical and responsible. She lives within her means and makes reasonable life decisions. The writing for this character is consistently congruent with the character's belief system and moral standing. The logic and flow of the character adds to the storyline in every episode. Sookie will do what is needed and what makes

sense and will get the job done, whether that be making a banquet meal or supporting a friend and making a sensible business deal. This type of consistency in character building invokes a sense of logos in the audience that brings the show to full-circle with a consistently persuasive effect, luring the audience into understanding and appreciating all of the characters.

RHETORICAL APPEALS ANALYZED: *pathos, ethos, logos, kairos*

(Did ya notice? Whenever appeals are discussed, those first three are always included, but kairos is optional. Try taking it out of my text above.)

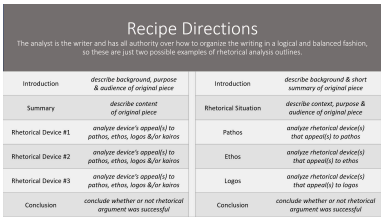
RECIPE DIRECTIONS: THE ORDER OF ANALYSIS

Now, the order of arguments within the analysis does matter, somewhat. A critique of food will usually start by introducing the restaurant, the chef, and the meal. Often information is given about the ambiance of the location and professionalism

of the servers. Next is the critique. This part is organized as well, usually going from one dish to another describing the smells, flavors, textures, and presentation of each and analyzing the ingredients and means of preparation along the way.

A rhetorical analysis has a general pattern as well. It usually starts with some context and rhetorical-situation background, and this is followed by a very short summary of the piece being analyzed. None of the meaty portion needs to be done in any particular order; it's just important to be sure the analysis has some good balance with the size, ordering, and emphasis of each. Rhetorical devices, for example, are better addressed as main points with discussion of appeals within *or* scattered throughout a set of rhetorical appeals as main points, not mod podged back and forth.

As with most English pieces, a conclusion is customary. Conclusions of a rhetorical analysis are likely to wrap up the argument and reify the answers to the main question of whether the author did the job well of persuading the audience or not.



Recipe Directions

The analyst is the writer and has all authority over how to organize the writing in a logical and balanced fashion, so these are just two possible examples of rhetorical analysis outlines.

Introduction	*describe background, purpose & audience of original piece*
Summary	*describe content of original piece*
Rhetorical Device #1	*analyze device's appeal(s) to pathos, ethos, logos &/or kairos*
Rhetorical Device #2	*analyze device's appeal(s) to pathos, ethos, logos &/or kairos*
Rhetorical Device #3	*analyze device's appeal(s) to pathos, ethos, logos &/or kairos*
Conclusion	*conclude whether or not rhetorical argument was successful*

Introduction	*describe background & short summary of original piece*
Rhetorical Situation	*describe context, purpose & audience of original piece*
Pathos	*analyze rhetorical device(s) that appeal(s) to pathos*
Ethos	*analyze rhetorical device(s) that appeal(s) to ethos*
Logos	*analyze rhetorical device(s) that appeal(s) to logos*
Conclusion	*conclude whether or not rhetorical argument was successful*

BON APPÉTIT

A food critic will put all of these pieces together to give the

reader of the critique a sense of how the creation and presentation of the food appealed to the eater's senses and whether the meal was successful or not. Likewise, the rhetorical analyst will identify the purpose and audience of a piece and analyze how the author used rhetorical devices to give rhetorical appeal to that audience and whether the author was successful with the piece to make the rhetorical argument or not.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS CHALLENGE — "Barf-o-Rama" Story from Stand By Me

Your turn.

One could write an argumentative essay for or against the social and emotional outcome of David "Lard-Ass" Hogan's participation in a pie-eating contest as told by Gordie in the 1986 classic *Stand By Me*, but the discussion in a rhetorical analysis is not about arguing a point, but about *the way* the story is told.

Fortunately, the other boys in the movie do some of the work for us here. After Gordie, played by Wil Wheaton, tells a compelling story using imagery, mockery, and irony, Teddy, played by Corey Feldman, asks, "Then what happens?" and a conversation ensues about what "Lard-Ass" does after the pie-eating contest, because this audience doesn't feel like there's enough to the story; there's no conclusion.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view

it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=120

Watch the clip above of the Barf-o-Rama story (if it doesn't work, you can search for one; be sure to include the campfire scene where the story is told) and decide if you agree with these boys. Use the concepts taught in this piece to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the story. Combine all of the ideas exemplified in the text boxes from this piece into one rhetorical analysis about one story, "Barf-o-Rama." In this case, use Gordie as the author and you and the boys as the audience.

Some ideas to discuss could (if you agree with the boys) start with the lack of finality of the story and how it interrupts the good use of the rhetorical devices of imagery, mockery, and irony, thus taking away from the flow of rhetorical appeal in the audience of sensation (pathos), confidence (ethos), and reason (logos) that was set up along the way throughout the story.

Use one of the outlines from the Recipe Directions section to write a complete rhetorical analysis. Remember to balance your analysis by making the largest part the discussion of rhetorical devices and appeals.

Just as the food critic's review is one step away from the actual meal, a rhetorical analysis is one step away from the initial piece the student read. Students read an article or listen to a speech and write their own piece (their rhetorical analysis)

about what tools (rhetorical devices) the author used in the original piece to convey ideas and therefore, generate the modes (pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos) and how using those modes affects the reader's understanding or ideas of the topic. Essentially, the rhetorical analysis argues whether or not the original author was effective in conveying the point and persuading the audience and *the way* it was done, much like a food critique argues whether or not the meal was satisfying and nutritious and *the way* it was done.

The food critic creates a writing about an eating and the rhetorical analyst creates a writing about a reading.

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24. The Most Powerful (and Terrifying) Word in Academia

BEN FILLMORE

Dear students,

Over the past 15 years I have taught kindergarteners to college students and every level of English as a second language (ESL). I have taught face-to-face classes, as well as online classes. One of the things I have noticed over the years is that no matter which level I'm teaching, some of the students are reluctant to ask or answer questions. Why is this so difficult for some of us? More importantly, whatever are we to do about it?

Well, the "Why?" is complicated.

Have you ever seen a young child, one that is just learning to speak, use the word "Why?" While it's never one of the first words we learn, it is one we pick up pretty quickly. It has kept humans alive for many thousands of years. "Why does the fire glow? Why can't I pet the wolf? Why can't I live underwater with the fish?"

Asking questions helps a youngster explore their world with one little word from a relatively safe space. Now, skip ahead to the present. The modern child still uses the term "Why?" but in various ways in order to get clarity on a subject or to get what they want. Think of a young child in a toy store:

Child: “Mom, can I get this?”

Parent: “No, you can’t get all three versions of the same toy.”

Child: “Why?”

Parent: “Because you only need one.”

Child: “Why?”

Parent: “Because I said so, and I’m the parent.”

Were you ever this child? Yes. You were. We all were at one point.

Now, a major tantrum erupts, leaving the child screaming through their tears and a parent looking for the nearest exit. This is a very important moment in a child’s life. They have learned that their once very positive use of the word “Why?” has turned into a negative. The result is that the child has learned two things: First, not to ask so many questions. Secondly, and more importantly, to become more selective of when and how they ask these questions. This is also the seed of understanding rhetoric.

Now, remember a time in your life when you raised your hand to answer a question but answered it incorrectly. How did it feel? What if you asked a follow-up question and were told to let others speak or to wait until after class? How did that feel? At this point, the teacher and some of the other students are ready to move on with the subject, but you still don’t understand it.

You quietly ask a classmate: “Why is that?”

“I don’t know,” replies your classmate with raised shoulders and a bewildered look.

So, you ask your other classmate the same question, only to get the same response.

At this point, your teacher catches you "visiting" with your classmates and shuts down your communication, leaving you without an answer and little incentive to ask it again. Maybe you felt embarrassed, angry, or left out. Now, repeat this scenario until you graduate from high school.

Fast forward to where you are now: a real-deal college student, sitting in a classroom (face- to-face or online) surrounded by a group of people you have never met. You've made it! You are out of the public-school system; you are an adult, expecting to take part in a very deep discussion like the ancient philosophers of Greece, gathered around the Parthenon to talk about the most pressing issues of the day.

Your head is full of questions; you have genuinely good questions. Then, the teacher enters the room and the chatter slows down to silence. You begin to reflect on your experiences (subconsciously or consciously) about asking questions in the past. The anxiety grows. You wonder if all those great questions will just sound silly or stupid in front of the obviously smarter students and the teacher around you.

You tell yourself, "Don't ask that! Everybody already knows that." You don't want to look foolish in front of everyone, so you hold your tongue. Then a strange thing happens: the teacher poses the first real, serious question to the class. You brace yourself against the impending tsunami of truth and knowledge to sweep over the class as everyone that is smarter than you (which is everyone) explodes forth with groundbreaking epiphany after epiphany.

And then ...

SILENCE.

That terror you have been feeling must be contagious, because it has spread to everyone. One brave student attempts an answer.

"Well, you're very close, but does anyone else have an answer?" the teacher replies.

At this point, the tsunami has become a glacier. What feels like never-ending silence follows. You gather up the nerve to ask your classmate, recalling a similar incident you had as a child, only to get the same response: shrugged shoulders accompanied by a sheepish smile.

Wait a minute, what just happened? Where is your "Why?" Where is everyone's "Why?" We must all be thinking this, right? Well, chances are that you are right. You are not the only person in class feeling this way. Sometimes your "Why?" gets suffocated by self-doubt and an intense need not to look foolish in front of your peers. Or, if you embrace your "Why?" you can get answers to your questions.

How strange.

Another way of thinking about this is that, if you have a question, you're not alone. It's often the case that at least one other person, if not everyone, is thinking the same thing; they just can't muster the courage to ask it. Therefore, one's ability to ask questions is not only a benefit to the person asking the question but to the people around them. The courage to pursue the "Why?" is contagious.

What's to be done now? You can continue on with life never getting the answers you need, or, you can arm yourself with the power of the almighty "Why?"

What does this mean? How can you apply it? How do your teachers apply it? After all, questions are rhetorical. Let's take this one step at a time.

The rhetorical situation. Sounds official, right? Something

you need to be taught, right? Well, as humans, we have been practicing the elements of rhetoric since we were infants. How? By understanding a few basic principles and their application. The rhetorical situation, in a nutshell, is the combination of knowing your audience (in this case, your teacher and classmates), having a purpose (in this case, to get answers to the questions you have), and understanding the context in which you ask a question (in this case, a college classroom filled with a teacher and students). In short, it's not what you ask, it's *how* you ask it. Let's try it.

Think of the first example of the child in the toy store. As a child, because we were incapable of providing for ourselves, we had to learn to ask for what we needed. First, we cried or screamed. We learned that doing so got a response. Then we learn the word "Why?" and its basic usage. This articulation provided greater benefits. Then we got older and the power of the "Why?" diminished. Why did this happen? Because we didn't know how, or experience how, to use the "Why?" effectively yet. This process needs to be developed. Let's rewrite the first situation using our new knowledge.

Child: "Can I get a new bike?"

Parent: "You already have a bike."

Child: "But, my bike is too small for me."

Parent: "It seems to fit you fine."

Child: "But, you know Jill, Mr. and Ms. Fillson's daughter?"

Parent: "Yes."

Child: "They bought Jill a new bike with multiple

gears, and now she is on the cycling team at school. She has made so many friends there and is so healthy. And since then she has been on the honor roll every month."

Now this child has learned to appeal to their parent by better understanding their audience: education, making friends, and being healthy are important to their parents. Compare this to "I want it NOW!" followed by a tantrum or shouting match at Walmart. As they say, "You catch more flies with honey than vinegar."

This leads me to my next point: Timing is everything. When should you ask a question? When is it appropriate, or, when will your question have the best chance of getting a positive answer? For example: When is the best time to ask about your grades? During a discussion, or after class? Should you ask your boss for a raise during a staff meeting? Should you ask if the tattoo you just got is permanent after the artist has finished their work? Right? I say again, timing is everything.

After several days, weeks, months or years, the aforementioned academic glacier begins to recede. You become more confident in your "Why?" You learn how to use it as effectively as possible by considering the rhetorical situation before you ask a question. By knowing your audience, understanding your purpose, being aware of the context in which you are asking, and then refining all three aspects of the rhetorical situation, your chances of getting a suitable answer will increase. It takes time to develop a very confident "Why?" But with a little practice, the power of your "Why?" will become a very valuable tool. Not just academically, but in your life as well.

The original spark of curiosity that you felt dwindle as you

approached the end of high school has now become a light in a confused darkness, not just for you, but for those around you as well.

In summation, the "Why?" is the key. Use it often, even if it means disagreeing. Use it concisely. Use it appropriately. Encourage others to use their "Why?" through your example. Use it for the benefit of all.

Why?

That's why.

Sincerely,

BR Moose

PART III

ACTION: HOW WE ENGAGE & INITIATE CHANGE VIA WRITING

Writing is a form of action. Through writing people respond to problems and can create change in the world.

25. Personal Literacy and Academic Learning

MARLENA STANFORD

When we think of "literacy," we generally think of the ability to read and write. In the twenty-first century, though, literacy means much more than reading and writing, although the ability to read and write is also critical. In the present age, to be literate means to be able to communicate through texts in ways that help you meet your needs and the needs of others. And this communication happens in a variety of situations. You might participate in a club, organization, or group in which you regularly communicate through reading or writing, for example. You likely engage in several literate practices on the job, such as designing and delivering presentations or adapting to new technologies. You might read to your child each night before bedtime, or you might regularly use social media to keep in touch with family and friends.

These examples are illustrative of the many types of literacy we practice in our daily lives: computer literacy, work-based literacy, health literacy, academic literacy, and personal literacy, to name a few. These various literacies are much more than skills; they are practices: observable patterns of behavior that we enact over time as we work in particular knowledge frameworks and use particular technologies to communicate.

One of the literacies we develop over our lifespans is personal literacy, also called vernacular literacy. Personal literacies are the reading and writing practices individuals engage in during activities of their own choice and for personal satisfaction or

to meet personal goals. Examples might include documenting your daily food intake with a smartphone app, keeping a journal, creating a weight-training plan and tracking your performance, or writing and playing music. They are instrumental to how we learn and to our success in formal schooling. These personal literacies are closely tied to our development of academic literate practices that help us learn in formal school settings.

While some students move easily between personal literacies and academic literacies, others have more challenges as they move from the types of literate practices they participate in for personal fulfillment to the types of literate practices they must participate in to succeed as students in institutions of higher education. Once we become aware of the various personal literacies we practice in our lives, we can begin to see their connections to the academic literate practices we must develop to meet our academic goals.

Roz Ivanic, a researcher at Lancaster University, studies the ways people use personal literacies to learn in school. In one of her essays, she introduces us to Nadine, a young woman who has a passion for horoscopes. Nadine reads her horoscope daily and believes in the predictions. She recognizes some horoscopes are better written and more useful than others, so she reads them from a variety of media, including television, print-based texts such as newspapers and magazines, and websites. Nadine also keeps a diary of the events that happen to her and analyzes the patterns she sees in her life events and their relationships to the horoscope predictions.

Nadine's personal literate practice is rich and varied, purposeful to her, and creative. It is a self-determined activity shaped by the context of Nadine's life. In contrast, when Nadine encounters reading and writing tasks in school, they may seem more valuable to the teacher than to Nadine, more formal and repetitive, and less creative. When Nadine goes to college, the literacies she must engage in often look very different from

the purposeful literate practices she engages in at home. It's important that Nadine notices the differences and similarities between her personal and academic literate practices so that she may use her capabilities to enhance her success in school.

When we learn to transfer our personal literate practices to formal school settings, we engage in a process of contextualization. In other words, we make meaning of school content by connecting our personal lives to our school lives. In Nadine's case, she might reflect on her practice of reading horoscopes and writing daily about her life and begin to see particular skills and ways of thinking that she can transfer to college. For example, she might notice she can make meaning of the things that happen to her by looking for patterns in her diary entries over time—an analytical process she most definitely can transfer to academic contexts. In fact, recognizing that she has already successfully used reading and writing to meet her needs can positively impact her confidence and determination as she faces new reading and writing situations in college.

Transitioning from the personal literate practices we engage in at home to the academic literate practices we engage in at school can be challenging, but we all bring valuable personal literacies with us into the classroom. We might think about how we can facilitate the process of contextualization while we're in college in order to ease the transition and better use the skills and literate practices we bring with us to support our academic goals.

Write to Learn: Personal Literate History

One of the ways we can develop our understanding

of ourselves as learners (in order to enhance our learning) is by reflecting on our personal literate history.

Create a timeline mapping out your reading or writing history. Include memorable moments from birth to now that have helped shape you as a reader or writer today. Share your timeline with your classmates.

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26. Writing for Community Change

ELISA STONE

As a college student, it's easy to get hung up on the consumer aspects of your education: having to pay tuition and fees, paying obscene amounts for textbooks you may not end up using again, balancing work and studies, and avoiding being a starving student. You may even have a family to take care of, whether it's fur kids or human kids or loved ones, on top of getting yourself an education. No one could argue that it takes an act of courage and dedication on your part to do what you're doing right now.

Once you jump through all the hoops, finish all your classes, and proudly display your degree, you'll go on to your next degree or delve into your career, which will present a new set of obligations and challenges. Either way, life tends to be busy and stay busy.

Still, college is about more than an education, more than just taking class after class, semester after semester, to get to where you want to go. College was designed to teach us to be whatever it is we want to be when we grow up (assuming we do grow up at some point), but it is also intended for a larger purpose: to make us good citizens. We live in a country where we elect our leaders and make choices about many aspects of our lives; we are allowed to voice our opinions, requests, and even demands to our elected officials. With this privilege comes an obligation, and that obligation is to be contributing members of society who work toward the greater good of all.

Why should you care? Well, maybe you don't care, right at this moment, since we already covered how busy you are and how stressed you must be and how little sleep you are probably

getting. Still, research shows that what makes people truly happy tends to involve working toward a cause outside of their own immediate needs and wants: in other words, service to others actually improves your own well-being.

What does this mean in a college setting? Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former U.S. Commissioner of Education, reminds us that "the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement." He says that colleges and universities must be staging grounds for action if we are to provide in-depth learning for students and meaningful opportunities for improving the world around us.

What does this have to do with writing? Or you? Our College has a history of combining service and learning in ways that allow students to gain hands-on experience, write for audiences outside of their classrooms, and change the way they see their role in the communities around them. Service-learning is an opportunity not to be missed! Many of your professors will support the idea that you can use college writing assignments to create texts that will help communities change for the better.

Let's take an example. Technical Writing is one of the core composition classes students can take as an alternative to English 2010. One semester, SLCC's Thayne Center for Service & Learning was approached by a local family called the Ahuna family. They had created a performance group to travel to various community events and share their family's traditional Hawaiian songs and dances with others, and at the same time honor and preserve their cultural heritage. "Ohana" is a Hawaiian word for "family," and so they called themselves "Ahuna Ohana," for the Ahuna family. They needed help with publicity. They wanted a logo, a website, and a promotional video. As a non-profit group, they did not have the funds to hire

professional marketers. A team of SLCC Tech Writing students agreed to take on the project. Meeting in a conference room down the hall from their regular classroom, the students worked with the Ahunas (including Grandpa Joe, who started their dance group and had very strong opinions about finding just the right fiery flame image for their logo) until the heart and soul of the Ahuna Ohana dance troupe could be proudly displayed online. This is an example of the countless ways students can combine service and learning to gain valuable skills that will make them more employable, help them have an impact, and come away with a sense of satisfaction knowing they truly helped someone who needed them.

There are many more examples. Did you know SLCC English students have done service, writing, and/or presentations for countless non-profit organizations and schools in our community? We have been involved with the United Way, the Utah Food Bank, Utah Food Rising, Catholic Community Services, Tree Utah, and so many more! For those who really get excited about service and learning, our College even has an Engaged Scholar program for students who want to do 100 hours of service over the course of their entire degree and graduate with special honors! We also offer alternative break trips to places like Seattle, San Francisco, and Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab for students who want to serve during spring break and reflect on the issues that we can do something about, such as food insecurity, homelessness, environmental preservation, and helping animals in need. Writing and reflection help us make these experiences into artifacts that show we are, indeed, good citizens.

But let's face it—being a good citizen doesn't always help us make rent, or have enough money to see a movie. Did you know, though, that service learning actually enhances student learning, and that it leads to greater employment opportunities? Being a good citizen, in other words, can actually help you get a higher GPA and be a more attractive

candidate to not only prospective employers, but also to transfer institutions if you plan to pursue additional education after your current degree. Where's the proof of this? Let's take a look at some research.

What does national research tell us about the employability of students trained in community-based experiential learning and problem solving? The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) commissioned Hart Research Associates to survey 400 employers from organizations with a minimum of twenty-five employees, at least 25% of whom have degrees from either two-year or four-year schools, with the goal of identifying learning outcomes favored in today's economy, including the importance of applied learning experiences and project-based learning (2015, p. 1). Their findings were as follows:

> Nearly all employers (96%) agree that, regardless of their chosen field of study, all students should have experiences in college that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own, including 59% who strongly agree with this statement. Large proportions of employers also agree that that all students, regardless of their chosen field of study, should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values (87%), take courses that build the civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to a democratic society (86%), acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences (78%), and gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies outside the United States (78%). (2015, p. 2)

Furthermore, a significant majority of employers surveyed by Hart Research Associates indicated they would be more likely to hire a recent graduate who has completed various types of "applied and engaged learning experiences—such as a comprehensive senior project, a collaborative research project,

a field-based project with people from other backgrounds, or a community-based or service-learning project" (AACC p. 7).

Given that employers value the outcomes and experiences service-learning can provide, what do students say about the importance of these concepts? The study mentioned above discusses how in 2013 Hart Research Associates surveyed more than 600 college students, including 158 community college students who planned to earn their associate degree or transfer to a university (2015, p. 1). Their findings were as follows (p. 8):

Students Agree with Employers on the Value of Applied Learning Experiences
Proportion of employers and students who say a company would be more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate if they have had this experience

	Employers %	College Students %
Internship/apprenticeship with company/organization	94	95
Senior thesis/project demonstrating knowledge, research, problem-solving, and communication skills	87	89
Multiple courses involving significant writing	81	76
Research project done collaboratively with peers	80	82
Service-learning project with community organizations	69	85
Field project in diverse community with people from different backgrounds/cultures	66	87
Study abroad program	51	71

The Value of Applied Learning Experiences: Employers & Students

Importantly, both employers and students saw the need for improvement in providing students with a wide range of knowledge and skills that apply to their fields (p. 9).

Similarly, a report from Community Learning Partnership, a national network of community change–studies programs based in community colleges in partnership with local non-profit and civic organizations, tells us that students trained as community organizers demonstrate the following strengths:

- Definable duties, as well as a skill set, knowledge base, and worker characteristics that influence their ability to do their jobs successfully.

- Cross-sector skills that they can apply to a range of job categories.
- Experience with hands-on practice, a capacity for self-reflection, and access to mentoring by experienced organizers.

Academic programs can also make a particular contribution to supporting the knowledge base that organizers need, something that training programs that focus on skills and tactics generally do not emphasize (2013, p. 1).

It's all good, you say, but that's for you humanities types. I'm in the sciences! I plan to study chemistry, or math, or engineering, so writing for community change doesn't really apply to my field or my future. Hold up . . . it does! Issues of social justice have become integral parts of the curriculum in many disciplines. This comes not only from concern for the well-being of society, but because studying issues of social justice delivers skills and a knowledge base that helps students be hired, succeed at their jobs, and succeed in post-graduate education. Students of disciplines that are traditionally associated with issues of peace and justice such as political science, communication, and social work will most certainly benefit from service-based writing. Yet a student of any discipline can stand to benefit from this opportunity. Examples of this can be seen in science fields such as medicine, psychology, and natural resource management.

In 2015, the Association of American Medical Colleges unveiled the new MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), which all prospective medical students must complete to apply to medical school (AAMC, 2015). The largest change to the test was making up to a quarter of it include content involving social and psychological principles. These can be seen in the test's "Foundational Concepts" 6–10. Examples of social justice are seen in Foundational Concept 9, "Cultural and social differences influence well-being" and Foundational Concept 10,

"Social stratification and access to resources influence well-being" (AAMC, 2015). The purpose of incorporating these concepts into the required curricula of all pre-med students is to ensure that the next generation of medical doctors have social and cultural understanding around issues of socioeconomic status, race, religion, gender, and other social justice issues.

While it is generally recommended that students take at least one introductory psychology and introductory sociology course in order to learn this, many students are likely to wish to engage in the material at a deeper level. This is not a new phenomenon in the medical disciplines, as shown by programs like Doctors Without Borders, which have incorporated social justice into their mission already ("Neglected People," 2015). Students who go into healthcare come to it through many undergraduate majors including biology, psychology, chemistry, and more. Service-based writing would be applicable and desirable to students intending on a career in healthcare, regardless of their major.

The field of psychology, and all of its sub-disciplines, has always had a social justice component, although it was not always in the forefront of the field. But now, the APA (American Psychological Association) and APS (Association for Psychological Science) have, in their own ways, changed the field to focus on and advocate for research and application of social justice issues in the field as a whole (Vasquez, 2012; Meyers, 2007). Salt Lake Community College offers an Associates in psychology and we know that many more General Studies students will go on to complete a Bachelor's or higher degree in psychology, as it is one of the largest undergraduate majors in the United States (Casselman, 2014).

Natural and cultural resource management and outdoor recreation are predominant areas of employment in Utah and the American West (see USAJOBS.gov for a clearinghouse of all federal job opportunities). Occupations vary from rangers

working within our national parks to field biologists to agriculture. Many of our students hope to and will find themselves in these types of fields through a number of disciplines. Resource management and outdoor recreation aren't just about the outdoors, though; they include human factors. And these disciplines, in both research and practice, have been incorporating the cultural, economic, and social needs of people into their management plans. What these fields need are more people trained in social justice awareness and in the human component of resource management. For one example of social justice conflict in park management, see a recent article from Al Jazeera America on the displacement of indigenous people in the name of conservation (Lewis, 2015, August 14).

Writing for community change via a service-learning experience would be applicable and navigable by any student in these types of science disciplines who wishes to dive deeper into these issues as they are seen in their fields. All of these fields are specifically asking for employees with the traits and skills that we hope to create at SLCC.

Hey, not everyone loves English classes or writing; we get that. Sometimes even professional writers hate writing! But since we all need writing for classes, everyday life, and career success, why not make it meaningful writing that helps create community change? Don't take our word for it; try service-learning for yourself and see how the satisfaction of knowing you made a difference helps all the stress from studying, work, bills, balancing your life, and catching your breath fade away long enough to make you smile. ☺

A NOTE ON JOBS IN UTAH

Given that today's employers value community organizing, leadership, public relations skills, critical thinking, effective communication, and cultural awareness, what is the value of these traits within our state? It turns out, Utah's non-profit sector offers significant employment opportunities. As of 2015, jobs in the Utah non-profit sector included positions such as:

- Development (fundraising) specialist
- Childhood development specialist
- Program leader
- Program coordinator
- Placement specialist
- Military mentor
- Support services staff
- Case manager
- Speech pathologist
- Children's group staff
- Executive director
- Administrative assistant
- Disaster preparedness educator
- Teaching assistant
- Education fellow
- Production clerk
- Independent living trainer
- Therapist
- Conference interns
- Social workers
- Treatment center support staff
- Community connections specialist
- Behavior counselor
- Food drive specialist
- Education specialist

- Job coach
- Veteran's residential program manager
- Speaker recruiter
- Grants administrator
- Clinical coordinator
- Director of human resources
- National Ability Center ski/snowboard instructors
- Childcare worker
- Spanish-speaking family educator
- Behavior analyst
- Clinical supervisor
- Physician's assistant
- Teen center staff
- Classroom aide
- Certified nursing assistant
- Literacy specialist
- Marketing specialist
- Volunteer coordinator
- Animal rescue staff
- Finance director
- Intake advisor
- Housing specialist
- Youth development professional
- Health education coordinator
- Resource development
- Community investment advisor
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Cook
- Prevention specialist
- Employment specialist
- After-school program leader
- Family resource facilitator
- Nutrition supervisor
- Computer skills instructor

- IT
- Healthcare navigator
- Billing specialist
- Accessibility design coordinator
- Substance abuse specialist
- Disabilities and mental health coordinator
- Crisis worker
- Graphic design and technology associate
- Children's advocate
- Special education paraprofessional
- Medical interpreter
- S.T.E.M program manager
- Veterinary technician
- Health policy analyst
- Accountant
- Business manager
- Outdoor education
- Youth mentoring specialist
- Youth garden program director
- Events coordinator
- Communications
- Transportation services manager
- Program and research coordinator
- American Indian specialist
- Service coordinator
- Continuum of care planner

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27. The Elizabeth Smart Case: A Study in Narrativized News

CLINT JOHNSON

It began with an open window.

Elizabeth Smart, a fourteen-year-old Mormon girl living in Salt Lake City, was asleep in the early morning hours of June 5th, 2002. Her nine-year-old sister Mary Katherine, who slept in the same room, woke as a man crept in the window. Frightened into pretending to sleep, Mary watched the intruder wake her sleeping sister and threaten her with a knife, saying, "You better be quiet, and I won't hurt you."

Moments later, both the intruder and Elizabeth were gone, leaving the nine-year-old to seek help from her sleeping parents.

The man led the captive girl to his camp in the woods, where his wife, Wanda Barzee, ritually washed Elizabeth's feet, a Biblical tradition. The kidnapper performed a ceremony he said married Elizabeth to him and proceeded to rape her.

The day after the kidnapping, the Smarts held a press conference pleading for whoever took their daughter to return her safely home. Soon after, 2,000 volunteers swept the area around the Smart home, even using dogs and aircraft to aid the search. They uncovered nothing.

As months passed, the police investigation uncovered hundreds of potential suspects, eventually focusing on a 26-year-old drifter named Bret Michael Edmunds. Suspicion intensified on Edmunds until he was discovered in a West Virginia hospital after suffering an overdose.

Primary suspicion then turned to a handyman previously hired by the Smarts, Richard Ricci, who was in police custody for other reasons. Ricci, on parole for the attempted murder of a police officer, was charged with felony burglary charges in the neighborhood of the Smart home. Despite pressure to confess from local police, Ricci refused until dying in jail of a brain hemorrhage. All leads died with him.

The Smart family, with extended kin, refused to let the lack of developments silence media coverage. They started a website to serve as a resource for the investigation and provided media with home videos of Elizabeth as a child and teenager.

Then, in October of 2002, Mary Katherine suddenly remembered where she had heard the kidnapper's voice: "I think I know who it is," she said. "Emmanuel."

Emmanuel ("God is with us" in Hebrew) had done a single day's paid yard work for the Smarts as well as spread word throughout the Salt Lake homeless population that the family was interested in hiring for odd jobs. When Mary Katherine told police she suddenly and without apparent cause remembered the kidnapper's voice as that of a man she had met briefly more than a year before, police did not believe her. The Smart family publicly accused police of not following up on the lead.

The family then hired a sketch artist to draw "Emmanuel's" face according to their memories and distributed the drawing to all interested media with the help of *America's Most Wanted* host John Walsh. Emmanuel's family recognized the drawing and reported the man's actual name: Brian David Mitchell.

On March 12, 2003, nine months after the abduction, an alert citizen in Sandy, Utah, who learned about the kidnapping on television, spotted Mitchell traveling with two people and contacted police. When officers approached the trio for questioning, they discovered Mitchell, Barzee, and, disguised in a gray wig and veil, Elizabeth.

Mitchell and Barzee were arrested. Initial psychological assessment announced Mitchell delusional and not competent

to stand trial; the ruling was then superseded by the court. But when the trial began and Mitchell acted out demonstrably in court, shouting religious condemnations, scripture, and hymns, the judge ruled the behaviors suggested psychosis. Mitchell was placed in the care of Utah State Hospital for pathological paranoia.

In February of 2006, a bill passed the Utah legislature allowing for forcible medication of defendants to ensure competence to face trial. In June, a judge approved forcible medication of Barzee so she could stand trial. A similar motion regarding Mitchell proved highly controversial, eventually reaching federal court on October 10, 2008. Intense debate raged as to whether Mitchell was genuinely delusional or merely highly manipulative, with expert witnesses testifying to both perspectives. Mitchell was finally declared competent to stand trial.

Years before, negotiations in a plea deal had reached an impasse primarily on one point: Mitchell's defense demanded that Smart not testify in court. Eight years after taking Elizabeth out the window in view of her sister, Mitchell stood trial for the crime. The trial lasted more than four weeks. Smart testified in the presence of Mitchell for three days, recounting nine months of rape, sometimes multiple times a day, and being forced to watch pornographic films and drink alcohol to erode her resistance.

Elizabeth's testimony sealed her abductor's conviction. Mitchell was sentenced to two life sentences in federal prison.

*****

In 2002, the year Smart was taken, police received more than 800,000 reports of missing people under eighteen years of age (Beam). CNN failed to report almost any. Meanwhile, as of 2014, they reported 498 times on the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart.

Why such exhaustive coverage of the Smart case while so many other missing children cases went unreported by national media?

One reason, likely among many others, is the Smart case lent itself readily to traditional story structure:

- Heroes in Smart's parents, who were wealthy enough to stay in the public eye, and eventually Smart herself, a victim straight from central casting: young, female, blonde, attractive, wealthy, white.
- A villain the caliber of Hannibal Lecter in Brian David Mitchell, who became a national boogie man: clinical psychotic, kidnapper, pedophiliac, polygamist, excommunicated radical Mormon, and self-proclaimed messiah.
- A clearly established beginning—Mitchell spiriting Smart out her open window, as attested to by Mary Katherine—and progression in the form of supposed sightings, a string of dismissed suspects including Edmunds and Ricci, and Smart's parents consistently keeping their missing child in the media with interviews and home movies.

Most tragically, other kidnapping stories lacked the victorious climax of the Smart case, in which Elizabeth, recovered mere miles from her house, became what the father of archetypal theory, Joseph Campbell, termed the "master of two worlds." Smart emerged from the ordeal possessed of an ability to reconcile her horrific experience with confidence in herself, the wider world, and her old faith—what to most would be an irreconcilable paradox.

Image taken from NYDailyNews

Smart's kidnapping readily lent itself to being told as a traditional narrative, with a clear perspective on heroes and villains, and a dramatic conflict progressing through multiple obstacles to a victorious climax and resolution. It was a story begging to be told, and news outlets did so again, and again, and again, meeting public demand.

Other missing persons cases of 2002 did not make such a neat tale. Few kidnappings open with such crisp drama as a little girl watching a knife-wielding man usher her sister out the window. Rarely are victims as easily identifiable as the pretty Smart, nor the perpetrators as absorbingly disturbed as Brian David Mitchell. Sadly, many such cases suffer from few developments and whisper into nothing, with no resolution whatsoever to comfort grieving families.

Story is the primary way we make meaning from life. And so, sadly, the 800,000 missing children cases that didn't easily fit story structure did not "mean as much." Thus, they were underreported or not reported at all.

This same story dynamic is a fundamental component of any method we use to understand our world: from journalism to gossip, in history and religion. Unlike life, stories present clear meaning. We perk up when we hear them told, and remember them long after. We reflect on and re-tell them, sometimes reinventing them in the process.

Stories with narrative structure, stories that feel like stories, get told and retold. Those that do not, sometimes despite their importance, languish untold or are quickly forgotten.

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28. Service Learning Abroad: Helping the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in South Africa

ELISA STONE

In summer of 2015, I was invited by Westminster College's Professor Rulon (Ru) Wood to help his team of professional communication students create an anti-stigma campaign for the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation. South Africa has the largest, most high-profile HIV epidemic in the world. As of 2013, approximately 6.3 million people there were living with HIV, including 330,000 newly infected people (avert.org). Although the Foundation has substantial support and resources, they still need marketing assistance.

Our service-learning team met weekly at Westminster and held early-morning Skype meetings with the Foundation. During fall break, Ru and I journeyed to South Africa to meet with Foundation leaders at the University of Cape Town to finalize the anti-stigma campaign. They loved my "Love Don't Judge" slogan, which was made into bracelets, t-shirts, and debuted at the 21st International AIDS Conference in summer of 2016. We then headed to Gugulethu Township to attend a community workshop for youth living with HIV/AIDS and to film video interviews with a pioneering doctor in the HIV clinic as well as counselors and kids who were born HIV positive,

with the goal of helping erase stigma around those needing diagnosis and treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Here is a video our communications team made for the anti-stigma campaign:

https://youtu.be/Y1Uia7bNOZg

While in Cape Town, Ru and I visited Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned and tortured for 18 years. We met several Freedom Fighters, including Mr. Visumsi Mcongo, who had dinner with us and allowed us to record his story of being a political prisoner with Mandela for 14 years. Mr. Mcongo accepted my gift of love beads that had been given to me by a stranger in SLC to wish me luck on my journey. Ru hopes to bring Mr. Mcongo, who has never been to America and would very much like to visit, to Westminster College as a guest lecturer.

We also learned about Apartheid and visited non-profit organizations on a philanthropic cultural tour with an organization called Uthando, a Xhosa word for "Love." It was gratifying to support an animal shelter, children's daycare center, and seniors' recreation center while honoring the personal histories of those who endured Apartheid and continue to suffer its aftermath.

The Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation requested I return in 2016 with Ru and a cohort of Westminster's professional communication students to film and produce additional videos for the DTHF Youth Centre in Masephumelele, an under-resourced community south of Cape Town. We did return in April of 2016. I was especially motivated to make an impact if we could, because a young man named Atti, with whom we had formed a friendship when he debuted in our initial video, passed away on February 9, 2016 due to not taking his medications for HIV/AIDS because of the stigma around his illness. He did not take his medications because he would have had to transfer to the adult clinic and thought during that process people would judge him for being sick. When I learned

of Atti's passing, my heart broke. I dedicate all of my service-learning endeavors to his memory; he wanted to be a doctor and help people.

During our second trip, I facilitated poetry workshops for Xhosa tribal members in both Gugulethu and Masephumele townships. I had to figure out a way to gain rapport and trust before asking people who are already stigmatized to write poems about HIV/AIDS and other topics, such as teen pregnancy, that the Foundation wanted us to cover. I used a formulaic poem where each person filled in the same information about themselves, and we all wrote poems together about our names, our fears, our hopes, our dreams, our parents, places we've always wanted to visit, and how we would describe ourselves. As each person shared, we learned we had a great deal in common.

Listen to a sample of our poetry:

https://youtu.be/9Xcb7PlRS5E

Our initial sharing allowed people to have enough rapport with one another to write more in-depth poetry about stigma. I was surprised to learn one of my fellow travelers had been wounded by AIDS as well. Here is a clip of our freestyle poetry:

https://youtu.be/Khyji63YdYI

I had to be careful about certain privileged assumptions I made. For example, I assumed that the young people we were working with in the townships would know and recognize places like Robben Island and the famous Table Mountain, a vista in Cape Town that is considered one of the seven natural wonders of the world. As it turned out, life in the townships is far too limited for folks to have traveled very far. The young people we worked with said they had never been to either Robben Island or Table Mountain. I changed my references in our anti-stigma campaign and in the poetry workshops to reflect only the places that would feel familiar to them.

We also had to combat the fact that many people turn to tribal healers to address the outward symptoms of HIV/AIDS,

but they don't want to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS or disclose that they have it due to stigma, and therefore, they don't get the free life-saving pills available to them through medical clinics. We didn't want to disrespect tribal customs, but at the same time, we wanted to help save lives. I came up with the idea of the Tutu Tribe. We would honor that each young person we met was loyal to their own tribe, whether it was Xhosa, Zulu, or another. But in addition, we told them, they could belong to the Tutu Tribe. This would involve continuing to earn Tutu points by meeting their medical obligations at the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation's Youth Centre, and by thinking of themselves as having dual tribal memberships, so that in the Tutu Tribe they would take their pills and get regular checkups to live out a normal lifespan despite being infected with HIV/AIDS. I wasn't sure if the Foundation would like this idea, but they loved it! Thus, we developed materials around it and started using the hashtag #TutuTribe. We conducted crash courses in public service announcements and helped the young people we met write and produce their own anti-stigma materials including poetry, video public service announcements, and print materials. We also had t-shirts and bracelets made. We shot as much film as we could, and the crew from Westminster took the raw materials back to Salt Lake City for editing.

Here is one of the PSAs created by my team, Aviwe and Ace, on the subject of myths about STDs:

https://youtu.be/wHTJUEkwkrA

The highlight of this second trip was that I was invited by Lavinia Browne, who was Desmond Tutu's Personal Assistant for 20 years, to have coffee with Tutu and attend a service he was overseeing. This was too exciting to pass up, so through a series of complicated travel maneuvers and nearly hitchhiking my way out of Kruger National Park, I flew alone to Johannesburg, then back to Cape Town. They said there would be riots that weekend, as the people were (and remain)

extremely displeased with President Jacob Zuma. “Don’t worry,” my cab driver told me. “There may be riots and shooting like the last protest, but just stay with your group and you’ll be fine.” There was no group. I was alone. I nodded. The next morning I ventured to St. George’s Cathedral and was surprised to secure both a front row seat and the attention of international media; Archbishop Tutu and his wife, Mama Leah Tutu, were receiving a Peace with Justice Award. I took my first communion from Desmond Tutu, and when he moved down the aisles to greet people, he unexpectedly gave me a hug! Without knowing who they were, I had befriended the world-famous photographers sitting next to me; they captured my moments with Tutu. After the services, I entered the reception area to share coffee with Tutu and present him with my “Love, Don’t Judge” bracelets for himself and his wife. To my surprise, he put his bracelet on immediately; he seemed genuinely pleased to hear of our anti-stigma work with HIV+ young people in the townships. Since Desmond Tutu is the man whom I admire most in the world, I was elated by my time in his presence. Paying my own way to South Africa twice was more than worth it as I considered the magnitude of fulfillment and joy I received in return for my choice to serve.

As a devoted practitioner of service-learning, I am elated and humbled by the opportunity to work toward social justice on a global scale. Lifelong friends from Africa and beyond, plus getting to meet a Nobel Prize–winning social-justice icon are my greatest gifts from this affirming experience. If you are thinking of trying service-learning, do it! Start small and don’t obsess over obstacles; you never know where the path of civic engagement will take you!

29. The Ethics and Importance of Arguments Across Moral Tribes

BRANDON ALVA

Renee and Ema are competing in an egg drop contest. They must drop an egg from a height of 15 feet and prevent it from breaking using only the following supplies: 60 inches of twine, a dozen plastic drinking straws, 4 sheets of paper towel, 6 popsicle sticks, a half cup of downy feathers, 24 inches of Scotch tape and a cotton handkerchief.

Renee and Ema decide to brainstorm separately and then come back together to discuss their ideas. Renee decides she needs to soften the fall by creating a parachute using the twine and handkerchief and then padding the egg using scotch tape to secure it to a mattress made of popsicle sticks topped with drinking straws and feathers.

Ema envisions a different plan to blunt the impact of the fall. She decides to suspend the egg in a flexible framework of drinking straws. A few straws will be wrapped around the egg itself. Another set of straws will extend outward from the egg to create a set of braces which will flex on impact and absorb the force of the fall (hopefully without breaking the egg).

The two come back together and share their plans. After sharing their ideas both Ema and Renee still believe their own plans to be best.

“I don’t think your popsicle stick and drinking straw mattress will do much to blunt the force of impact,” Ema argues.

"Well, that's what my parachute is for—the egg will be dropping slowly," Renee responds.

"Yes, the parachute is a great idea," Ema concedes, then counter-argues, "But you are using resources in a less effective design. My design makes better use of the drinking straws."

"What if we use your drinking straw idea and combine it with my parachute …" Renee suggests.

"That's a great idea. We should do that."

Ema and Renee's new plan is a success. Their egg lands uncracked.

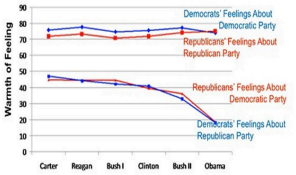
This is a small example of a healthy debate resulting in successful collaboration. And this pattern of healthy debate among interested parties leading to new knowledge is something we can observe on a grand scale throughout human history. This is why debate is important for any society—because a healthy debate resolves conflict. Consider for a moment that almost all of our current scientific and technological knowledge was at some point the subject of debate. That's right, even scientific basics such as genetics and the earth revolving around the sun were once hotly contested ideas.

Over the course of American history, humanity has also made tremendous advancements in our understanding of human rights. If we walk backward through history we will see the civil rights movement, women' suffrage, the end of slavery, the legal protection of religious rights, the freedom of the press, and the granting of trial by a jury of your peers. All of these rights, which we often take for granted, were once the subject of fierce debate. In our current hyper-partisan climate it can be easy to become cynical and feel as if the current debates will never end, but that is not what history tells us.

Debates in the public sphere rarely play out as smoothly as our egg-drop example. Many debates take decades and sometimes centuries. They can become contentious,

sometimes even violent. However, though the progress is slow and sometimes comes at a great price, it can happen.

In the last few years, it seems that the ability to debate in U.S. politics and public policy has broken down. It appears to many that we no longer hear one another. Increasingly the other party is seen not just as the loyal opposition or competition, but as the enemy. Fear and resentment are growing rapidly among partisans, as shown in the following chart.



Source: Jonathan Haidt and Marc J. Hetherington. "Look How Far We've Come Apart." The New York Times, The New York Times, 17 Sept. 2012.

One of the most alarming things about this chart is the dramatic acceleration of negative feelings toward one's political opponents. We also see these sentiments reflected in the political rhetoric of our time and the inability of our government to reach compromise on important issues. How can we restore healthy debate?

AVOID MANICHAEAN THINKING

Mani was a self-professed prophet who taught that those who

disagreed with his teaching were servants of the devil. Today he has the dubious honor of being the namesake of Manichaean thinking. Today Manichaean thinking refers to when we, without due warrant, suspect our opponents of bad faith; when we believe that those we disagree with are not sincerely mistaken—they are in some way actually aware that what they are doing is wrong. Thus, they are not sincere in their beliefs—they have ulterior motives for their political, religious, or ethical positions.

Some subtle examples of Manichaean thinking might include the following statements:

Those Christians—they know there is no god and that they are just talking to a wall when they pray. They can't publicly admit it, but they know that it's all nonsense.

There are no atheists in foxholes. In their hearts they know there is a God, they just want to continue a life of sin.

Liberals want to bankrupt the government so they can put a socialist government in place.

NRA members know that assault rifles are the cause of mass shootings, but they also know that after mass shootings both gun sales and donations to the NRA go

up.

Notice how each of these statements/claims states or implies that the opposition is not sincerely misinformed but that they have ulterior motives for their positions. Manichaean thinking is common because it is seductively self-flattering: you and those who agree with you are the truly righteous and your opponents are morally inferior. Manichaean thinking is also seductive because it dramatically simplifies the complexity of the world we live in. If we give into Manichaean thinking, many complex problems are reduced to a simple need for the righteous to crush the wicked beneath their heels.

The golden rule is a very old truism in ethics: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Consider for a moment the important ethical principles we might learn by applying the golden rule to debate across ideological divides. How would we want those we disagree with to treat us as we attempt to persuade them? I suggest that we would want our opponents to do the following:

Assume good faith.

When we engage in debate with others it is important to debate the subject at hand rather than engaging in Manichaean thinking and ad hominem attacks. (Ad hominem is Latin for "to the man." It is an attack on speakers themselves rather than on the argument.) Ad hominem attacks often close off meaningful debate and cloud our ability to think critically about the issue at hand. If you say to someone, "I disagree with you about principle x," then you both have the option to proceed to debate principle x. But if you say to them "you are a fascist" or

"a liar" or a "racist" or "a libtard" then debate is likely foreclosed. They are going to (perhaps correctly) perceive that you are not interested in meaningful exchange but simply want to fight.

Take our earlier example at the egg drop contest. Suppose instead of arguing about which design was superior, the women involved had instead accused each other of being selfish and egocentric, essentially saying "You only want to do that idea because it was yours and not mine." They would have reached no compromise and their designs might have failed. It is important to note that the point about egocentrism might not be entirely untrue—perhaps Ema and Renee preferred their own designs because in part they created them. Just as it might be true that those who support gun rights do so in part because of their enjoyment of using guns and just as those who support gun control might do so in part because of a lack of experience with guns. It is also true that there will be exceptions to those stereotypes as well. There are indeed experienced gun owners who favor increased gun control and there are also people who have never touched a gun who favor gun rights. In other words, we must evaluate positions and arguments on their own merits and not on the perceived motivations of the speaker. This is why ad hominem attacks are logical fallacies.

Listen.

When we debate important issues we all want to be heard. When we discuss these issues with others we need to listen as well as advocate. Not only does listening allow you to discover the merit of other points of view, if there

are any, it is also an important rhetorical strategy. If you listen to them, they might listen to you.

Be patient.

We believe that our conclusions are simply a matter of logic, that getting others to agree with us is a process similar to having them correct an error they made in solving a math problem. Once you point out to them the error in their logic then they will see their mistake and correct course. But if we look at the lives of those we are seeking to persuade, we will see it is not so simple. Our moral positions often determine both our tribe and lifestyle (or is it the other way around?). When we attempt to persuade someone that they should change their position on abortion, religious belief, veganism, etc. we are not just asking them to change their ideas abstractly—we are asking them to change their core beliefs and often their daily lives as well. For obvious reasons, people do not make such conversions casually or often as the result of a single conversation but rather as the outcome of a process that takes time and repeated exposure to a new set of ideas.

IN CONCLUSION

Because we so rarely see people publicly changing their positions on important issues ("You are right Aunt Janice, the flat tax is the way to go. Thanks for SCREAMING some sense into me using the caps lock.") we can become cynical about engaging in conversations about these issues. We may begin

to think that no one ever changes their mind about important issues and that we should simply avoid such discussions all together. But again experience shows that many people's beliefs do change over time.

In fact, history is filled with important people whose thinking on important issues evolved over time due to the influence of others. But to briefly give you some more recent examples: Megan Phelps-Roper was an outspoken member of the Westboro Baptist Church. She began a series of Twitter debates with David Abitbol, founder of the blog, Jewlicious, in hopes of getting him to repent for being Jewish. But their exchanges, which some believed to be a waste of Abitbol's time, lead to Phelps-Roper questioning Westboro's teachings and eventually to her leaving the group.

In another example, Dereck Black was a white supremacist, so much so that at one point he hosted a white supremacist radio show. But when he went off to college he found himself questioning a lot of what he'd been taught and decided not to tell his classmates about his affiliation. When his fellow college student found out about his white supremacist activities, they debated if they should ever speak to him again. Some of his classmates decided they would continue to talk to him in an effort to persuade him to change his mind. In part due to their efforts, he has now renounced white supremacy.

In each of these cases many would have felt tempted to write the mistaken individual off as a lost cause, but patience, respect for the person (but not their ideas), and a willingness to engage in difficult dialogue led to something amazing and wonderful: a person willing to listen and change. You can find more detailed accounts of each of these stories in the references.

Also remember some people cannot be persuaded. But sometimes we engage those who cannot be persuaded (but can remain civil) in public debate because in so doing we have a larger audience in mind or maybe even a future audience.

Paul A. Samuelson once wrote, “Science advances funeral by funeral.” Samuelson got this idea from Max Planck who said in his own words “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.” Sometimes we can persuade our most ardent opponents, other times we are publically promoting ideas that the next generation will take up. And, in fact, you do not need to persuade everyone. The civil rights movement did not have so many legislative and legal victories because it persuaded everyone but because it persuaded a majority of voters and lawmakers.

There are many who will see this call for respectful public debate as a call to respect all ideas, even those ideas which are harmful, hurtful, or objectively mistaken, but I endorse no such nonsense. The view that the earth is the center of the solar system is false, unlike the view that the sun is the center of our solar system. But resolving that difference of opinion is often best done with a respectful debate because multiple lines of evidence and reason support a heliocentric view and all earth-centered arguments are flawed in some way. The greater your confidence in the superiority of your positions the more you should desire a meaningful and respectful debate. Public debate can lead to meaningful progress, but it takes patience, effective rhetoric, and time.

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30. Academic Writers: Responsible Researchers First

SIMONE FLANIGAN

- Identifying Our Own Bias
- Examining the Cultural Eye
- How Cognitive Bias Impedes Reliable Research
- Evaluate Your Relationship With Information
- Transforming as Academic Researchers

As academic writers, we often write for change, but inspiring an audience to modify their minds and behaviors is not an easy task. To be successful in our goal of persuasion, before we ever sit down to draft, we must first look inward, investigating our own beliefs, motivations, and biases. To become culturally responsible writers requires us to consider diverse audiences, acknowledging and honoring their experiences. From there we look at our relationship with information: where we receive it and how we process it. To be an honest researcher and writer we cannot be idle or passive in the information we ingest daily. We must intentionally work at being active participants in society, seeking legitimate, relevant, reliable, and varied perspectives.

IDENTIFYING OUR OWN BIAS

A recent study from Cornell University concluded that people often think they are innocent of bias but believe others are guilty of it (Wang and Jeon). It seems it is easy for us to see the culpability in others but cling to our own perceived innocence. Our egos can be sensitive, and we might be resistant to begin the real work of self-reflection and analysis. There are concrete benefits to self-awareness, especially in our academic lives as researchers and writers. The first step is admitting to bias, and tools like the Harvard Implicit Association Test can lend a hand in uncovering our shortcomings. If we have never been asked to challenge our perceptions, this might be uncomfortable.

To build a strong foundation when starting a writing project, a writer needs to reflect and admit to their own potential "myside" bias. "Myside bias is a common type of cognitive bias where people process information in a manner biased toward their own prior beliefs, opinions, and attitudes" (Wang and Jeon). Writers are often guilty of myside bias when they begin a project. Instead of pursuing truth, they pursue validation. To be aware of and therefore resist myside bias, we need to first unpack our perceptions and investigate where our beliefs originated.

EXAMINING OUR CULTURAL EYE

We all have a unique cultural eye that continues to form daily based on our environment and experiences. While each

moment we experience shapes us, some of the most profound likely have to do with our race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender identity, sexuality, health, ability, impairments, religious and political beliefs. These are just a few of the many diverse lenses we have learned to interpret the world through.

TRY THIS

Write down as many of your own lenses as you can. As you identify them, ask questions like: How have these lenses shaped the person I am today? Which of these lenses work subconsciously? Which came from your childhood? etc. Afterward, imagine people's perceptions on the opposite side of the spectrum, as well as the importance of lenses you did not examine. Assume without judgement. For example: if you are healthy and that isn't a lens you typically have to think about, what would it be like for someone who has diabetes and has to make sure that they always have insulin with them? Perhaps you identify as straight and haven't ever considered the fears a queer couple might have when it comes to showing physical affection in certain public spaces.

To understand our own beliefs and ideas, we move through our history, taking the required time to establish *why* we believe and think the way we do. Each individual is unique and although we might be like our peers in some ways, we can be dramatically different in others. When we want to persuade an audience, out of necessity we must understand perspectives

that are not our own. To honor the cultural eye of others, we do this by asking questions and being curious about *their* experience.

HOW COGNITIVE BIAS IMPEDES RELIABLE RESEARCH

No one is without culpability when it comes to bias. While it takes effort, the more we discover about bias, the easier it will be to identify when our mind goes from being curious to being judgmental. There are over one hundred cognitive biases that affect how we interact with the world. Let's cover just a few.

Confirmation bias is much like myside bias. In short: we do not seek the truth; we seek *our* truth. We search for things like, "why are so many homeless people addicted to drugs?" instead of "what is the correlation between drug addiction and homelessness." One is assuming a relationship, the other is questioning if there is one. Even though we might make assumptions that can prove to be true, to research with integrity we need to avoid assuming and allow the data to inform us.

In-group favoritism is when we identify as being part of a specific group and believe people within that group are better than others because of their affiliation. This might be as harmless as thinking our state football team is the best, to more harmful beliefs about our political affiliation being superior to others.

Declinism is the belief that society is declining. We romanticize the past, willfully ignoring the injustices and horrors of history. "Make America Great Again" was an empowering slogan for some in America, but it was a deeply hurtful one to others, especially to people of color

and queer people who have been fighting against injustice in their communities for hundreds of years.

Anchoring is when we make decisions informed by the first source of information we receive, rather than collecting a full, analytical picture. Perhaps we watch a powerful Ted Talk. We decide, as the speaker professed, that obesity in teens is worse than it's ever been. Later we realize the speech was over a decade old and data has changed. If we would have assembled a more accurate and relevant portrayal, we would have figured that out sooner.

Availability bias is when we rely on what we already know to inform our opinions and beliefs about issues, rather than seeking additional knowledge to accurately educate us. Because of demanding schedules, students often limit their opportunity for academic growth in availability bias. Instead of doing the needed foundational research to legitimize their ideas, they start with their formed assumptions.

What do all these cognitive biases have in common? They obstruct our ability to research responsibly. When we aren't responsible researchers, no matter how innocent we might be to our inherent bias, we invalidate our work. To write for change we have to identify the varied communities issues affect.

EVALUATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH INFORMATION

Once we identify and scrutinize our cultural lenses and biases, we can look at where and how we ingest information to determine what changes may be needed. For example, 86% of Americans say they get their news from a smartphone,

computer, or tablet, and 53% of people admit they get their news from social media platforms (Shearer). Because so many of us rely on our devices for information, it's important to accept how we are interacting with news sites and social media platforms.

In early adulthood, our groups of family and friends may seem diverse, but they can also be homogeneous. If our peers look, act, and believe the same or similar ideas, it may be difficult to observe what different perspectives are held by others. We know that in-group favoritism affects us cognitively by holding our personal groups in higher esteem than other groups we are not a part of. To ensure we are being critical thinkers and researchers, we need to evaluate where we obtain our information. If we tend to get our information from the same sites, what other more reliable sources may be out there? Media bias charts from sites like Ad Fontes or All Sides Media can help give you a sense of the political leanings and reliability of where you get your information. "Media bias charts … offer well-researched appraisals on the bias of certain sources. But to best inform yourself, you need a full toolbox. Check out Poynter's MediaWise project for more media literacy tools" (Sheridan). Also, as you start to collect your data, consider using fact-checking websites and Mike Caulfield's Four Moves to assist your research process.

We can all find ways of improving how we interact with information daily, and it always requires frequent maintenance. Our scrolling habits take attention to revise, but with intentional change will come rewarding benefits in our ability to research and — therefore — in our ability to write.

TRANSFORMING AS ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS

When we fail to examine our behavior, we may be standing directly in the way of change and equality, without realizing that we are the impediment to someone else's quality of life. To write material that is relevant to *all* of society, material that can tangibly change our communities, we must first identify and acknowledge our bias. To do this we need to analyze where our own perceptions and beliefs come from, what cognitive biases influence us, and then take the needed responsibility and proactive steps to keep ourselves aware, honest, and as objective as possible. Then we identify our blinders when it comes to how we consume information.

Once we have done this, we can become reliable academic researchers and writers who can successfully persuade our diverse audiences. Verna Myers, the VP of Strategy and Inclusion at Netflix, says when we become more aware, we can approach this knowledge with "low guilt, but high responsibility." She goes on to say, "Once you know these biases are wrong, what do you want to do about it?" Spending the time to become conscious of our beliefs and motivations can be uncomfortable, but it ultimately sets us free to be critical thinkers. Through empathy for ourselves and others, we can truly write with purpose and write for change.

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31. Introduction to Civic Engagement & Service-Learning

DANIEL BAIRD AND LISA PACKER

- What Is Civic Engagement?
- How Civic Engagement Works in the Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies (ELWS)
- Get Involved!
- Resources
- Further Reading

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Your college experience will prepare you to make a living, follow a career path, and find self-fulfillment. Yet it should go beyond these self-oriented goals in that it also should prepare you for civic engagement. Civic engagement can be thought of as being involved in solving social problems or improving the community. Being civically engaged during college means

learning about and participating in community investment through individual, club, and class activities and assignments.

> *"I think [civic engagement] means that community service goes hand-in-hand with getting a higher education. Just as an individual invests in a degree in order to begin or advance their careers, they should also invest in the community where they will advance in age and/or their children will be born into. I think it's especially important to set good examples of community service to younger generations so that they can continue implementing good acts and keep the cycle going."*
>
> *—Previous English Student*

How Civic Engagement Benefits You

Those who participate in civic engagement tend to have higher grades, are more likely to graduate, and have a more meaningful class experience. Giving something back to the community is just as important as learning in class, and by doing both you can be prepared to be a good citizen in your community, workplace, and in your life. Other benefits include:

- A more complex understanding of communal, societal, and global issues
- Developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Increased involvement and connection with the community through mutual learning and helping
- Enhanced learning due to practical application of skills

- Heightened empathy for others
- Developed ability to help and serve others
- Practice in analyzing and implementing public action
- Increased personal development, including confidence and self-esteem
- Networking opportunities to support career development

How Civic Engagement Benefits the Community

Your service will also benefit your community. Whether you are serving others at a shelter, designing a marketing pamphlet for a nonprofit, translating documents into another language for an elementary school, or tutoring high school students in math, your service has a lasting impact. You can learn more about what other students have done by reading the newsletter *Reflections*.

And there are other ways your involvement helps the community. Stanford University's Hass Center for Public Service has defined six pathways of public service and civic engagement. These six, including service, are community-engaged learning and research, activism, philanthropy, being involved in the political process and governance, and entrepreneurial and corporate social responsibility. To learn more about these see their video on Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement.

What Civic Engagement Is Not

Sometimes we misunderstand the purpose of service and may do more harm than good in the community. It is not:

- Taking pity on others
- Just community volunteering (instead, it combines academic learning with ongoing service)
- An opportunity to show others the "right" way to do things
- Proselytizing

HOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WORKS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, LINGUISTICS, AND WRITING STUDIES (ELWS)

Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Courses

You can participate in civic engagement in several ways in the English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies Department. One way is by taking officially designated service-learning courses. These courses allow you to apply what you are learning to real-world settings and you are able to demonstrate your learning through your service with a non-profit organization.

> *"Service-learning is not volunteering; it is service tied to learning, putting knowledge into action."*
>
> *—Lucy Smith (Engaged Learning Coordinator)*

Typically in a service-learning class you will give service either directly or indirectly by working with a nonprofit organization. You may also have the opportunity to research on a topic related to the community.

You can find out more by reading "Service-Learning in English Composition Courses." For more information on service-learning in general see the Engaged Learning Office's overview of Service-Learning.

> *"Service-learning programs involve students in activities that address local needs while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community."*
>
> *—Blinn College*

Civic Orientation Across the Curriculum and Writing as a Form of Action for Social Change

Not all faculty will officially designate their course as a service-learning course. There are, however, other ways you can participate in civic engagement in a class. For example an instructor may ask you to research a topic on social equity or other community issues. Another instructor may focus their course around a theme such as researching food sustainability. There are many ways an instructor can give you opportunities to research and write about community issues that are of interest to you.

Civically Engaged Scholars

You can also participate in the The Civically Engaged Scholars (CES) program. CES provides you with an opportunity to have a larger community-engaged experience during college. You will have the opportunity to participate in various forms of leadership, both on campus and in the community, and to foster social equity and justice. The values and goals promoted by CES reflect the idea that Salt Lake Community College is an "engaged campus." This acknowledges that SLCC is a part of the larger community and emphasizes the importance of mutually beneficial relationships with that community. The ELWS Department promotes CES for its majors and also provides service-learning courses for those in other majors who are looking to fulfill general education requirements.

Upon graduation, Civically Engaged Scholars receive a special distinction on their transcript, a designation at graduation with a blue honors cord, a letter from the President of SLCC for Graduation, a letter of recommendation from the CES Coordinator if requested, an e-Portfolio that showcases their civic engagement, networking opportunities, and referrals to other institutions of higher education. To learn more about Civically Engaged Scholars in the ELWS Department, please fill out this form. You can also contact Clint Gardner at Clint.Gardner@slcc.edu to learn more about CES and ELWS.

Read About Other Students' Service

The Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies newsletter, *Reflections*, contains stories by students who have been involved in civic engagement, including service-learning

classes and as civically engaged scholars. It occasionally includes stories about service done by your instructors as well.

Finding an Instructor in ELWS That Offers Civic Engagement Including Service-Learning Courses

Many instructors include some form of civic engagement as part of their course. It may be centered around the course itself such as ENGL 2460 Writing and Social Justice. Other instructors simply feel very strongly about community engagement and include it as part of their course.

Instructors can officially designate their course as a service-learning course. Depending on the instructor, certain service-learning opportunities will be optional but encouraged. Instructors understand that due to work commitments or other circumstances not everyone can participate in service-learning during a semester. Some instructors, however, may require service-learning participation for the course.

Officially designated service-learning courses are so noted in MySLCC when you register (see Fig. 1 below). Also, a list of the instructors that teach service-learning is available on the ELWS website. The Engaged Learning Office keeps a list of all designated service-learning courses.

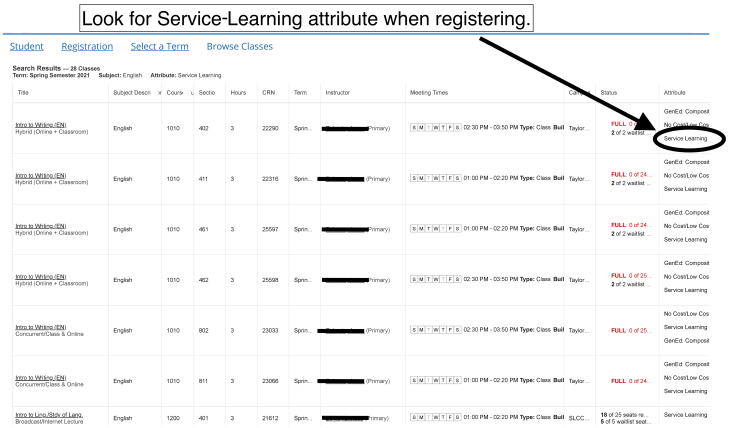

Fig. 1. Finding service-learning courses when registering.

Defining Service Opportunities

Here are some ways you can combine service with learning:

- **Direct service** — Directly serving a population either as an individual or on behalf of an organization such as a nonprofit or a religious entity, for example serving meals to the homeless and through reflection and other writing prompts fulfill class assignments.
- **Indirect service (usually projects)** — Usually understood as off-site/online service such as updating an organization website or creating a pamphlet, etc. The service also fulfills a class assignment. The Engaged Learning office offers funding for eligible projects.
- **Non-direct service** — Where one does not directly serve people but works behind the scenes on something that will have an impact on society, for example removing invasive plants from the Jordan River waterway, etc. and through reflection and other writing prompts fulfill class

assignments.

- **Raise awareness or propose a solution** — Find a problem you think can be improved by raising awareness, teaching people how to do something, or marketing a solution to the problem you've chosen. You could write a report detailing the problem, write a proposal explaining the problem and your solution, or design a pamphlet or website to address the issue. For example, how could you use the skills and abilities of your major or career field to improve education for K–12? Or is there a social issue you feel strongly about and would like to research and suggest a solution? Some issues could be:
    - Abuse (sexual, physical or other)
    - Animal rights
    - Gender imbalance in STEM subjects
    - Homelessness
    - Structural inequities such as the school-to-prison pipeline
    - Unequal access to healthcare
    - Vulnerable populations such as children or the elderly
- **Alternative fall/spring break or weekend service** — For both fall and spring break, the Thayne Center offers local, and national service opportunities. Information about these opportunities can be found in SLCC Groups. Similarly some community partners offer service opportunities on weekends for students who cannot give service during the week.
- **Advocacy work** — Active support of an idea or cause, especially the act of pleading or arguing for something, typically performed in a political context. An example might be coordinating a letter-writing campaign to educate the Salt Lake Valley about domestic violence and creating resources for survivors.
- **Research & consultation** — Using an academic skill set to investigate an issue impacting a community organization

and presenting this knowledge in a way that benefits the work of that organization. For example, gathering statistics about Salt Lake children in foster care and presenting research and recommendations to the Salt Lake County Division of Youth Services is research and consultation.

GET INVOLVED!

Your participation in civic engagement is reciprocal: it will not only benefit your community, but it will also result in a more meaningful class experience through practical application of skills. In other words, it will be a highlight of your time at SLCC as your homework benefits the community you serve. You will also have a better understanding of issues that face the community in which you live. As Elisa Stone said in her article, "Writing For Community Change," "Service benefits those who serve just as much as the recipients; it is reciprocity that keeps this practice at the heart of meaningful education."

So if you haven't already, take advantage of the many opportunities to combine learning with civic engagement in the Department of English, Linguistics, and Writings Studies at Salt Lake Community College.

RESOURCES

- The Thayne Center for Student Life, Leadership, and Community Engagement is the heart of civic

engagement at SLCC. The center coordinates between faculty, students, and community nonprofits to provide quality service opportunities for students.

- SLCCGroups (also called CampusGroups) provides a list of various community events, including service opportunities. They also keep a list of nonprofit organizations, called community partners, that love to have SLCC students serve with their organization. Login with your MySLCC name and password.
- Service-Learning tuition waiver: If you are or have participated in a service-learning designated course and have showcased what you did on your ePortfolio, you are eligible to apply for the one semester tuition waiver. You can find more information about this on the SLCC student Service-Learning page that is part of the Engaged Learning Office.

FURTHER READING

- "Service-Learning in English Composition Courses"
- The Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies newsletter, *Reflections*, contains stories by students who have been involved in civic engagement
- Elisa Stone's articles: "Writing for Community Change" and "Service-Learning Abroad: Helping the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in South Africa"
- Andrea Malouf's article addressed to faculty about service-learning: "Service-Learning in English Studies and Writing Studies"
- Introduction to Community Engaged Writing at Purdue's Online Writing Lab

32. Writing for Community Change

ELISA STONE

- College Is More Than a Traditional Classroom Education
- Doing Service to Enhance Your Learning Improves Your Own Well-Being
- How Does It Work?
- What Does Research Tell Us About the Efficacy of Service-Learning?
- What About the Sciences? Isn't Service-Learning Just for Humanities?
- Writing for Community Change Is for You!
- Personal Experience Narrative & Photos

COLLEGE IS MORE THAN A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM EDUCATION

As a college student, it's easy to get hung up on the consumer aspects of your education: having to pay tuition and fees, spend obscene amounts for textbooks you may not end up using

again, balance work and studies, and avoid being broke, hungry, and exhausted. You may even have a family to take care of, whether it's fur kids or human kids or loved ones, on top of getting yourself an education. No one could argue that it takes an act of courage and dedication on your part to do what you're doing right now.

Once you jump through all the hoops, finish all your classes, and proudly display your degree, you'll go on to your next degree or delve into your career, which will present a new set of obligations and challenges. Either way, life tends to be busy and stay busy.

Still, college is about more than an education, more than just taking class by class, semester by semester, to get where you want to go. College was designed to teach us to be whatever we want to be when we grow up (assuming we do grow up at some point), but it is also intended for a larger purpose: to make us good citizens. We live in a country where we elect our leaders and make choices about many aspects of our lives; we are allowed to voice our opinions, requests, and even demands to our elected officials. With this privilege comes an obligation, and that obligation is to be contributing members of society who work towards the greater good of all.

DOING SERVICE TO ENHANCE YOUR LEARNING IMPROVES YOUR OWN WELL-BEING

Why should you care? Well, maybe you don't care, right at this moment, since we already covered how busy you are and how stressed you must be and how little sleep you are probably getting. Still, research shows that what makes people truly

happy tends to involve working toward a cause outside of their own immediate needs and wants: in other words, service to others actually improves your own well-being (Hopper, 2020).

What does this mean in a college setting? Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former U.S. Commissioner of Education, tells us that "the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement." He says that colleges and universities must be staging grounds for action if we are to provide in-depth learning for students and meaningful change in improving the world around us.

What does this have to do with writing? Or you? Salt Lake Community College has a history of combining service and learning in ways that allow students to gain hands-on experience, write for audiences outside of their classrooms, and change the way they see their role in the communities around them. Many of your professors will support the idea that you can use college writing assignments to create texts that will help communities change for the better.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Let's get specific about how. Technical Writing is one of the core composition classes students take as an alternative to Intermediate Writing, ENGL 2010. One semester, SLCC's Thayne Center for Service & Learning was approached by a local family called the Ahuna family. They had created a performance group to travel around to various community events and share their family's traditional Hawaiian song and dance with others, and at the same time honor and preserve their cultural

heritage. “Ohana” is a Hawaiian word for “family,” and so they called themselves “Ahuna Ohana,” for the Ahuna family. They needed help with publicity. They wanted a logo, a web site, and a promotional video. As a non-profit group, they did not have the funds to hire professional marketers. A team of SLCC Tech Writing students agreed to take on the project. Meeting in a conference room down the hall from their regular classroom, the students worked with the Ahunas (including Grandpa Joe, who started their dance group and had very strong opinions about finding just the right fiery flame image for their logo) until the heart and soul of the Ahuna Ohana dance troupe could be proudly displayed online. The writing that students were able to create with this project included formal and informal correspondence with the Ahuna family in the form of memos/emails, descriptions/narrations of the Ahuna Ohana dance troupe, their mission, and their history, and the equally important work of visual design work and web content with a real-world client, all of which are emphasized in technical communication. This is one of the countless ways students can combine service and learning to gain valuable skills that make you more employable, help you have an impact, and come away with a sense of satisfaction knowing you truly helped someone who needed you.

Fig. 1. Ahuna 'Ohana. Source: Facebook, 2021, Ahuna 'Ohan. Retrieved on 2021, March 15 from https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/Ahuna-Ohana-146953438695573/ (CC Public Domain Mark 1.0.)

There are many more examples. Did you know SLCC English students have done service, writing, and/or presentations for countless non-profit organizations and schools in our community? They have been involved with the United Way, the Utah Food Bank, Utah Food Rising, Catholic Community Services, Tree Utah, and so many more! For those who really get excited about service and learning, our college even has an Engaged Scholar program for students who want to do 100 hours of service over the course of their entire degree and graduate with special honors! We also offer alternative fall break service opportunities locally as well as alternative spring break trips to places like Seattle, San Francisco, and Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab for students who want to serve during spring break and reflect on the issues that we can do something about, such as food insecurity, homelessness, environmental preservation, LGBTQ+ issues, and helping

animals in need. Not only does service contribute to a greater sense of personal well-being and happiness; writing and reflection help us make these experiences into artifacts that show we are, indeed, good citizens.

Fig. 2. SLCC Alternative Spring Break Volunteers in Kanab, UT, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. Source: E. Stone, 2010.

But let's face it: being a good citizen doesn't always help us make rent or have enough money to see a movie. Did you know, though, that writing for community change actually enhances student learning, and that it leads to greater employment opportunities? Being a good citizen, in other words, can actually help you get a higher GPA and be a more attractive candidate to not only prospective employers, but also to transfer institutions if you plan to pursue additional education after your current degree.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT THE EFFICACY OF SERVICE-LEARNING?

Where's the proof of this? Let's take a look at some research. What does national research tell us about the employability of students trained in community-based experiential learning and problem solving? The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) commissioned Hart Research Associates to survey 400 employers from organizations with a minimum of 25 employees, at least 25% of whom have degrees from either two-year or four-year schools, with the goal of identifying learning outcomes favored in today's economy, including the importance of applied learning experiences and project-based learning (2015, p. 1). Their findings were as follows:

- Did you know that 96% of employers say that no matter what field of study you are in, students should have college experiences that teach you how to problem-solve with people whose views are different from your own?
- Not only that, but a majority of employers think students from all fields of study "should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values (87%), take courses that build the civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to a democratic society (86%), acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences (78%), and gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies outside the United States (78%)" (2015, p. 2).

Furthermore, a significant majority of employers surveyed by Hart Research Associates indicated they would be more likely to hire a recent graduate who has completed various types of "applied and engaged learning experiences—such as a comprehensive senior project, a collaborative research project,

a field-based project with people from other backgrounds, or a community-based or service learning project" (AACC p. 7).

Given that employers value the learning outcomes and experiential learning a service-learning experience can provide, what do students say about the importance of these concepts? In the same study mentioned above, in 2013 Hart Research Associates surveyed over 600 college students, including 158 community college students who planned to earn their associate degree or transfer to a university. (2015, p. 1). Their findings were as follows:

Students Agree with Employers on the Value of Applied Learning Experiences *Proportion of employers and students who say a company would be more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate if they have had this experience*		
	Employers %	College Students %
Internship/apprenticeship with company/ organization	94	95
Senior thesis/project demonstrating knowledge, research, problem-solving, and communication skills	87	89
Multiple courses involving significant writing	81	76
Research project done collaboratively with peers	80	82
Service-learning project with community organizations	69	85
Field project in diverse community with people from different backgrounds/ cultures	66	87
Study abroad program	51	71

Importantly, both employers and students saw the need for

improvement in providing students a wide range of knowledge and skills that apply to their fields (p. 9).

WHAT ABOUT THE SCIENCES? ISN'T SERVICE-LEARNING JUST FOR HUMANITIES?

It's all good, you say, but that's for you Humanities types. I'm in the sciences! I plan to study chemistry, or math, or engineering, so writing for community change doesn't really apply to my field or my future. Hold up . . . it does! Issues of social justice have become an integral part of curriculum in many disciplines. For example, social justice is important to strong, ethical science in the real world. The kind of communication and writing you'll do in service-learning is a required skill for science and engineering. This approach to learning comes not only from concern for the well-being of society; it also comes in order to deliver skills and knowledge base to students for hire-ability and for successful post-graduate education. Students of disciplines that are traditionally associated with issues of peace and justice such as political science, communication, and social work will most certainly benefit from service-based writing. Yet a student of any discipline can stand to benefit from this opportunity.

In 2015, the Association of American Medical Colleges unveiled the new MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) which all prospective medical students must complete to apply to medical school (AAMC, 2015). The largest change in the new test was as much as a quarter of the test now includes content involving social and psychological principles. These can be seen in the test's "Foundational Concepts" 6–10.

Concerning issues of social justice, examples are seen in Foundational Concept 9, "Cultural and social differences influence well-being" and Foundational Concept 10, "Social stratification and access to resources influence well-being" (AAMC, 2015). The purpose of incorporating these concepts into the required curricula of all pre-med students is to ensure that the next generation of medical doctors have social and cultural understanding around issues of socioeconomic status, race, religion, gender, and other social justice issues.

While it is generally recommended that students take at least one introductory psychology and introductory sociology course in order to learn this, many students are likely to wish to engage in the material at a deeper level. This is not a new phenomenon in the medical disciplines, as shown by programs like Doctors Without Borders who have incorporated social justice into their mission already in their humanitarian causes ("Neglected People," 2015). Students who intend to take an educational path in health care come to it through many undergraduate majors including biology, psychology, chemistry, nursing, etc. Service-based writing would be applicable and desirable to students intending on a career in health care from a variety of majors.

The field of psychology has always had a social justice component, although it was not always in the forefront of the field. But now, the APA (American Psychological Association) and APS (Association for Psychological Science) have charged the field to advocate for research and application of social justice issues in the field as a whole (Vasquez, 2012; Meyers, 2007). Salt Lake Community College offers an Associates in psychology and we know that many more General Studies students will go on to complete a bachelor's degree in psychology or higher, as it is one of the largest undergraduate majors in the United States (Casselman, 2014). Psychology classes interested in community service can, for example, take on nutritional choices of students, conducting a literature

review, ethnographic research, and nutritional data, then create a social media campaign to help individuals make informed, healthy choices in campus dining areas. The same type of project could be undertaken in a K–12 educational environment, perhaps with the goal of educating parents as well.

Natural and cultural resource management and outdoor recreation is a predominant area of employment in Utah and the American West (see USAJOBS.gov for a clearinghouse of all federal job opportunities). Occupations vary from rangers working within our national parks to field biologists to agriculture. Many of our students hope to—and will— find themselves in these types of fields. Within the needs of resource management includes the human factor. And these disciplines have been incorporating the cultural, economic, and social needs of people into their management plans. What they need are more people trained in social justice awareness and in the human component or resource management. For one example of social justice conflict in park management, see Al Jazeera America's article on displacement of indigenous people in the name of conservation (Lewis, 2015, August 14). Students interested in writing for community change could join with non-profit organizations writing grants or litigate cases aimed at restorative justice for indigenous peoples. These issues are ongoing.

WRITING FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE IS FOR YOU!

Writing for community change via a service-learning experience, or even an internship, would be applicable and navigable by any student in the sciences who wishes to dive

deeper into their learning of these issues within the standard curricula of their fields. These fields are specifically asking for the traits and skills in the next generation of graduates and employees that we hope to create at SLCC.

Hey, not everyone loves English classes or writing; we get that. Sometimes even professional writers hate writing too! But since we all need writing for classes, everyday life, and career success, why not make it count for community change as well? Don't take our word for it; try service-learning for yourself and see how the satisfaction of knowing you made a difference helps all the stress from studying, work, bills, balancing your life, and catching your breath fade away long enough to make you smile. ☺

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE & PHOTOS

Service-Learning Abroad: Helping the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in South Africa

By Elisa Stone, SLCC English Professor

I've never wanted to ask my students to do something I wouldn't be willing to do myself, and so I've been volunteering alongside them ever since I first became interested in service-learning. In summer of 2015, I was invited by Westminster College's Professor Rulon (Ru) Wood to help his team of professional communication students create an anti-stigma campaign for the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation. South Africa has the largest, most high-profile HIV epidemic in the world.

As of 2013, approximately 6.3 million people there were living with HIV, including 330,000 new infections and 200,000 South Africans who died from AIDS-related illnesses (avert.org). Although the Foundation has substantial supporters and resources, they still need marketing assistance.

Our service-learning team met weekly at Westminster and held early-morning Skype meetings with the Foundation. During fall break, Ru and I journeyed to South Africa to meet with Foundation leaders at the University of Cape Town to finalize the anti-stigma campaign. They loved my "Love, Don't Judge" slogan, which was made into bracelets, t-shirts, and debuted at the 21st International AIDS Conference in summer of 2016. We then headed to Gugulethu Township to attend a community workshop for youth living with HIV/AIDS and to film video interviews with a pioneering doctor in the HIV clinic as well as counselors and kids who were born HIV positive, with the goal of helping erase stigma for those needing diagnosis and treatment for HIV/AIDS (Wood, 2016).

Fig. 3. Group Photo in Cape Town, Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation. Source: R. Wood, 2016.

While in Cape Town, Ru and I visited Robben Island, where

Nelson Mandela was imprisoned and tortured for 18 years. We met several Freedom Fighters, including Mr. Visumsi Mcongo, who had dinner with us and allowed us to record his story of being a political prisoner with Mandela for 14 years. Mr. Mcongo accepted my gift of love beads that had been given to me by a stranger in SLC to wish me luck on my journey. Ru hoped to bring Mr. Mcongo, who has never been to America and would very much like to visit, to Westminster College as a guest lecturer.

Fig. 4. Freedom Fighter, Robben Island Former Prison. Source: E. Stone, 2016.

We also learned about apartheid and visited non-profit organizations on a philanthropic cultural tour with an organization called Uthando, a Xhosa word for "love." It was gratifying to support an animal shelter, children's daycare center, and seniors' recreation center while honoring the personal histories of those who endured apartheid and continue to suffer its aftermath.

The Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation requested I return again in spring of 2016 with Ru and a cohort of Westminster's professional communication students to film and produce additional videos for the DTHF Youth Centre in

Masephumelele, an under-resourced community south of Cape Town. I was asked to conduct poetry and storytelling workshops for HIV positive high school students and young adults, collaborating with them to combat stigma by creating Public Service Announcements.

Fig. 5. PR Campaign, Desmond Tutu Youth Centre, Cape Town. Source: R. Wood, 2016.

To my joy, I was invited to have coffee with Desmond Tutu himself, including attendance at a Peace with Justice Award Ceremony for he and his wife Mama Leah Tutu at St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. Though it was a rather epic endeavor to get myself back to Cape Town, as the rest of the group was on safari, I opted to return on my own to honor the invitation to meet Tutu, whom I consider to be one of the greatest heroes in all of human history for his bravery in combatting racism, violence, and risking not only imprisonment, but his life—many times over—during South Africa's apartheid. Archbishop Emeritus Tutu, a Nobel Prize winner, responded to our project with great enthusiasm, graciously accepting my "Love, Don't Judge" anti-stigma bracelets for he and his wife. Meeting him

is a moment I will always cherish and reflect upon as one of the greatest of my life.

Fig. 6. Desmond Tutu greets Elisa Stone, Cape Town. Source: E. Miller, 2016.

Fig. 6. Elisa Stone and Desmond Tutu. Source: E. Miller, 2016.

As a devoted practitioner of service-learning, I am elated and humbled by the opportunity to work towards social justice on a global scale. Lifelong friends from Africa and beyond are my greatest gift from this affirming experience. I believe individuals can, and do, make a difference in their communities and their worlds. I believe we owe it to ourselves to try, even if our impact isn't grandiose. Service benefits those who serve just as much as the recipients; it is reciprocity that keeps this practice at the heart of meaningful education. If you are thinking of trying service-learning, do it! Start small and don't obsess over obstacles; you never know where the path of civic engagement will take you!

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33. Words Do Things in the World

STACEY VAN DAHM

- Writing Is an Everyday Action
- Small Rhetorical Gestures Can Be Part of Significant Change
- There Is Always an Ethical Component to Writing

WRITING IS AN EVERYDAY ACTION

We take literacy for granted sometimes. We all write, all the time, but often people don't think of themselves as writers. We might even falter sometimes in explaining the obvious — that **writing and reading empower us to do things**, to change our lives, to change the world. Or simply to get a cup of coffee with a friend.

I think we're less conscious of writing because writing is a tool that we use every day, like a fork or a toothbrush. Or a keyboard. Writing is sometimes mundane. You might leave a note for your parent or roommate saying when you'll be home. You might send a quick email to a relative or instructor or someone at work. You might post a comment on social media,

text a friend about going out, fill out an application, or draft an essay for a class. You actually write all the time. It's true. You take advantage of your literacy — writing and reading — every day. It's like a superpower we forget we have. But texting your friend about a cup of coffee (or to study, or whatever) can lead to sharing some important time with someone you care about. A little text message can lead to human connection — the most important thing.

I'm a big fan of dystopian literature and film. One common trope or structuring theme we find in dystopian fiction is illiteracy or, really, control over who gets to learn to read and write and what information is available to people. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) the "World Controllers" create and disseminate the official history of the World State, and they intentionally remove strong human emotion — by giving everyone the drug, Soma — in order to sustain a peaceful society. The state enforces peace by eliminating access to literature, art, science, and religion.

Imagine a world in which you weren't allowed to read your favorite novel ...

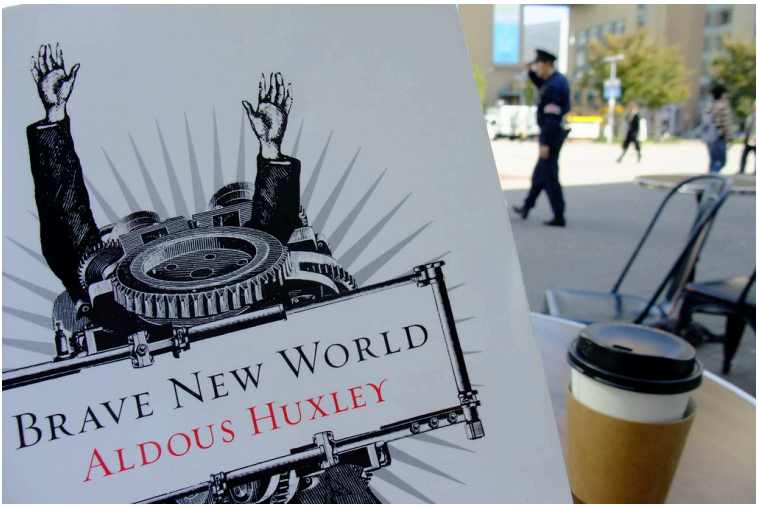
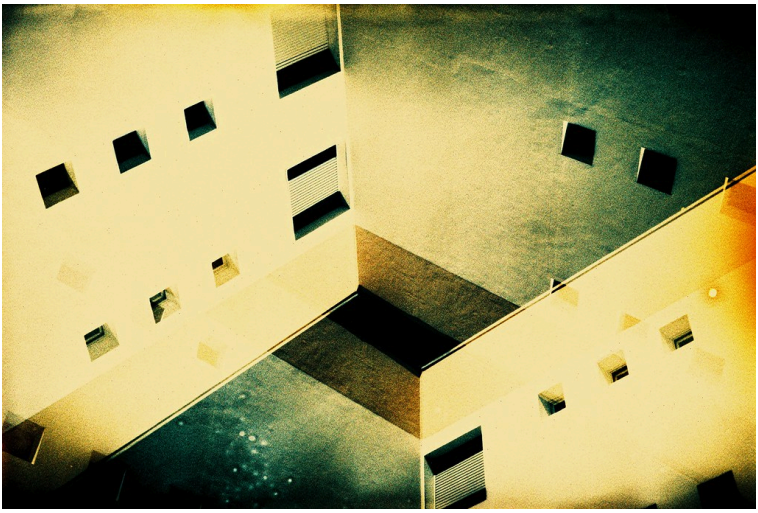


Image by owenfinn16 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Or a world in which government-mandated medication dulled the senses.



"Soma" by Garuna bor-bor is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

In Margaret Atwood's famous novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which is now a popular TV show, we can see how within the space of just one or two generations, the new society of Gilead will be filled with young people who do not know about the past at all. This is because girls are completely forbidden from reading and writing and boys are taught a tailored version of history and religion. The entire economic and political system resides on highly restricted, gender-based roles for everyone. You have probably seen the red uniform of the handmaid as a popular form of social critique in our society today. As people learn only their assigned position in society, they lose unique ways to express themselves.

Image from THE HANDMAID'S TALE, Victoria Pickering, Flickr, Creative Commons, CC BY-NC-ND

Both books demonstrate how controlling what people say and what information they have access to means controlling people. Illiteracy means the erasure of history, a dumbing down of society, implosion. People who control the words control most other things.

So, if literacy is so important, then why do we sometimes take it for granted in our everyday lives? It's probably because small, everyday rhetorical gestures (from text messages to a note on the fridge to an email at work) don't usually change the world. We don't always recognize that these are part of the way we move through life. But all of our writing counts. The introduction to *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life* (2003) defines rhetoric as "the ways that individuals and groups use language to constitute their social realities, and as a medium for creating, managing, or resisting ideological meanings" (Nystrand and Duffy ix). The words we use every day help us to navigate our social realities, to situate ourselves in our communities and societies. They demonstrate who we are in relation to ideas and other people.

For some humorous examples of notes that can make a difference, you might check these out.

Literacy is empowering. It is how people escape oppression, change their circumstances, think critically about what's going on, and argue for change. In fact, in the novels mentioned above, literacy helps to break down the oppressive system because inquisitive and determined characters access forbidden information, use their literacy skills or learn some, and ask critical questions of the systems that oppress them.

Consider the ways you have used reading and writing in the past year to navigate your social reality. If you signed a petition, emailed your representative, cast a ballot, posted something important to you on social media, applied for college, wrote an essay, or wrote a note to a loved one, you engaged your rhetorical skills in a way that helped situate you in relation to the things you care about. You empowered yourself using literacy.

SMALL RHETORICAL GESTURES CAN BE PART OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

When we put our words into the world, we usually expect an outcome. In any writing you've done recently, you might have achieved your aims, or it might be too early to tell, but if you found yourself hoping for a response, that's a reminder that writing is much more than just a tool, because language has power. Even the smallest rhetorical gestures can be part of significant change **because our words have consequences**. When your parents know when you'll be home, they might make sure to have dinner ready for you. When your instructor understands your situation, they might give you an extension for your project. And when you make a strong case for a

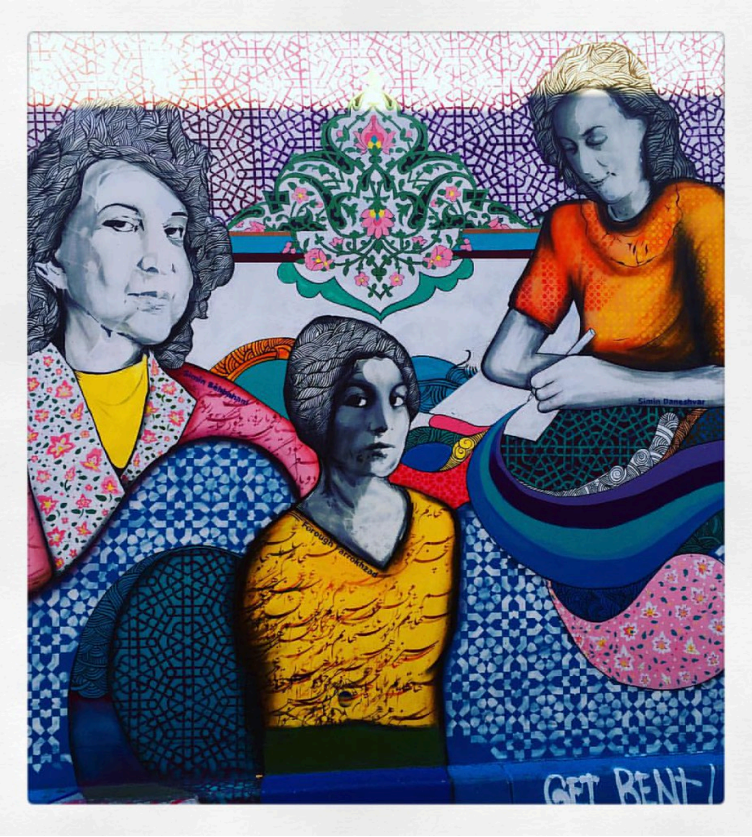
promotion at work, you might get a raise. Writing is the engine of our lives because people act on our words. When we put our words into the world, they do things.

If we thought about that more often, we would probably reflect on the power of our own literacy a little bit more. Words are like people; when you get a bunch of them together, interacting, they can do huge things, powerful, world-changing, mind-bending things. And words, like people, can collide and create reactions that are bigger than the sum of their parts. Of course, words don't happen separately from people. Consider mass protests in which words bring people together to make a political or social statement further articulated in signs, chants, and slogans.

Women's March on Washington, 2016, Mobilus In Mobili, CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

We can even say that putting our words into the world is an action in itself. Speech Act Theory, developed by British philosopher and linguist J. L. Austin and philosopher J.R. Searle, in the 1960s and '70s, became a basis for analyzing language

this way. The title of Austin's collected lectures was *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), which gives a pretty good idea of his views on language. Austin and Searle studied the difference between utterances that describe something — "someday I'm going to get married" — and words that act — as when one answers "I will" in response to a marriage proposal or "I do" at a wedding ceremony. "I do" — just two small words — can have a huge impact on the lives of those involved, for generations. The words we speak and write have consequences, a ripple effect that keeps going, like the multiple generations of a family.



"#family #generations #mother #daughter #grandmother #latergram #art #mural #streetart #clarionalley #getbent" by Shockingly Tasty is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Social media is a space in which our own words contribute to a sense of our identities and influence the way others see us and what communities we stand with. When we post a response to a social or political issue or even share a news item, we are by proxy articulating our own values and views. In fact, social media has become important for political organizing and social activism. This "Clictivism" has been criticized as a rather passive and sometimes harmful way for people to try to create change, but it has also contributed to powerful and important change in the world (Butler). The truth is, if you've participated in a social action of any kind in the last couple years, it's very likely you were connected to it via social media. Consider the breadth of the Black Lives Matter protests across the nation and the world in 2020. Social media helped facilitate this mass action, and the tenets of the movement have had a huge impact — consequences — in policing, racial accountability, and institutional commitments toward inclusivity and equity across the country.

Protesting the murder of George Floyd by tedeytan via Flickr is licensed CC BY-SA 2.0

BLM Protest, Pixaby

Two 2021 bills in Utah demonstrate how ideas move to action with real consequences in the world.

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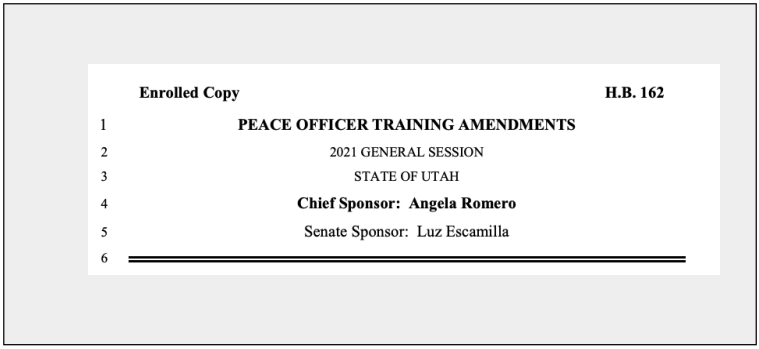
USE OF FORCE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Angela Romero

Senate Sponsor: Jacob L. Anderegg



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PEACE OFFICER TRAINING AMENDMENTS

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Angela Romero

Senate Sponsor: Luz Escamilla

An important event that exemplifies how words have consequences is the tension around the 2020 presidential election and the infiltration of the capital on January 6, 2021. After having claimed for weeks that the election was stolen — though without evidence — former president Donald Trump was accused of inciting an insurrection at the capitol on January 6, the day that congress was supposed to certify the election results marking Joe Biden as the winner. In his speech that day, the former president made several statements that have been linked to the violence at the capital, including: "We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore" (Naylor). While some suggest this phrase incited protesters to violently overrun the capital, others argue that the words were meant figuratively. In

fact, this is a false binary. Words have meaning and act on listeners beyond the intent or expectations of the speaker. Some may dismiss these words, others may protest, some may sign petitions, others may argue with their relatives on social media. But there are some who will take violent action.

Capitol Riot Jan 6 from Al Jezeera

So, words can lead to action that goes beyond our expectations. And that leads to the final point here.

THERE IS ALWAYS AN ETHICAL COMPONENT TO WRITING

Our words have consequences in our lives and in the lives of those around us. This means **there is always an ethical component to writing**. From the name of the January 6 march, "Save America," to the numerous signs and banners, to the various ways the event was covered by the media — multiple messages contributed to strong ideological views about the election, and the meanings of "America" and "freedom." In the midst of this fervor, hundreds of protestors stormed the capital, transforming the event into an insurrection that involved $30 million in damages, violence, and death. NPR, reflecting on its own coverage of these events, demonstrated how powerful media representation is when it published an analysis, on January 14, 2021, of the way its own discourse covering the event evolved over the course of several days. They chose to call those involved "pro-Trump extremists" not "domestic terrorists." The word "protestors" changed later to "mob" and "rioters." All of these word choices impact the way listeners think about the events of January 6. You might also note my own word choices above: "infiltration," "insurrection," "violence," and "overrun," for example. I chose these carefully. A look through Fox News headlines shows terms like "riot," "stormed," "seizure." The words we use reflect and influence thinking, choices, and action. Where we might not often see such extreme action taken in response to political speech, we can recognize that it impacts our own choices quite often — from how we vote on policies and candidates, to what media we consume, to where we live, and even what communities we choose to join and which ones we avoid — or outright reject.

Sometimes dystopian fiction helps us imagine what life would be like without the kinds of political discourse and emotional speech that incites such strong reactions. The 2014

film *The Giver*, based on Lois Lowry's 1993 novel of the same name, limits speech and historical memory by putting it in the hands — the heart and mind — of just one member in the community, the main character, Jonas. When he reaches adulthood, Jonas is chosen to be the Receiver of Memory for all the community. Beyond suppression of memory, people in this society are controlled by other common dystopian tropes: suppression of emotion (through medication), strict rules enforcing equality (in this case sameness), and deconstruction of familial affiliation (infants are raised in a nurturing center). The film version uses color, or lack thereof, as a way to emphasize the blandness of such a controlled life. When Jonas rebels and passes beyond the boundary of his community, this "releases" the memories so that everyone experiences them and learns about the past; they suddenly feel true emotion. The film conveys this by washing the usually black and white scenery with vivid colors.

Screenshot from THE GIVER

As lush images and sounds of diverse human experiences of joy and pain, love and loss, war and celebration fill the scene and flood people's consciousness, *The Giver* asks us to consider the true definition of freedom and the cost of peace. In this case, freedom was suppressed by limiting access to historical

knowledge for the sake of a bland peacefulness in society, a harmony devoid of human feeling. Literacy is suppressed to stop people from feeling, from desiring something different, or understanding the ways their own society oppresses them. In this way, these texts argue that words and images that share the stories of human experience have immeasurable power in the world.

The ethical implications of inciting violence, rejecting those who hold a different worldview, or withholding human emotion and history are incredibly important. These acts work against human connection. In all these cases, we can see that the words people use and withholding or altering information all have consequences that go far beyond any expectation. In the study of rhetoric, there is a long history of linking rhetoric to ethics. One well-known voice in this discussion is John Duffy. This scholar suggests that writing is a practice of virtue. Teaching writing, he argues, means to teach the "communicative practices of honesty, accountability, compassion, [and] intellectual courage" (213). Writing and honesty go hand in hand. In my classes you'll hear me say that "effective rhetoric is ethical rhetoric." I mean that the most effective means of persuasion include careful and transparent reasoning, credible and substantiated evidence, and awareness of the human experiences we impact with our writing.

It might be easy for an ad to persuade us by massaging the facts, but that leads to short-term results, shallow responses, even unethical choices. None of us want to be persuaded by lies or trickery. This becomes more salient when we recognize that our words have consequences. We might not always know what effect they will have, but we are responsible for trying to understand just that.

One final example is helpful here: the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, during the Cold War. This was before I was born and probably before you were born, but it's pretty important

because we likely wouldn't have been born at all had things not worked out. In brief, the Soviet Union started to build medium-range nuclear missiles in Communist Cuba. The U.S. wasn't having it. So, the two leaders, John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, had some words. Letters, to be more precise, archived in the JFK Library online as "The World on the Brink." Consider the rhetorical situation (the context and purpose). Each leader had an entire nation to appease, Kennedy during an election year, Khrushchev recognizing a nuclear arms gap that favored the U.S. The eyes of the world were on them because one false step would lead to nuclear disaster — apocalyptic, dystopian-level annihilation. Neither could afford to simply back down. It was in the interest of all of humanity for them to find a peaceful and face-saving solution to this crisis. Here are a few excerpts to demonstrate the nature of this conversation:

Kennedy to Khrushchev, 22 October 1962

I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win ...

... I expressed our readiness and desire to find, through peaceful negotiation, a solution to any and all problems that divide us.

Khrushchev to Kennedy, 23 October 1962

I must say frankly that measures indicated in your statement constitute a serious threat to peace and to the security of nations.

We affirm that the armaments which are in Cuba, regardless of the classification to which they may belong, are intended solely for defensive purposes ...

Kennedy to Khrushchev, 25 October 1962

I have received your letter of October 24, and I regret very much that you still do not appear to understand what it is that has moved us in this matter.

I urged restraint upon those in this country who were urging action ...

Khrushchev to Kennedy, 26 October 1962

From your letter, I got the feeling that you have some understanding of the situation which has developed and (some) sense of responsibility. I value this.

I think you will understand me correctly if you are really concerned about the welfare of the world.

War is our enemy and a calamity for all the peoples.

I see, Mr. President, that you too are not devoid of a sense of anxiety for the fate of the world ...

You are mistaken if you think that any of our means on Cuba are offensive.

There, Mr. President, are my thoughts, which, if you agreed with them, could put an end to that tense situation which is disturbing all peoples.

These thoughts are dictated by a sincere desire to relieve the situation, to remove the threat of war.

Khrushchev to Kennedy, 28 October 1962

In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace, to give an assurance to all people who crave peace, ... the Soviet Government ... has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive ...

It took them about a month of exchanging letters to get there.

But they got there. Not with aggressive action, but with words. Of course, this event was much more complicated than I've represented here, but the point is there is no doubt that each leader understood well the ethical implications of each word, each sentence of their exchange.

CONCLUSION

Literacy is a sometimes underappreciated superpower. When we write, our words take flight and do things in the world. When your words connect you with a friend or ensure your place at the dinner table, they are important. And they are important when they win you admission to college or express the beautiful fragility of human experience in a story or poem. Your words have consequences. They open a space for you in communities, and they allow you to share your perspective and convince others that it's a sensible one. And words always have ethical implications. We should use them often, effusively, creatively, and with care.

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34. Service-Learning in English Composition Courses

LISA PACKER AND DANIEL BAIRD

- Service-Learning and the English Threshold Concepts
- What Are the Requirements for a Composition Service-Learning Course?
- Critical Reflection
- ENGLISH 1010 Service-Learning
- ENGLISH 2010 Service-Learning
- ENGLISH 2100 Technical Writing Service-Learning

INTRODUCTION

Civic engagement? Service-learning? What are "designated" classes? Let's start with a brief explanation of these terms that will be important to know before reading any further. Civic engagement is fulfilling your role as a citizen in your community and society through active participation in "civic life," defined as "the public life of a citizen concerned with the affairs of the community and nation" (Center). Service-learning falls under the umbrella of civic engagement. It is when a student participates in an academic course doing meaningful community service that reinforces the learning concepts in the individual course. (See the article, "Introduction to Civic Engagement and Service-Learning.")

You may have noticed that several English 1010, 2010, and 2100 courses are "designated" as service-learning courses. Why is this so, and what makes them different from a regular English 1010, 2010, 2100 course? An English designated service-learning course:

- Combines academic study with engagement in "real-life" situations while writing, communicating, using critical thinking, researching and problem solving.
- Allows you to be meaningfully engaged while contributing to a community issue in collaboration with a community partner organization. This process encourages more authentic connection between your intellectual pursuits and a larger framework of understanding and action.

According to Barbara Jacoby, a Senior Consultant for the Do Good Institute in the School of Public Policy, students who engage in service-learning are more likely to achieve desired learning outcomes and master course material than those who opt for a more traditional course model (Jacoby). A designated

English service-learning course challenges you to not only learn academic material but to explore the practical application of that material in a way that benefits you and your community. These courses marry civic and academic engagement to help you explore the power of writing, the myriad purposes writing can fulfill, and the diverse audiences writing can reach.

> *I think that service this semester has helped me with my writing because it has shown me how personal experiences really enrich writing about a subject. It is easy to speculate about how volunteering at a service organization will help the community or help me as a person, but by actually doing it and writing about it after, I can see how the personal voice and experience makes the writing more credible to the audience. If I am writing about anything in the future, I have learned this semester that I can raise my ethos by engaging in an activity related to my writing. This can make my writing about those experiences relevant and more genuine.*
>
> *—Jordan V.*

Service-learning also means you will develop specific writing skills and a greater awareness of writing contexts as you work with and serve others; in short, you will learn more about the impacts of the written word while serving a larger community.

SERVICE-LEARNING AND THE ENGLISH THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

Below is a chart defining the six threshold concepts of writing, deliberation, action, contingency, action, rhetoric, and engagement. In this chart, "engagement" has to do with the process of writing. Most often we think of civically engaged writing as a form of action—a way to think about the community and enact social change within that community, whether the community is local, state, national, or global.

If you engage in a service-learning English course, you will see the application of these concepts in real-world ways:

- How writing is a valuable resource with practical application
- How communities use rhetoric and how rhetorical analysis helps us to better understand our communities
- How writing becomes public action that directly impacts our communities
- How writing can be used strategically to create practical solutions to problems within our communities

- How the act of writing is to engage with one's community
- How one's community, and thus the writing within it, can look different depending on many factors

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> *My engagement in service-learning this semester definitely influenced my writing. I learned that sometimes I need to look outside of the box and find a more creative way to approach topics. I also realized that sometimes I need to be more open-minded about topics or situations that I was sure of my knowledge on. It was an incredible experience for me, and one that certainly changed me for the better.*
>
> *—Erika N.*

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A COMPOSITION SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE?

So if you enroll in a designated service-learning course, what will you have to do? How is it different from a regular English class?

In a service-learning designated course, you will be required to commit a designated number of hours of service with a non-profit organization of your choice over the course of the semester. This may look differently depending on your instructor and their objectives for the course.

For example, by direction of your instructor, you may be

asked to carefully select a community partner organization under the guidelines of that specific course. It will be important to keep in mind that your coursework during the semester will be informed by the work that you do for the organization as well as your personal reflections on this organization's role in the community. The organization that you choose will come from the Thayne Center's Community Partner database found on SLCC Campus Groups. This is the website SLCC uses to organize their database of community partners. It will also be the place where you log your service hours.

There were some feelings that I wanted to volunteer, do something better for other people, yet it needed self-push to make it happen due to too much concerns and fears of knocking the doors of unknown places. This class project actually eases these worries. It was really nice to have these organizations prepared and explained clearly to us. Also feeling like I'm not alone to make this new move, it was nice to have some shared feelings for this new start with a group.

—Emiko P.

CRITICIAL REFLECTION

Critical reflection is a crucial component of service-learning/ civic engagement. It is through engagement and critical reflection that you are able to see communities as learning contexts (Jacoby). You will also be asked to submit reflective writing throughout the semester about your experience with your community partner. Depending on your instructor and their objectives, the reflective prompts may look something like these:

- Describe your experience with your chosen organization(s) this semester. What did you learn? Did it fit or not with your expectations at the beginning of the course?

- How did your experience reveal or challenge your attitudes, values, and biases? Do you feel that your perspectives on your issue changed through working on the issue and writing about it?

- One of the core concepts of English 1010, 2010, 2100 is the following: "Writing is a form of action. Through writing people respond to problems and can create change in the world." Relate the civic engagement experience this semester to your previous involvement in the community and society. How has the learning in this course shifted your understanding of community and society? How did your involvement in service-learning and civic engagement this semester influence your writing?

- Now what? What changes can or will you make personally to address this issue in our community?

- Describe a few experiences and/or people you encountered during your service that/who left a strong

impression on you. Why did they leave those impressions? What impressions do you hope you left on others? Why?

- How would you change established systems based on your service-learning experiences? Explain.

This next section is an overview of how service-learning works in the English composition courses. Feel free to skip to the course you are interested in learning about.

- English 1010
- English 2010
- English 2100

ENGLISH 1010 SERVICE-LEARNING

At a Glance

English 1010 service-learning will motivate you to consider (and study) when, where, and how writing helps and hinders our engagement with others: other communities, other people, other practices, other ideas, and other values. In her book, *Service Learning Essentials*, Barbara Jacoby suggests that we

think of service learning — the combination of academic study with engagement in real-life situations — as a text in and of itself. English 1010 encourages you to consider how "texts" come in many different forms, and how service to a community organization can serve as valuable field research into issues of local, national, and global concern. Ultimately, English 1010 service-learning courses encourage you to discover how real-world experiences are the backbone of relevant writing (Jacoby).

In More Detail

As an introduction to both writing and service-based community engagement, the initial writing projects in the 1010 SL courses ask you to consider how writing enables someone to engage with their community, creating dialogues about past writing experiences with other students and instructors through structured online discussions and in-class activities. At the same time, there are open lines of dialogue with the community-partner organization where you will complete your service project, enabling you to learn about the issues faced and community needs addressed by the community partner.

Here are some of the ways you may do civic engagement in 1010:

- Analyze how writing is action and how to apply this concept in our own communities
- Open lines of dialogue with community partners to learn about the issues faced and community needs
- Develop writing projects that address a community-partner issue
- Log direct-service hours with a chosen community partner
- Engage in structured online forums and in-class activities

and discussions
- Respond to reflective prompts to guide student conversations with each other and instructors
- Attend in-class lectures given by community partners, who guide on-site interaction and give individual feedback on student service projects and written documents

Examples of Past Student Projects

- Working with United Way to mentor and tutor elementary or middle school students in math or reading
- Aiding and helping those experiencing homelessness, such as through The Catholic Community Center opportunities, which include working with the St. Vincent de Paul meal program and the Weigand day shelter, helping sort donations, prepare meals, clean, or help with the laundry
- Helping recently resettled refugees and migrants with the International Rescue Committee, which opportunities include working at the Goat Kidding Farm, Spice Kitchen, and mentoring
- Volunteering at Clever Octopus, a creative re-use center, by sorting supplies, creating kits for educators, stocking the store, and organizing the warehouse
- Greeting students and stocking shelves at the Bruin Food Pantry for those students and staff experiencing food insecurity

ENGLISH 2010 SERVICE LEARNING

At a Glance

Like its precursor, English 1010, English 2010 is based on the premise that writing matters. In this class, you will use writing not only to engage in daily personal activities, but also as a method of engaging with our respective communities on a larger level. English 2010 service-learning courses take the English 1010 idea of writing as action and explore just how far we can bring our writing into our communities to create meaningful change — in other words, we ask ourselves how writing is an inherent component of community and civic engagement, and we use our writing projects to question,

study, and explore the idea of writing as a form of action in the world.

Just as English 1010 challenged you to view real-world texts using the lens of rhetorical analysis, in English 2010 you will learn how to synthesize real-world experiences and academic study.

In More Detail

Building on the model of writing as community engagement established in 1010, you, along with other students continuing on with service-learning, will continue to expand community dialogues initiated in previous courses.

Here are some of the ways you may do civic engagement in 2010:

- Log direct-service hours with a chosen community partner
- Engage in in-depth research on social justice issues happening in the local community
- Participate in structured online forums
- Attend in-class activities and discussions
- Respond to reflective prompts to guide conversation with other students and instructors
- Attend in-class lectures given by community partners, who guide on-site interaction and give individual feedback on student service projects and written documents

As you, along with other 2010 students, move on to gather and shape materials to produce informational texts, practical proposals on community-partner issues, and multimodal commentaries, you broaden lines of community dialogue to

include classmates, instructors, community partners, and community members.

Examples of Past Student Projects

Direct Service:

- Working with a local garden, harvesting the food that other students helped plant in the spring, helping with post-market surveys and analysis, interviewing and creating photo essays about the gardeners and working at their farmer's market
- Preparing and serving a meal for Youth Resource Center clients with the help of the SLCC Food pantry and SLCC Community Garden; working collaboratively to create a resource guide of food pantries in the city, recipes for healthy meals made from food-pantry ingredients (and some recipes without the use of a kitchen), and other helpful information
- Attending a SLCC Alternative Break to make a constructive difference in the community through accessible, affordable, immersive service experiences regarding issues such as immigration, homelessness, food access and sustainability, animal rights, and more

Research:

- Find an issue/problem that needs improvement to help raise awareness, teach people how to do something, or market a solution to the issue/problem chosen for the semester. Choose to write a report detailing the problem, write a proposal explaining the problem and possible solution(s), or design a resource guide (pamphlet or website) to address the issue.

ENGL 2100 TECHNICAL WRITING SERVICE-LEARNING

At a Glance

Similar to English 2010 service-learning courses, in English 2100 service-learning courses you will learn how to synthesize real-

world experiences and academic study by engaging with our respective communities on a larger level.

English 2100 teaches writing for your career whether you will be a scientist, an engineer, a nurse, or a computer programmer. Your class will combine your assignments with service in your community to enrich your learning about writing in your chosen career field.

In More Detail

In English 2100 you must complete two projects: the Writing Project and the Design Project. Each project has several options that you can choose from and one of those options is the civic engagement option. When deciding what service opportunity to pursue you should consider what social issues you care about or would like to learn more about and whether to choose online or in person service.

Here are some of the ways you may engage in civic engagement in 2100:

- Community Partners, or CP, (nonprofits) have a need and create a project for students to do on their behalf. This may include editing websites, creating videos, designing a brochure or other information materials, translating a document, etc. This is called indirect service because you are directly helping the CP, which in turn, then indirectly benefits those people or the cause that the nonprofit serves.
- You can volunteer with the community partner (CP) and directly serve the target population or cause that the CP espouses. For example, you may choose to tutor either math or reading to a K–12 class through United Way of Salt Lake or volunteer at the Maliheh Free Clinic to help provide free healthcare.

- Alternative fall or spring break also presents several opportunities from local to various out-of-state options for direct service.

Examples of Past Student Projects

Writing Project:

- Participating in weekend service helping with Youth Resource Center serving youth experiencing homelessness. Service included organizing the donation rooms and pantries to building shelves or cleaning and serving lunch to the youth. Students produced a proposal and a service-learning journal.
- Writing grants for United Way of Salt Lake, Safe Harbor, and Teens Act, etc. to help these nonprofit organizations with continued funding.
- Directly serving many of these organizations by volunteering time such as with The Children's Center or the Village Project and writing about their service or doing research. (A student wrote about the impact that math tutoring has had on Kearns high school students and submitted the report to United Way of Salt Lake City.)
- Assisting the Family Support Center over multiple semesters to update their policy and procedures manual.
- Translating documents from English to Spanish or other languages for organizations such as the Esperanza Elementary School, YMCA, and The Family Support Center.

Design Project:

- On behalf of Catholic Community Services, creating videos through interviewing and highlighting stories of those who are homeless and their struggle to erase the stigma of homelessness
- Creating a new website for Teens Act
- Creating flyers and other materials for organizations such as The Thayne Center, Bruin Pantry, Canyon Home Care and Hospice, The Inn Between, and the Boys and Girls Club
- Creating kitchen instructions for the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Hall of Catholic Community Services

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as stated earlier in the English Threshold concepts, "Writing is a form of action. Through writing people respond to problems and can create change in the world." By taking a designated service-learning English 1010, 2010, or 2100 course, you can make this concept a reality. As stated in the Civic Engagement Learning Outcome Statement:

> Students develop civic literacy and the capacity to be community-engaged learners who act in mutually beneficial ways with community partners. This includes producing learning artifacts indicating understanding of the political, historical, economic or sociological aspects of social change and continuity; thinking critically about—and weighing the evidence surrounding—issues important to local, national, or

global communities; participating in a broad range of community-engagement and/or service-learning courses for community building and an enhanced academic experience.

Further Reading:

- The Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies newsletter, Reflections, contains stories by students who have been involved in civic engagement including service-learning classes.
- "Introduction to Civic Engagement and Service-Learning"
- "Writing For Community Change"

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PART IV

DELIBERATION: HOW WE MAKE STRATEGIC WRITING CHOICES

Writing is a process of deliberation. It involves identifying and enacting choices, strategies, and moves.

35. Writers Make Strategic Choices

Why can't writing be as simple as the King's advice to the White Rabbit in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland: "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop"?

CHARLOTTE HOWE

Writing involves making choices. Lots of choices.

We choose what to say, when to say it, where to say it, and to whom. We choose the form our message will take, and the tools we will use to create and deliver our message. As we write, we make many choices of style and tone, organization and flow, word usage and sentence structure, and more. So many choices! It can seem like a Las Vegas buffet with too many dishes to choose from and not enough time or space to try them all. In other words, so many choices can seem overwhelming, which can lead to the dreaded writer's block—that condition of staring glassy-eyed at a blank page while a deadline looms ever nearer and panic begins to set in. Why can't writing be as simple as the King's advice to the White Rabbit in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*: "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop" (65)?

When we write, we are responding to the needs of a situation, a conversation already taking place, an occasion that has prompted us to speak. We listen to the conversation for a while, we do our research, and at some point we give voice to

our message. If we want to be heard, understood, and perhaps even agreed with, we must make choices, develop strategies, and enact decisions that go beyond simply deciding what we want to say. We must choose the occasion—find just the right moment—to speak. We must consider audience—who are we speaking to? What do they believe and what do they already know? What is our purpose in speaking to them? How will we deliver our message—what type of writing shall we use and what are the expectations our readers will have for that type of writing? Shall we meet those expectations or stretch them in some way to surprise our readers?

Our answers to these questions cause us to make choices that go beyond what we want to say to considering how, when, where, and to whom we say it. To simplify this process of making choices, we can start by looking closely at the situation that calls for us to respond in writing. This instance of communication is often called a rhetorical situation.

In every instance of communication (or rhetorical situation) there is a message (or text) being sent by an author to an audience for a purpose—and this communication happens in a time and place (or context). So these are some terms that will help us make sense of our writing choices:

TEXT & ITS MESSAGE — (a purposeful, written communication)

AUTHOR — (the person who creates and often delivers the text)

AUDIENCE — (the individuals who receive the text, whether intended or not)

PURPOSE — (the reason for sending the message)

CONTEXT — (the time, place, and environment for the message)

And this is how it works: To increase the chances of our message being heard, we'll need to consider our purpose, our chosen audience, and our context as we write. And we'll make many choices about content, tone, length, format, genre, and mode of delivery based on our analysis of the rhetorical situation in which we are writing.

While writing is never as easy as Lewis Carroll's "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop," learning how to make writing choices based on your analysis of the rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, context) can help you reach your audience strongly and clearly.

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36. Making Choices in Writing

JESSIE SZALAY

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Are you going to wear a t-shirt or a sweater today? Answer your phone or let it go to voicemail? Eat an apple or a banana? Let your friend pick the show on Netflix or fight for your favorite? We make decisions all day every day, narrowing dozens of options down to a few, often without even noticing, and then selecting our chosen option fairly quickly. (After all, who says you need to wear a shirt at all? It might be a bathrobe day.)

Writing, and all communication, is no different. Deciding whether or not to answer your phone is a decision to engage—the same kind of decision you have to make when it comes to your composition class assignments. What are you going to write about? Each potential topic is like a ring on your phone: "Answer me! Pay attention to me!" But do you want to? Maybe that topic is like your dramatic relative who talks your ear off about old family grudges from the 1970s—too exhausting to think about and leaving you speechless. Or maybe that topic is like an automated phone survey, and you just can't get interested in the issue. In order to produce the best writing you can—and not be miserable while you're doing it—you're going to want to pick a topic that really, truly interests you, with which you are excited to engage, about which you have the resources to learn, and about which you can envision having something to say. After all, writing is an action. By writing, you are entering into a conversation with your readers,

with others who have written about the topic, and others who know and/or care about it. Is that a community you want to engage with? A conversation you want to be a part of?

All this thinking sounds like work, right? It is. And it's just the first of many, many decisions you're going to make while writing. But it's necessary.

Making decisions is a fundamental part of writing. The decisions you make will determine the success of your writing. If you make them carelessly, you might end up with unintended consequences—a tone that doesn't fit your medium or audience, logical fallacies, poor sources or overlooked important ones, or something else.

I've often thought of my own writing as a process of selecting. Rather than starting with an empty page, I sometimes feel like I'm starting with every possible phrase, thought, and a dozen dictionaries. There are so many stories I could tell, so many sources I could cite, so many arguments I could make to support my point! There are so many details I could include to make a description more vivid, but using them all would turn my article into a novel. There are so many tones I could take. By making my article funny, maybe more people would read it. But by making it serious, it might appear more trustworthy. What to do? My piece of writing could be so many things, and many of them might be good.

You might have heard the saying, attributed to Michelangelo, "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." Each chip in the marble, each word on the page, is a choice to make one thing emerge instead of something else. It's a selection. It's up to you to select the best, most rhetorically effective, most interesting, and most beautiful option.

WHERE DO I START?

Deciding on your topic ("the decision to engage," as termed by *The Harbrace Guide to Writing*) is often the first choice you'll make. Here you'll find some more decisions you'll need to make and some ways to think about them.

But first, a note on rhetorical situations. Your rhetorical situation will largely determine what choices you make, so make sure you understand it thoroughly. A rhetorical situation is the situation in which you are writing. It includes your message, your identity as an author, your audience, your purpose, and the context in which you are writing. You'll read more about the rhetorical situation elsewhere.

These tips assume that you already know the elements of your rhetorical situation, and focus on how to make good choices accordingly.

Genre.

> Genre is the kind of writing you are doing. The term is often applied to art, film, music, etc., as well, such as the science fiction genre. (Here's a fairly comprehensive list of genres.) In writing, genre can refer to the type of writing: an argumentative essay, a Facebook post, a memoir. Perhaps your genre will be chosen for you in your assignment, perhaps it won't. Either way, you will have to make some choices. If you've been assigned an argumentative essay, you need to learn about the rules of the genre—and then decide how and to what extent you want to follow them.

Form or Mode of Delivery.

This is often similar to genre. For instance, a Facebook post has its own genre rules and conventions, and its mode of delivery is, obviously, Facebook. But sometimes a genre can appear in various forms, i.e. a sci-fi novel and a sci-fi film are the same genre in different forms. You could write your argumentative essay with the intent to have it read online, in a newspaper, or in an academic journal. You might have noticed that many politicians are now laying out their arguments and proposals via series of tweets. This is a calculated decision about the form they are using.

Word Choice.

Something I love about English is that there are so many ways to say things. One of the myriad elements I adore in the English language is that there are thousands of options for phrasing the same idea. I think English is great because it gives you so many choices for how you want to say things. English rocks because you have a gazillion words and phrases for one idea.

Different words work with different tones and audiences and can be used to develop your voice and authority. Get out the thesaurus, but don't always go for the biggest word. Instead, weigh your options and pick which one you like best and think is most effective.

Sentence Structure and Punctuation.

As with word choice, the English language provides us with thousands of ways to present a single idea in a

sentence or paragraph. It's up to you to choose how you do it. I like to mix up long, complex sentences with multiple clauses and short, direct ones. I love semi-colons, but some people hate them. The same thing goes for em dashes. Some of the most famous authors, like Ernest Hemingway and Herman Melville, are known as much for their sentence structure and punctuation choices as their characters and plots.

Tone.

Tone is sometimes prescribed by the genre. For instance, your academic biology paper probably should not sound like you're e-mailing a friend. But there are always choices to make. Whether you sound knowledgeable or snobbish, warm or aloof, lighthearted or serious are matters of tonal choices.

Modes of Appeal.

You've probably heard that logos, pathos, and ethos should be in balance with each other, and that can be a good strategy. But you might decide that, for instance, you want to weigh your proposal more heavily toward logic, or your memoir more toward pathos. Think about which modes will most effectively convey what you want to say and reach your readers.

Length.

You professor likely gave you a word or page count, which

can inform many other decisions you make. But what if there's no length limit? In higher-level college classes, it's fairly common to have a lot of leeway with length. Thinking about your purpose and audience can help you decide how long a piece should be. Will your audience want a lot of detail? Would they realistically only read a few pages? Remember that shorter length doesn't necessarily mean an easier project because you'll need to be more economical with your words, arguments, and evidence.

Organization and Structure.

Introduction with thesis, body with one argument or counterargument per paragraph, conclusion that restates arguments and thesis. This is the basic formula for academic essays, but it doesn't mean it's always the best. What if you put your thesis at the end, or somewhere in the middle? What if you organized your arguments according to their emotional appeal, or in the order the evidence was discovered, or some other way? The way you organize your writing will have a big effect on the way a reader experiences it. It could mean the difference between being engaged throughout and getting bored halfway through.

Detail, Metaphor and Simile, Imagery and Poetic Language.

Creative writers know that anything in the world, even taxes, can be written about poetically. But how much description and beautiful language do you want? The

amount of figurative or poetic language you include will change the tone of the paper. It will signal to a reader that they should linger over the beauty of your writing—but not every piece of writing should be lingered over. You probably want the e-mail from your boss to be direct and to the point.

Background Information.

How much does your audience know about the topic, and what do they need to know to understand your writing? Do you want to provide them with the necessary background information or do you want to make them do the work of finding it? If you want to put in background information, where will it go? Do you want to front-load it at the beginning of your writing, or intersperse it throughout, point by point? Do you want to provide a quick sentence summary of the relevant background or a whole paragraph?

These are just some of the elements of writing that you need to make choices about as a writer. Some of them won't require much internal debate—you'll just know. Some of them will. Don't be afraid to sit with your decisions. Making good ones will help ensure your writing is successful.

37. Organizing Texts in English Academic Writing

ANNE CANAVAN

There's an old joke about writing in English: "Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, then tell 'em what you told 'em." While this may seem funny (or not, depending on your sense of humor), it is also a very accurate way of thinking about the way English-speaking readers want their texts to be organized. It is important to keep in mind that what works in English may not work in other languages. English is a writer-responsible language, so readers expect the writer to do all of the hard work of organizing ideas and presenting research [see the chapter "Writer-Responsible Language"].

We are taught from a young age that all writing needs an introduction and a conclusion (where we tell the reader what we are going to talk about and then remind the reader of the main points of the essay). Later on, we are taught the classic five-paragraph essay form, where we have a clear list thesis such as "Velociraptors make the best pets because they are intelligent, can find their own food, and are really good at guarding your house." Then we develop one body paragraph about each of these main points. These types of essays are great for timed writing, such as tasks on the ACT or in-class essays, but they don't give you room to add much complexity. For instance, what if you want to address the counter-arguments to your position, such as "velociraptors aren't great pets because it is unwise to cuddle them"? The classic five-paragraph essay doesn't give you much room to address those

sorts of ideas, so we need to develop a more complex structure for our ideas.

WHAT DO I WANT TO SAY?

The first step to organizing your thoughts is to decide what information you already have, what information you need, what other people have already said about the topic, and what you want to say.

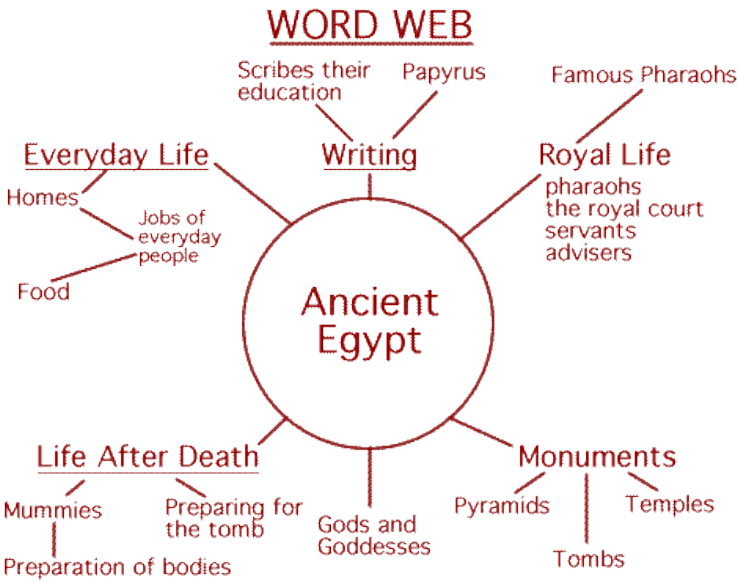
Thesis Statements

Most English writing begins with a thesis statement, even if you don't actually put it in your paper. Because writers in English have to be so careful to help their readers follow the flow of the paper, English writing tends to be thesis-driven. This means that the main point of the entire writing can be stated in one or two clear, direct sentences, and these sentences often appear at the beginning of the writing. Once the writer knows his or her thesis statement, everything in the paper should go towards supporting that idea or argument. Even if a thesis statement does not appear in an essay, it should be easy for the reader to determine what the thesis of the essay is.

Word Webs

As you try to figure out what you want to say, one way

of getting a look at your ideas is through creating a word web, as in this example from the Detroit Institute of Art:



A word web capturing the ideas on the broad topic of "Ancient Egypt"

Here, it is pretty straightforward to see the main ideas that the writer is going to address and if there are any areas that the writer might want to do more research on, such as, for instance, royal life. I recommend doing your first word web for a project in pencil, so you can move ideas around and make connections more easily.

Outlines

Another way to create a plan for writing is through

making an outline for your topic where you can see the order of things you want to address. Below is a basic outline for a paper on how awesome velociraptors are:

A. Introduction and thesis (Velociraptors=best pets)

B. Guard pets

1. Raptors would be great guard animals because they are large and good at killing other creatures.

2. They are also fast—no one gets away!

3. Counter-argument: Probably not good to have dead people around, even if they tried to break in

i. Maybe self-defense works for raptors too? NOTE: Check Utah laws

C. Intelligent

1. Raptors can open doors, so you don't have to worry about accidents in the house!

2. Counter-argument: Raptors can open doors so they can escape and destroy the neighborhood.

i. Can raptors open locked doors?

And then you would continue the outline until all of your main points are accounted for. Again, I recommend doing your first draft in pencil, or with Word's handy outline feature. One of the best things about outlines is that they can be done before you start writing to get a sense of your ideas, or after your paper is finished to make sure that your ideas flow together (called reverse outlining). Typically, reverse outlining involves gathering the main ideas from each your paragraphs and checking them to see if you have repetition or ideas that are out of place.

Paragraphs

Speaking of paragraphs, it is a good idea to make sure that your paragraphs are doing their jobs. While you may have been taught in grade school that a paragraph is always 3–5 sentences, this idea (like many others) gets more complicated as you get older.

The primary job of a paragraph is to develop ONE idea fully. Sometimes that may mean that your paragraphs are

short, and other times it means they may be as much as a page in length. In general, if you read back over your paper and you see a paragraph that seems very short or very long, go back and double check that you only have one idea at play in that paragraph, and that it is being fully developed. Ideally, you should be able to summarize a paragraph in a few words or a single sentence. Some writers will even go back through their first drafts and label each paragraph with a brief summary to make sure the idea is clear. Having clear paragraphs is also the best way of building transitions from one idea to another.

Transitions

Since English is a writer-responsible language, English readers expect a lot of the work of idea connection to be done for them in a clear manner, usually by using transitions. Transitions range from very simple (*however*, *next*, *therefore*) to more complex sentence or paragraph transitions. No matter how simple or complex, a transition does one basic job—it shows a reader how two ideas are connected and leads them from one idea to another. One way to think about transitions is as bridges. Imagine that your two ideas are the opposite sides of a river, and you need to help your reader cross. The farther apart your ideas, the stronger your transition needs to be.

So let's think of our raptor outline from before. We need to form a transition between the idea that raptors are great guard animals to the fact that they are intelligent.

BASIC: Another reason raptors are great pets is

that they are intelligent.

The transition above works, but it is pretty boring and doesn't give the reader much insight into why you connected these ideas together.

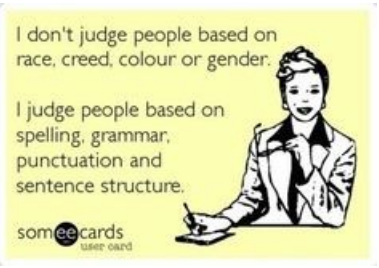
BETTER: One of the reasons that raptors make such great guard animals is because they are so intelligent. But their intelligence also makes them excellent pets in other ways!

This slightly longer transition reminds the reader of the main idea they just read (guard animals) and gives them a head's up as to where the paper is going next, as well as demonstrating the logical connection between the two ideas.

38. Punctuation, Memes, and Choice

NIKKI MANTYLA

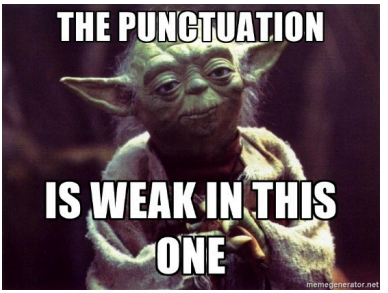
- Punctuation Is Powerful
- Periods and Paragraph Breaks Are Preferred
- Semicolons and Colons Like to Link
- Parentheses and Em Dashes Love to Interrupt
- Commas Save Lives
- Conclusion
- Comma Chart



It's okay to admit that punctuation use is a bit … overwhelming. There's a lot of pressure knowing that our writing—and by extension, our intelligence—will be judged by

our execution of said punctuation, as the meme above so nicely informs us. Even worse, between text messaging, status updates, emails, assignments, and so on, our writing and its punctuation (or lack thereof) is constantly out there for others to see. Insert big gulp.

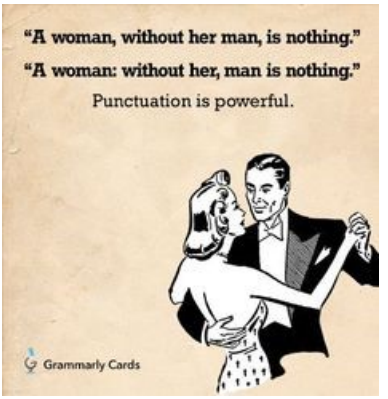
We might feel like Yoda is talking about us here:



The good news is that we live in the age of social media and its omnipresent, semi-helpful, ever-snarky memes. If we decipher them one by one, we might learn to understand their snide comments and avoid the traps they imply.

LESSON #1: PUNCTUATION IS POWERFUL

Please note that punctuation isn't as black and white as it is portrayed in some memes. Often there's a lovely spectrum of available choices, and—as with other writing choices—what punctuation you decide to use affects how your words come across.



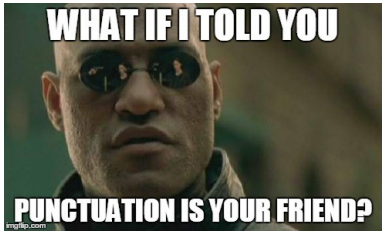
Think about the outrageous line shown in the adjacent meme: "A woman without her man is nothing." Punctuated one way, it belittles women; the other way, it belittles men. Left without punctuation, it confuses readers of any gender.

(Let me quickly say that I encourage neither gender-damning position—only the analysis of opposing effects.)

This first lesson is fundamental because when we recognize that punctuation is powerful we can anticipate how our markings lead to three possible outcomes: **emphasis**, **de-emphasis**, or **confusion**.

Many of us are already familiar with these effects in verbal conversations. People naturally give each other vocal or body-language signals to emphasize or de-emphasize what they're saying. They might raise their voice or pause dramatically or make big gestures to convey importance, and they might shrug or snort or roll their eyes to imply something else is unimportant. If their signals are unclear, someone will express confusion: "Wait, what?" Then they'll try again, slowing down and using a stronger tone so the emphasis isn't lost this time.

Punctuation allows us to give those crucial cues in writing.



Exclamation points and question marks are obvious examples, but many other written conventions are often overlooked—namely periods, paragraph breaks, semicolons, colons, parentheses, em dashes, and commas. Two of the best ways to stop overlooking them? Notice them and use them. Observe the punctuation in your textbook or your favorite novel (or this article, hint hint). Experiment with punctuation in your school papers and social-media posts and text messages.

Mastering punctuation's power expands our repertoire for conveying meaning. The broader our repertoire, the more skillfully we can employ the most effective tools for each context. The better our skills, the more our personal style and voice can shine. (And the less the memes will gripe.)

LESSON #2: PERIODS AND PARAGRAPH BREAKS ARE PREFERRED

Isn't it funny how the most useful things get the least recognition because they're so ordinary? Periods and paragraph breaks make up the bulk of our conventions arsenal—and for good reason! Imagine if all our sentences ended with exclamation points! Or with question marks? No periods ever? And imagine if all the sentences were shoved together with no paragraph breaks! It would be chaos! Or at the very least, any emphasis would get lost pretty fast! So should we use exclamation points and question marks sparingly? For sure!

It's crucial to stress that most of the time the period is where it's at. A period emphasizes in a different (less shouty) way than an exclamation point. It's essentially saying "the end" to each concept you describe.

This also means that the longer you take to get to the period, the more emphasis gets lost along the way. Readers pay the most attention to what comes first ("Such an important-looking capital letter!") and what comes last ("Why did we stop here?"). Structure your sentences accordingly.

Paragraph breaks function the same way but with spacing instead of a mark. The extra space makes it so readers notice your paragraph's beginning and ending the most. Therefore, the shorter the paragraph, the more it will stand out.

When your sentences or paragraphs go on for too long without any noticeable break in sight, readers start to wonder what point you're making and why it's taking so long to make it and how much longer before we can simply move on to the next idea already, since this one has been beaten to death without getting anywhere, other than winding through all the tangents with which you littered the ridiculously long and winding sentence. You run the risk of confusing the reader, and your emphasis is totally lost in the maze of way-too-many-words-and-too-few-stops you just spewed out in one big unorganized blob of utter madness.

It's better to end your sentences and paragraphs more often

to emphasize what you're saying. Don't underestimate the power of simplicity.

That said, expectations for sentence length and paragraph size will vary by genre. More research-based, academic-level writing will typically have longer sentences and paragraphs, while writing that's meant to be digested quickly, like news reports, will stick to short segments. But unless you want to confuse your reader on purpose, avoid labyrinthine sentences and paragraphs in any genre. Get to the point.

LESSON #3: SEMICOLONS AND COLONS LIKE TO LINK

Now that we've covered the basics (the stops), it's time to move into less familiar territory: the middle marks. Punctuation that belongs mid-sentence can make a lot of people start to sweat. But take a deep breath. We have memes here to help, like Ron Burgundy's assurance:

How so? Because semicolons and colons can take the place of a period. You get to where the sentence could end, but then

you decide to attach more. It's a big deal because you get this awesome choice of hooking up your sentence with extra goodness.

Semicolons are the easiest ones, as the meme below demonstrates.

Take two or more sentences; switch the period between them to a semicolon; now you've turned multiple sentences into one. That's it.

The important consideration is why you would want to do that. Semicolons emphasize a connection between the statements. It's subtle, but it makes the reader consider the reason for the link. Often there's a compare/contrast situation, as in this case:

> My mom loves brownies; my dad prefers pie.

Easy, right? Just make sure that each side could stand alone and that the connection is obvious.

What's cool, too, is that semicolons could fix at least two of the world's big problems. On a grammatical level, they absolve the blasphemy of unintended comma splices (two statements

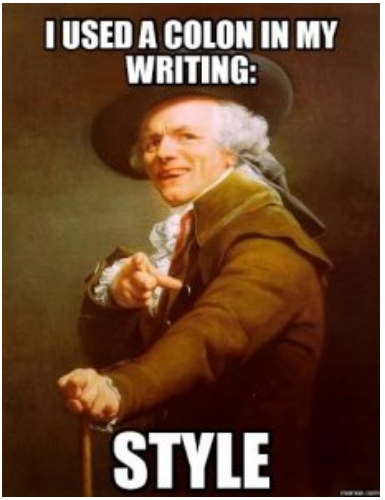
hitched together with just a comma). Replace the comma with a semicolon and voila!

On a more serious level, one group called Project Semicolon began promoting them in April 2013 for a surprising purpose: suicide prevention. The organization says, "A semicolon is used when an author could've chosen to end their sentence, but chose not to. The author is you, and the sentence is your life." Advocates draw or tattoo semicolons on their bodies as a tangible reminder to keep going; don't end here; there's still more life to live; continue on ...

See? Told you punctuation is powerful.

And now that semicolons make sense, it'll be easier to understand colons as well. Again, both of them replace a period, but here's the thing:

> Semicolons are subtle; colons are blunt.



Colons are like a drumroll: they loudly announce (with a big, dramatic pause) that you're about to provide an explanation hinted at in the preceding statement. You could think of it like this:

Statement filled with anticipation: delivery.

Unlike with semicolons, the second part of the sentence doesn't have to be another full statement. There are lots of choices after a colon: a single word, a list, a quote. In each case, you make a statement suggesting more info to follow, place a colon where you could end with a period, and then deliver on the expectations by providing extra details: like this. It's the same way a digital clock uses a colon to detail the minutes after stating the hour. Trust me: colons come in handy.

One last option is putting a noun in place of the anticipatory

statement. You're saying, "I'm about to explain this word." We're used to this structure thanks to Webster. Conclusion: it's no big deal.

LESSON #4: PARENTHESES AND EM DASHES LOVE TO INTERRUPT

If punctuation marks had personalities, these two would be the kind of people who butt into the middle of conversations. Parentheses whisper tidbits in your ear; em dashes shout their trivia to the whole room.

We all know the household rule that any parentheses you open must be closed (unless you're going for Most Interesting Man in the World, like the neighboring meme). We also know to use them at a logical point in the sentence or paragraph (when our tangent will make sense).

It's also good to understand that parentheses de-emphasize. You place them around unimportant parts of the sentence that could be completely removed without changing the overall meaning. Anything that is crucial to the sentence should stay outside the parentheses (such as the period on the end). (Unless the whole sentence is in parentheses, like a long whisper.)

Parentheses' alter egos, em dashes, are more foreign, but it helps to know that parentheses and em dashes are

interchangeable. Either set can surround info that is 100% removable. One whispers (de-emphasizes) while the other shouts—emphasis!—and both interrupt an otherwise complete sentence.

Em dashes also have some peculiarities, like their appetite for gobbling up adjacent punctuation that parentheses would have left alone. Notice the mysterious disappearance of the comma in the example below when parentheses are changed to em dashes.

> If this works (and it will), I'll be ecstatic.

vs.

> If this works—and it will—I'll be ecstatic.

(It's a fairly recent craving, so if you read older works, like Jane Austen's, you might notice em dashes and commas getting along just fine. Don't be confused: punctuation can change!)

Also, em dashes don't get along with periods at all. But instead of eating the period, the em dash will completely bail when they're about to meet up. This means we only use one

em dash instead of two when the interruption comes at the end.

I'm going to attempt an interruption (right here).

vs.

I'm going to attempt an interruption—right here.

Ironically, em dashes—despite all their attention-grabbing qualities—got overlooked by every keyboard maker ever … until the invention of the touchscreen. On a touchscreen, you can hold down a letter/number/mark to see related choices, and that's where you'll find our friend the em dash. If you're on a touchscreen right now, give it a try by holding down the hyphen key on the touchscreen keyboard. See that lengthy option—the really lengthy one? That's your em dash.

Otherwise, you'll have to rely on auto-formatting or inserting symbols or using alt codes (PCs) or option + shift + hyphen (Macs) or plain old copy and paste. [See "5 Ways to Create an Em Dash" on *Tech Tools for Writers*.]

If absolutely necessary, you can place two or three hyphens in a row, but whatever you do, for the love of all that is holy, please never use one hyphen in place of an em dash. Or the memes will bite your fingers off.

One last thing: em dashes give you a random additional choice brought up by the *Futurama* meme below—to put a space around them, or not to put a space around them.

In Microsoft Word, two hyphens with no spaces will automatically format into em dashes as you type, so that's one legit reason for no spaces. One reason for adding spaces — formatted like this on *both* sides of each em dash — is that they lengthen the marks, which can be good if your chosen font has somewhat shorter dashes. Other than that, it's personal preference. Just be consistent (because technically

those spaces above are incorrect for this article on the basis that all em dashes in a particular piece should look the same).

Admittedly, em dashes require some practice. It might be good to stop here and give them a try. Maybe text your mom using an em dash on your smartphone—which shows her you're learning something in college!

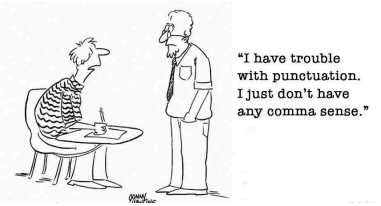
LESSON #5: COMMAS SAVE LIVES

It's time to address the most infamous punctuation meme of all:

Commas are punctuation heroes in more than one sense. Not only do they save the lives of everyone invited to dinner, they also fill in for a lot of their fellow punctuation marks to give the other guys a break. They're the ultimate substitutes, ready to jump in at a moment's notice. They also do their job humbly, de-emphasizing the punctuation's role in the sentence. We use them when we don't want to call attention to the structure.

The hardest part is identifying which comma is doing what. They're like little elves, small and identical and busy-at-work everywhere. At first, it's tough to tell a clause elf from a

parenthetical elf from a series elf from a quotation elf, so they are highlighted below to help you spot them.



The Clause Comma

A clause comma substitutes for a period or semicolon, yet it needs a buddy. A semicolon implies a connection, but a clause comma spells it out directly using one of its FANBOYS. FANBOYS is an acronym for seven connector words you can choose from, and they are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. Comma + connector work as a team, so they're strong enough to hold two statements together.

The Parenthetical Comma

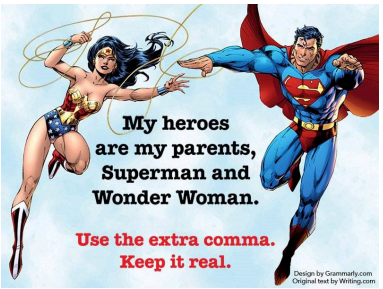
A parenthetical comma jumps in for (you guessed it!) parentheses or em dashes. Use it when you don't want to whisper or shout but instead talk in, like, a normal voice. These commas often come in pairs, like twins, the way parentheses do. You could think of them as handles on a tray to lift the removable interruption right out. However, sometimes the removable part will come at the beginning or end, as "however" does here, and then you only need one comma.

The Quotations Comma

A quotation comma can take the place of a formal intro with a colon. Think how stuffy we'd sound if we introduced every quote with a full statement and a colon like a butler with a calling card. Thanks to the quotations comma, we can move in and out of quotations more casually. For example: "I have trouble," the meme above says, "with punctuation." The comma pairs with any version of *says* (*asked/joked*, etc.) to clarify who is doing the talking.

The Series Comma

A series comma replaces or precedes the word *and* in a list in order to separate the items. It's a very organized sort of comma and likes to keep everybody straight. Sounds like a boring job, but it creates more options than you'd think. Notice the meme below, which demonstrates the potential confusion resulting from a missing serial comma.



The "extra" comma it needs is called an Oxford comma, which would clarify it's a list, not a parenthetical

description of your parents. But before you condemn those who dismiss the Oxford comma (like Vampire Weekend's expletive-emphasized song line, "Who gives a [bleep] about an Oxford comma?"), let's look at how our series-comma choices create various effects.

- You could use a series comma + *and* to emphasize each item:

> … take out the trash, and wash all the dishes, and finish the laundry, and mow the lawn, and clean your room.

- You could omit all series commas to convey feeling rushed/overwhelmed:

> … four essays and two tests and five classes and three labs and twenty hours of work this week!

- You could alternate between a series comma vs. *and* to sort out groups:

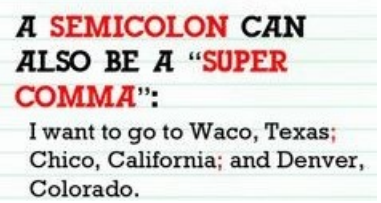
> … Kermit and Miss Piggy, Obama and Michelle and their girls, Oprah and Dr. Phil, George and Mary Bailey.

- You could use only series commas to push the emphasis after the list:

> … pearls, gourmet dinners, fancy parties, beautiful flowers—all pointless since she hates anything froufrou.

Again, isn't it amazing how much power a little mark can have?

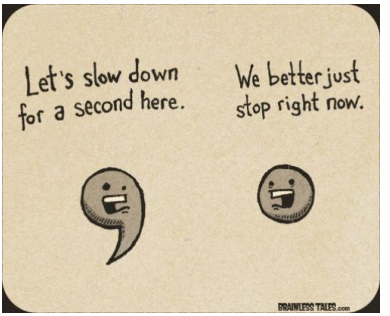
One final series to be aware of is the complex series. It happens when you add details about the items in the list, such as what state each city is in, and the extra commas require semicolons to beef up the separation between the main items, as this meme shows:



Got it?

If not, don't be dismayed. It can take a while to tell these little guys apart. You'll find a printable comma chart below for reference, and it'll be worth the effort to understand them. Once you know your commas, you won't have to guess anymore. You can decide where you need them, want them, or can get away without them.

CONCLUSION



Now, after the several lessons the memes have taught today, the biggest choice that remains is how you will use this knowledge for good and not for evil. Do not troll social media for poor punctuation and lambast the unwitting souls who know no better. Instead, use your powers to create effective messages, effective memes, and effective emphasis. The end.

Resources for Further Study

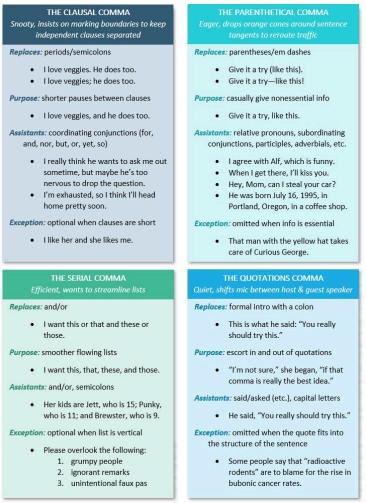
Three great places for further reading on fascinating punctuation power:

- "When Your Punctuation Says It All (!)" by Jessica Bennett, New York Times Feb. 27, 2015
- The Best Punctuation Book, Period. by June Casagrande, 2014
- RealGrammar.com

Comma Chart

Click on either the PDF link or the JPG image below to open and save/print the comma chart for future reference.

- Comma Chart PDF



NOTE: Comma placement can vary somewhat by author preference. In the case of optional exceptions, play with inserting and removing the commas, reading your sentence with and without them, and then trust your gut.

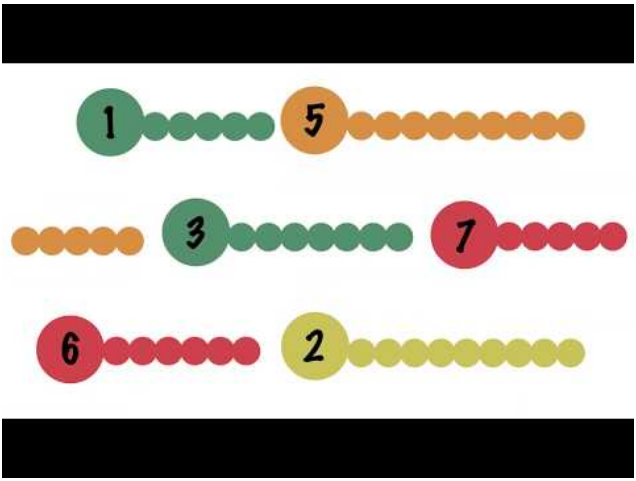
39. Adding the Storyteller's Tools to Your Writer's Toolbox

CLINT JOHNSON

- Tool #1: The Power of Scene
- Tool #2: The Power of Experience
- Tool #3: The Power of Sensory Detail
- Tool #4: The Power of Voice
- Tool #5: The Power of Conflict
- Conclusion

Writing is decision making. It's problem solving.

We write with particular goals in mind, be it earning an A on a biology report, making everyone laugh with a quick tweet, or getting an interview by presenting ourselves as best as possible on a resume. When we write, we think of our audience and make choices about how to achieve our goals with them. The more options we can identify when making writing choices, the better our chances of finding effective ways to reach our goals.



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UNC Writing Center

It can be helpful to think of a writer as a craftsperson, similar in many ways to a carpenter. To perform a craft requires a variety of tools, various skills using those tools, and particular approaches or attitudes about the work of one's craft. The carpenter must value the dynamic, living nature of wood, for example. Wood changes shape with fluctuating temperature, greatly complicating the carpenter's work. Someone without that attitude of appreciation for wood's nature is likely to ignore or fight against it, trying to make their furniture static with hardware and strong glues, which will cause the object to break down over time.

Writing is similar. Like the carpenter, a writer's tools, skill with

those tools, and attitudes about their work determine the quality of the writing they produce. While a writer's tools include physical objects such as computers, keyboards, pens, paper, and the like, they are usually techniques that serve the same purpose as the carpenter's tools: giving the craftsperson options in how to work with their chosen material, which, in the case of the writer, is language.

Storytelling may seem like a unique writing situation, and in some ways it is. But many of the tools we discover and gain skill with while telling stories can help us solve problems when writing in many other genres in very different situations.

TOOL 1: THE POWER OF SCENE

Consider

> You are writing a profile on Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple. You want your readers to understand the power of his personality, his sheer charisma, given that *Bloomberg News* referred to Jobs as "perhaps the most charismatic chief executive officer in business history."
>
> How do you take something like charisma, the experience of a man's nature, and put it into words?

One Option

> Writing stories requires that we write meaningful scenes: areas of intense focus where we describe people, places, and actions in order to make a reader feel they have witnessed something themselves. That ability—to use

language to create an experience in a reader's mind—is potentially valuable in communicating the magnetic presence of Steve Jobs.

Maybe while researching you find a story by one of Job's employees touting his magnetic personality and confidence. But the excerpt is short and dry, very to the point. If you have ever written a story, either from memory or imagination, you have tools to take this employee's memory of Jobs and bring it to life as a scene. By starting your profile with an intense, illustrative vignette showing Jobs's personality, everything that follows is interpreted through that lens. Your readers don't just learn about Jobs; to an extent, they experience him.

For Example

Mike Evangelist (that's his real name) believed in nothing but computers, and so he worshipped by designing and building them. In 2000, while heading Apple's team responsible for conceptualizing a DVD-burning app that would eventually become iDVD, he converted to Jobsism.

After three weeks preparing their pitch, Evangelist and his team sat in a boardroom so full of screenshots of program windows and reams of documentation higher than their chairs that it felt like a ruined temple, only with splintered pillars of paper rather than marble. Jobs strode in catlike, his bare feet moving silently and straight toward something only he saw. He didn't

glance at the twenty-thousand pages crowding the room in pillars. Instead, he picked up a fleck of crimson in the whitewash: a marker. As every pair of eyes in the room scanned each other, trying to figure out what they were seeing, Jobs walked to a whiteboard on the room's wall.

Pulling the top from the marker, he drew a crisp-sided rectangle. Back went the cap. He stabbed at the simple shape with the marker.

"Here's the new app," he said. "It's got one window. You drag your video into that window. Then you click the button that says BURN. That's it. That's what we're going to make."

He exited with a small smile, seemingly not about what he had just announced and certainly not about anything anyone else in that room had done, but something secret only he knew, handing Evangelist the marker on the way out.

Evangelist never became religious, but he has believed in something other than computers since that day—the barefoot genius who smiled at things only he could see, and made others burn with the need to see them too. (Adapted from Quora.com.)

Can a hypothetical situation written as a scene work as evidence for a claim you make in an argument? Might reflecting on your past by writing a specific experience in scene lead your mind to recall details and emotions more clearly, improving your memory? How else might scenes—the ability to use language to create or re-create an experience—be useful in different writing situations?

TOOL 2: THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE

Consider

The philosopher Plato dedicated his life to the pursuit and teaching of logical thought. Why, then, did he tell the story of Atlantis? The New Testament in the Bible recounts the life of Jesus Christ trying to reform behavior among the Jews. Why did he use parables such as the Good Samaritan? Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States, has dedicated much of his life to trying to bridge racial communities, both as a politician and community organizer. So when he decided to write his first book on race, why did he decide upon a memoir—a story?

One Option

Can effective storytelling strengthen our ability to communicate logic? When people make claims about what is good or bad, effective or ineffective, or true or false, we automatically compare the claim to our lived

experience. We ask, *Does this make sense to me? Have I seen it bear out in my life?* Stories can provide new experiences by which people can make sense of the claims they encounter. Could this help a reader understand something that may be accurate even if they have not experienced it themselves, making them more likely to accept your claims?

For Example

Check out the Native American parable of the Two Wolves.

TOOL 3: THE POWER OF SENSORY DETAIL

Consider

You are writing a review of your new favorite restaurant. You think every person you know, and every person they know, should eat there. It's that good. How do you motivate them to try the place beyond a fierce "I said so!"?

One Option

As a storyteller, you know the importance of sensory description. To describe something using the senses not only gives an additional texture of reality to the subject, but it can help memory. Knowing that one of the most important criteria for most eaters when choosing a restaurant is taste, could skillfully describing the succulent experiences of the dishes at your new favorite spot motivate readers to frequent it? Could the evocative description of human tastes—salty, savory, sweet, bitter, and sour—help people remember their favorite flavors, maybe beloved childhood foods, and associate those with this new restaurant?

For Example

The chocolate cake ($8.79) will knock you out with a pure, earthy fist and then, languidly, lure you back toward awareness with its tart breath of raspberry tickling the back of your throat.

TOOL 4: THE POWER OF VOICE

Consider

Your professor assigns you to write objectively about a social subject you care about greatly, let's say global climate change. You have passionate opinions on the subject and wish to criticize those who hold positions you feel are foolish, unfounded, or dishonest. However, you know that doing so will result in a low grade as your professor expects you to maintain an objective style throughout the paper. Do you have to give up your desire to point out the weaknesses of your opponents' stances on the issue?

One Option

Most good stories are about dramatic, interesting characters, people who the author creates yet are not the author. Their words—dialogue—have great power to establish unique, distinctive voices separate from the author's own voice as a story's narrator. These character voices seem so real it's easy to forget that the author created them. Could you find quotes that work similarly, allowing you to draw a reader's focus to your opponents' statements, their voices, without using your own voice? Could the controversial, confusing, silly, or abusive statements they have made allow you to shape your reader's view of them without directly sharing your thoughts on the issue, allowing you to seem objective while still influencing your reader's opinions?

For Example

How might a supporter of the theory of man-influenced global climate change use these statements collected by *Rolling Stone* to persuade a reader without giving their opinion in their own voice?

TOOL 5: THE POWER OF CONFLICT

Consider

Your political science teacher asks you to take part in a debate on the issue of safety versus individual liberties in America's age of terrorism. She specifies you must choose a subject of focus and approach the subject from many different angles, including historical, legal, geographic, and religious. Soon into your research preparing for the debate you feel lost, drowning in more information than you could tackle in a lifetime. How do you make sense of the mass?

One Option

You know that every good story is about conflict because conflict means people care. Conflict is produced when

different individuals or groups have competing interests and take action trying to achieve their personal goals, often by overcoming resistance from others. Might you not find similar patterns in your research on safety versus privacy, and might that pattern help you discern where you should put your focus? Is it possible to understand a social issue as a story, with different parties serving as characters with their own motivations? What is at stake with the issue as in a story? What actions are the different sides taking that create a kind of societal plot? Finally, what would each group envision as a climactic resolution and what would their victory or defeat mean?

For Example

Okay, so, what's the conflict in the gun control issue, as seen by those who support more control? It's a matter of safety, of life versus death. Who or what is the threat? It's not just murderers but also people who accidentally misuse guns. So, really, maybe the guns themselves are the bad guy! Then that would make the law and government the good guy. It isn't about choices made by individual people. It's about government acting in the best interest of the people while guns, those who make them, and those who insist upon their accessibility and use, are antagonists. So from this perspective, it's ultimately a matter of whether responsible government, in the eyes of gun control advocates, triumphs over a form of mob rule.

CONCLUSION

How many tools can we learn by writing stories? Where and when can they be applied in different writing situations we later face?

There is no definitive answer. Indeed, the writing process is unique to every writer. We each have our own toolbox brimming with techniques and the experiences we honed them on. Writing stories is a distinctive and sometimes overlooked way to add specialized tools to our toolbox.

Does considering the tools provided by storytelling provide easy answers to future problems we have when we write? Likely not. But it does give us more options to choose from.

When deciding if we should use storytelling tools, we can consider:

- Do we seek to connect with readers logically, emotionally, or both?
- Do we let someone else tell their experience, do we dramatize their experience for them, or do we build our own hypothetical reality?
- Do we skim over a subject or really focus on it, adding the intense emphasis of description?
- Do we communicate literally or using the figurative language of metaphor?
- Do we base our judgments on information or examine the stories we use to interpret what information means?

Writing, much like life in general, is decision making. It's problem solving. Our storytelling tools will not solve every writing problem we face—but they will sometimes be a productive option, and sometimes even the best option, to achieve a goal.

Look for ways to use them when you come upon this story: "Once upon a time there was a writer who had a problem …"

40. Is That a True Story?

RON CHRISTIANSEN

- Putting Stories Back into My Writing Classroom
- True or Not True?
- Writing as Decision Making
- Emotional Truth
- Making Deliberate Choices

For many years I did not teach narrative writing (fancy name for stories) in my writing classes. To be honest, I was unsure how to do it effectively and a bit nervous that my colleagues would perceive me as unaware of the current trends in writing theories, which focused more on so-called academic writing—see expressivist pedagogy vs. social constructivism and critical pedagogy or ask your instructor about this if you are dying to know more.

We can see the broad (i.e. not caught up with this specific debate with my colleagues) tensions and problems in my title, "Is That a True Story?" This use of "true" seems to assume we have easy access to the truth. And our general use of the term "story" almost always connotes "made-up, creative, for fun." So it is ironic, indeed, that I now embark on a story about my teaching in order to make a somewhat academic argument

for a particular way of seeing and using stories in the writing classroom. Well … on with the story.

PUTTING STORIES BACK INTO MY WRITING CLASSROOM

When creating my English 2010 class without a textbook, I decided it was time to revisit narrative writing, specifically memoirs, to see if I could figure out how to teach this type of personal writing in a more rhetorical way.

The first semester of my return to narrative writing, I ran into an unexpected problem, something I hadn't thought much about. Often when I gave feedback on early drafts of memoirs, I would ask students to offer more details and more specific scenes. But generally students seemed to ignore my feedback or in one way or another say that they were not able to flesh out the scene. Sometimes I assumed students were simply being a bit lazy; eventually, I realized that students were actually asking a specific question in order to figure out if their writing would be acceptable in this particular rhetorical context: "Does my story have to be true, like completely true?" You can see a student imply this question in this exchange:

> "Which memory do you think you will work on? I'm curious about the one about your grandfather and you fishing and catching grasshoppers that you placed in Tic Tac boxes," I said in a conference with a student.
>
> "Well, I like that one best too, but, to be honest, I can't

remember any of the details. It was so long ago."

TRUE OR NOT TRUE?

People often ask if a story is true. In fact, as a culture, we are a bit obsessed with truth. But what exactly are we asking when we directly or indirectly ask if a story is true?

It appears that we are asking if something literally happened. And that seems easy enough, right? Let's explore this with an experience I wrote about from my life some time ago. When I was twelve or thirteen, my cousin, Jeff, and I helped my grandmother clear out her attic. It was a huge job as stuff had been crammed up there for decades. In my memory, we found hundreds of old beer bottles that my cousin and I tried to save but my grandmother only allowed us to keep twelve each. I imagined my Mormon grandmother was embarrassed that her husband, who had died many years before when he was only forty-six, had made his own beer because alcohol was frowned upon by most Mormons. Yet when I asked her about it later, she insisted there were only twenty bottles or so, all of which we kept, and that,

no, she was not embarrassed because the bottles were not my grandfather's and he did not make beer.

Who to believe?

There is no way to tell this story without some level of interpretation. The "truth" is getting a bit complicated.

Many years later, after my grandmother had passed, I asked my cousin about this story. He agreed there were many more than twenty beer bottles that our grandma forced us to take to the garbage dump. But as we got to talking, he remembered that our grandmother bought us off, letting us keep twelve of the beer bottles and two old wine bottles plus ten dollars apiece, if we kept what we found between us. I had no memory of this, yet I had already written up the story.

WRITING AS DECISION MAKING

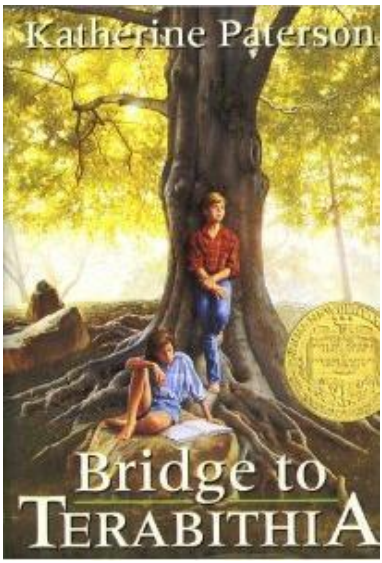
Now, I had a decision to make about truth, but also about the overall rhetorical situation and purpose of my story: Was the story I had written a lie? Was it simply my version? Who did I imagine as my audience? Should I add what my cousin had revealed even though I had no memory of it? Should I offer the competing accounts? There is no right answer to these questions. Awareness of the decision-making process itself is the core of effective writing.

I would argue, however, that one thing is clear: the minute we start to retell a story from our past we are constructing it from our point of view, so there's no need to get too worried about getting every detail correct. It's impossible.

Still, stories presented as true clearly impact us differently than "merely" fictional ones. Think of the rise of reality TV. Think of our fascination with true crime TV shows and podcasts (e.g. the *Serial* podcast or Netflix's *Making a Murderer*). We

want stories to be true. My guess is what we actually want are stories that speak to us, that speak to the human experience.

EMOTIONAL TRUTH



When Katherine Paterson is asked if her fictional novel *Bridge to Terabithia* is true, she replies, "I hope so. I meant for it to be true. I tried hard to make it so." But, strictly speaking, it's not true. That is, there wasn't a boy named Jesse who built a magical land across a river where, later, while he was away on a day trip, his friend Leslie visited. On that day the river was swollen because of run-off and she fell in and died.

It turns out, however, that when Paterson wrote the novel she and her family had recently dealt with the death of their son's best friend and the author had a close call with cancer. Even though the facts of the story didn't play out that way, the story clearly represents the emotional truth of how these families, both the author's and the fictional, dealt with death.

This idea of emotional truth is also important in nonfiction stories like memoirs. Monisha Pasupathi, a professor of developmental psychology at the University of Utah, suggests, "What really matters isn't so much whether it's true in the forensic sense, in the legal sense." Instead, "What really matters

is whether people are making something meaningful and coherent out of what happened. Any creation of a narrative is a bit of a lie. And some lies have enough truth" (qtd in *Heritage Day: The Importance of Life Stories*).

For our purposes in a writing class, it is paramount that we tell meaningful and coherent stories. Meaningful so that we are invested in communicating something to someone who may or may not know us; coherent so that our story can be understood. And while this conversation of truth and memoir can get a bit theoretical, it also has a very practical and pragmatic impact on writing memoirs.

Let's return to the short vignette between me and my student to see how we worked through her decisions concerning her memoir:

"So what, if you don't remember any of the details?" I replied.

"Well, then, there's no story. I mean I can't remember it."

"But do you remember the broad strokes? Do you remember what you felt? And you do remember some of the details, like the Tic-Tac box for the grasshoppers," I insisted.

"Sure. It was a meaningful experience for me."

"Then you are good to go. Just make up the rest," I said.

"But won't that be lying?"

"Nope, that's just the act of telling a true story."

After that conversation her story took off:

> We would drive up the canyon in his VW bug van. He wore his old fishing hat and I wore my scuffed-up sneakers. We would stop at the mouth of the canyon. The air was still crisp and fresh. Before getting out he handed me a small Tic-Tac box that said *orange* on it in bright colors. In my young mind it seemed odd that once where there were yummy orange candies now there would be gross little grasshoppers spitting black juice. After getting out of the car I would take his hand until we reached a dry place where many grasshoppers were jumping, "Go to it," he would say and then he'd move off to another spot where he would fill his Tic-Tac box. After ten minutes or so he would return asking, "What did you find?" I was so proud of my catch, so proud that I had braved the sticky little legs and black juice.

MAKING DELIBERATE CHOICES

She also reflected on her process of figuring out the details:

> I couldn't remember what kind of car exactly that he drove so I asked my mom. I drove up to the canyon where I knew we had fished, hoping I would remember more details about our trips. Driving up I remembered how we used to stop at the mouth of the canyon to catch grasshoppers. But that's all I remembered. I did know that the overall experience was positive. He was a father-figure to me and I felt safe and confident. So I made up the other details to communicate this. To help me with some details I looked up images and videos of grasshoppers and people catching grasshoppers. That's where I got the black juice idea, which I had forgotten, but I'm sure must have been there.

True stories, even when told through the genre of memoir, are about much more than simply transcribing each fact. We may still have to do some research by talking with others and looking up details. But this process, as we see above, is not about sticking to the facts. Instead, it is about the overall emotional truth and getting, as best we can, at the experience of being human.

Writers, therefore, have to make deliberate choices about what kinds of truth their stories contain and how they then choose to communicate these truths.

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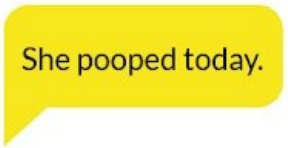
41. Follow a Map and Grab a Sandwich: Help Your Reader Navigate Your Writing

STACIE DRAPER WEATBROOK

- Your Thesis Is Your Roadmap
- Pack Snacks: Use the Quotation Sandwich

I received this text from my neighbor:

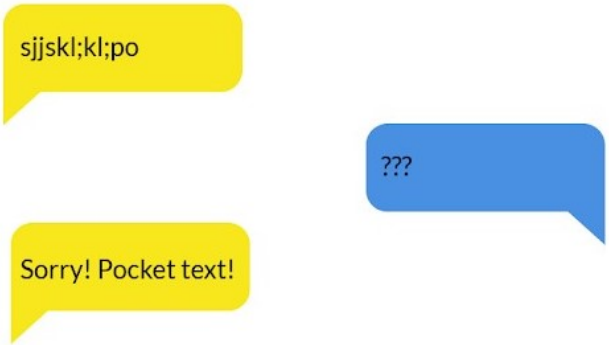


I was baffled. I hadn't heard from my neighbor since the day before, when we were coordinating carpool. I had no idea what this random text meant. To speak in rhetorical terms, I had no context. There were no other messages she'd sent that were

contingent to this new, cryptic text. Before I could respond with a question mark, she quickly texted again:

My neighbor, whose grandmother lived with her, meant to text the home health nurse. It was important for the nurse to know the status of grandma's digestive tract, but my neighbor mistakenly clicked on my name in her contacts instead of the nurse.

Have you ever received a confusing text?



These mishaps occur frequently when we text, and they are often humorous because, as readers, we expect what we read to make sense. When you write something, you're basically making a contract with the reader. You're saying,

If you read this, I promise to make sense.

It's an unspoken contract, but readers and writers rely on it. It's like when you get in the car with a friend. You expect they will drive safely and go where you both agreed to go.

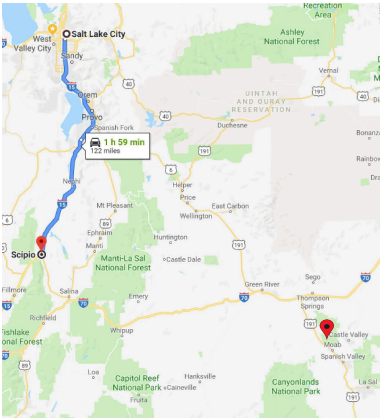
The road metaphor is a good one when considering how to make sense to your audience. Two ideas about how to make sense to your reader as they take a trip through your paper are to use a thesis as your roadmap and to use "quotation sandwiches" to integrate sources.

YOUR THESIS IS YOUR ROADMAP

Don't Leave Your Readers Stranded in Scipio: Map Out Your Essay with a Thesis

In the days before Google Maps, when you went on a road trip, you needed to know the route. Say you're going to Moab from Salt Lake. You'd need to know to travel through Provo, then Spanish Fork, and—this is important—take the Highway 6 exit from I-15 at Spanish Fork. Highway 6 will lead to Helper and Price, where it merges with Highway 191 and leads to Green River and then on to Moab. You'd get the general idea in your head and mentally check off each town as you passed.

On one road trip, my friends and I missed the exit for Hwy 6 that led to Price. We found ourselves 70 miles down I-15 in Scipio and, after stopping at one of the only two gas stations for instructions, realized we'd added 74 miles and an hour to our drive.



It was an adventure.

Your audience, often your instructor and peers, aren't likely to be as adventurous. In fact, if you tell them you're going one place and then go somewhere else, they may feel hijacked, or at the very least annoyed. Academic writing is usually not a whimsical road trip. It's more like your audience needs a ride to their job interview and they need to get there on time. Your thesis is your roadmap.

When composing your thesis, think:

What do I want my audience to know or think when they are done reading my paper?

Answer this question, and you're on your way to a good thesis. Your thesis will probably change many times as you are composing and drafting, but in your final draft, the destination should be clear. Don't forget the map and the destination in the course of writing your paper!

Your thesis outlines the essay. Consider this thesis for a rhetorical analysis paper, a paper that talks about the writing style of a document rather than the subject of that document:

Anne Lamott, in her essay "Shitty First Drafts," effectively reassures her readers that the writing process is messy and doesn't need to be perfect in the first drafting stages. She uses her ethos as a writer to convince her readers to shun perfectionism. Her appeal to pathos helps readers connect emotionally through her humor. Finally, Lamott suggests a logical solution to overcoming the fear of writing: simply write a terrible draft.

A few things to notice in this thesis: First, it's longer than a sentence. Having a thesis statement that's actually a paragraph may feel weird, but it's perfectly acceptable. Second, it uses "guiding words" to show what the paper talks about and in which order. Just as map will show you to drive through Provo, Spanish Fork, Helper, Price, and Green River to get to Moab, if your audience is told they will be passing through Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, you'd better deliver and in that order.

Your thesis will help you set up a map or outline of the paper. The points in your thesis will be the sections of your outline.

***DESTINATION (Thesis)**:*

You and your passengers have all agreed to go to Moab, and they trust you as the driver to take them there. (You should arrive in Moab without delays or detours.)

***THESIS (Destination)**:*

Anne Lamott is effective in helping her readers know they don't have to write perfect drafts. (By the end of the essay, readers should see that Anne Lamott is effective.)

***MAPPED ROUTE (Outline)**:*

1. Provo
2. Spanish Fork to Highway 6
3. Pass through Helper and Price
4. Highway 191 to Green River then Moab

***OUTLINE (Mapped Route)**:*

1. She uses ethos (credibility)
2. She also uses pathos (emotion/humor)
3. She uses logos (a logical solution)
4. Final destination: Lamott is effective

Don't confuse major points for paragraphs. According to the outline above, the rhetorical analysis essay will have three major points: ethos, pathos, and logos. To properly cover the subject, you'll want to have a few paragraphs for each of the points.

Think of each point in your outline as a town on the map. You'll give your readers a topic sentence, or point sentence, about each of the "towns" listed in the thesis. On your way to Moab you might say to your passenger as you approach Helper,

We're coming up on Helper. It used to be where the railroad would add an extra engine to help the coal trains make it up the mountain.

Use point (or topic sentences) to signal your discussion of each point in the thesis. The passenger knows to mentally check off one of the points on the map. Topic sentences are signals in the body of the paper to the reader that you are

keeping your promise to discuss what's in the thesis or to help lead the reader logically through your thoughts.

Point one:

Lamott uses ethos as she establishes herself as a writer who knows about writing.

Then you'd give several specific examples from the text and explain (analyze) why they are examples of credibility or ethos. One way to organize your paper is to give each specific example its own paragraph.

Point two:

Appealing to readers' emotions with humor, Lamott allows the reader to be open to her unconventional idea of writing a terrible draft and being okay with it.

Again, in this section of the analysis, you'd give several specific examples from the text and explain why they are effective examples of pathos or emotion.

Point three:

Lamott uses a logical approach to help her audience overcome the fear of writing: simply write a terrible draft.

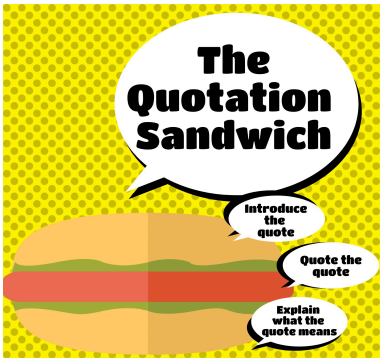
Here, as you discuss the last portion of the thesis, you'll also give several specific examples and quotes from the text and explain why they are appeals to logic or logos.

Notice that each of these sentences mirrors and explains the ideas in the thesis statement.

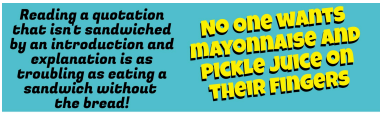
PACK SNACKS: USE THE "QUOTATION SANDWICH"

So far, we've talked about having an outline and using topic (point) sentences along your journey. There's a lot to fit in between points A and B and B and C. You'll want to integrate sources to back up the points you make in your thesis (which are now the topic sentences). Think of it as packing a sandwich for your readers to munch on during the ride.

A sandwich, as you are well aware, has bread surrounding meat, cheese, veggies, or PB&J. The bread makes it easy to eat. It's the same when adding sources to your paper: you want the information you give to be easily digestible for the reader. You want it to make sense. Gerald Garff and Kathy



Blinkenstein give a solution for integrating sources. In their book, *They Say I Say*, Garff and Blinkenstein tell readers to use "the quotation sandwich" (46). Sandwiching quotes between an introduction—which includes an attributive tag naming the author(s)—and an explanation helps the reader see how the quote you included supports your overall thesis and the immediate point you're trying to make.



Readers find it disconcerting to have a quotation appear out of nowhere with no introduction or attributive tag and no explanation. It's like being handed a wad of ham, pickle, tomato, lettuce, and cheese dripping with mayonnaise and mustard. It's going to run uncomfortably down your riders' arm and most likely make a mess on your car's upholstery. The solution for eating sandwich fixings is bread (or lettuce or flatbread, if you're going for a wrap; you get the idea.) In writing, sandwich your sources in between an introduction and an explanation.

Here's what a quotation sandwich might look like:

> Lamott uses ethos as she establishes herself as a writer who knows about writing. Of course, Lamott is the author of the book, Bird by Bird, in which her essay appeared. Being a published writer ostensibly gives her some credibility to talk about writing. Lamott continues to establish her ethos as she shares her connections to other writers. She says, "I

know some very great writers...who have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic or confident" (21). Here, Lamott tells her readers she knows successful writers and those writers don't write great first drafts. By showing her readers that it's not just her practice of writing a terrible first draft, but it's also other famous(and rich!) writers, Lamott builds her audience's confidence in her knowledge and her subsequent advice to let go of perfectionism in first drafts.

Here's a play-by-play recap of how the quotation sandwich works:

Topic sentence (following the order given in the thesis):

Lamott uses ethos as she establishes herself as a writer who knows about writing.

Analysis and ideas about the essay from the writer of the rhetorical analysis:

Lamott is the author of the book *Bird by Bird*, in

which her essay appears. Being a published writer ostensibly gives her some credibility to talk about writing.

The introduction—the bread on the top of the sandwich:

Lamott continues to establish her ethos as she shares her connections to other writers. She says,

The quote—the fixings between the bread:

"I know some very great writers ...* who have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic or confident" (21)**.

*I've shortened the quote. The ellipses (...) show readers I omitted some parts of the original essay.

**This quote came from a printed book, so this number is the page where I found the quote. If you are writing from a source that doesn't have page numbers, you will not include page numbers. It then becomes even more essential to include the attributive tag to let your readers know where the quote or information came from.

The explanation—the bread on the bottom of the sandwich:

Here, Lamott tells her readers she knows successful writers and those writers don't write great first drafts. By showing her readers that it's not just her practice of writing a terrible first draft, but it's also the practice of other famous (and rich!) writers, Lamott builds her audience's confidence in her and her subsequent advice to let go of perfectionism in first drafts.

The quotation sandwich isn't just for direct quotes. It is not only helpful but also avoids plagiarism to use this same pattern when discussing any information you get from sources:

Lamott again uses ethos as she explains her process of writing first drafts that no one will see, saying there might be something on page six that is useful, but you'll never know until you write (23).*** Lamott's essay shows it is clear she has been through this process of writing without self-judgment, and shows the reader her advice of

writing bad first drafts works.

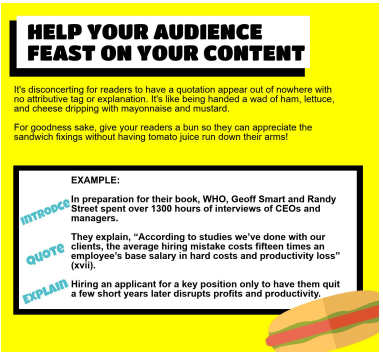
***The ideas in the sentence are Lamott's. Even though I didn't directly quote her, I need to use an attributive tag to properly credit her as my source, and, since there is a page number available, I use it. When we are clear about attributing quotes and ideas, we also make it clear to our readers that the sentences without an attributive tag are our own brilliant analysis of the text and subject.

CONCLUSION

Remember, **you are the tour guide of your paper**. It's your job as a writer to help your audience know where you're going, which points you'll pass through, and why they are significant.

Giving your audience a map, or a thesis, is giving them the big picture of what you want them to see. Continue to remind your audience often of that big picture. Just as important as keeping the big picture in mind is letting your audience know when you reach each of the said points by using topic sentences.

When we think of writing as driving our reader efficiently to a destination, we're able to see the importance of a mapped-out route. Along the way, we provide our reader with snacks (quotation sandwiches, anyone?) they can easily digest. After all, no one loves being lost in Scipio and no one loves cleaning a greasy mixture of pickle juice and mayonnaise from their car seat.



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42. Multi-Modal Communication: Writing in Five Modes

ANN FILLMORE

- The Five Modes Explained
- Multi-Modal Considerations

As writers, we make choices. In every situation, we must decide how to best communicate meaning to our intended audiences. It is a process of deliberation that involves calculated choices, strategies, and moves. And, nowadays, writing isn't just putting words onto paper anymore.

"Multi-modal" assignments have become common in higher education, and it is likely that you will be asked to create multi-modal texts during your academic career. In the field of writing/composition, "modality" is a rhetorical decision that you need to consider as you explore how to best achieve your intended purpose(s).

A multi-modal text employs more than one "mode" to communicate meaning *beyond the written word* alone. According to the New London Group, these are the five modes:

LINGUISTIC/ALPHABETIC — written and spoken words

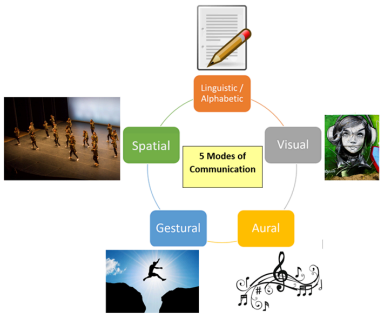
VISUAL — images (moving or still)

AURAL — sound, music

GESTURAL — movement, expression, body language

SPATIAL — position, physical arrangement, proximity

Why would writers want to communicate in a modality other than alphabetic text? We've all heard the saying that "a picture is worth 1000 words." In certain situations, a visual has the potential to convey an idea more effectively and more quickly than written text. Images can help readers to better engage with the topic and experience a moment in a way that could be more difficult to accomplish with words alone.



THE FIVE MODES EXPLAINED

Modality is an important rhetorical decision that writers need to consider. Here's a more detailed look into each mode of communication. Modes can be used individually and in combination with others to create multi-modal texts.

1. **Linguistic/Alphabetic Mode: includes written and spoken words, word choice, vocabulary, grammar, structure, and organization of sentences and paragraphs**

Writers use **words** to communicate. This mode is the most widely used, is a form that most people are familiar with, and can be delivered through print and audio.

Shopping lists, emails, text messages, academic essays, and the automated voice you hear as

you're on hold with customer service use the linguistic/alphabetic mode since they rely on **words** to create meaning.

2. **Visual Mode: includes images, video, color, visual layout, design, font, size, formatting, symbols, visual data (charts, graphs), animation (like gifs)**

   The visual mode helps writers communicate meaning in a way that can be **seen** by the audience. Sometimes people must see to believe, and visuals can be helpful and even persuasive. For example, if you want to showcase how climate change has devastated the arctic ecosystem, you might include a video that shows real-world footage, like this one by National Geographic. This video is considered a multi-modal text since words, visuals, and audio are used together for a stronger effect.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=225

The visual mode also includes elements of design and allows writers a more creative way to present text on a page/screen. For example, the textbook in the photo below makes use of labels, headings, color, and other visual features to help the reader more easily understand the information. This textbook is considered multi-modal since it combines multiple modes of communication.

3. Aural Mode: includes spoken words, sound, music, volume, rhythm, speed of delivery, pitch, tone, voice

Sound catches people's attention, and writers use the aural mode to bring their words to life. For example, have you ever listened to a game on the radio? Listen to the way the sportscasters help the audience to experience the game through sound. This sportscast is considered a multi-modal text since the authors combine words (linguistic/alphabetic mode) with sound (aural mode).

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=225

Another example of the aural mode is an audio book. Listen to the following excerpt from *The Carriage*, by Jena Baxter. Spoken words can add depth and emotion to a story. As you listen, pay attention to the volume, rhythm, pitch, speed, and tone of the narrator's voice. Multi-modality can enhance the experience of "reading" a text.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=225

4. Gestural Mode: includes movement, speed, expression, body language, facial expression, physical proximity, interactions between people

The gestural mode of communication allows writers to communicate meaning through **movement**. Traditionally, this mode was used primarily in face-to-face interaction; however, modern technology allows writers to show movement virtually in their work, through video. The gestural mode is often used in combination with other modes, such as linguistic/alphabetic

(written/spoken), spatial (physical arrangement), and aural (sound) to provide an enhanced sensory experience for the audience.

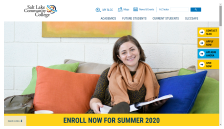
For example, sign languages use the gestural mode since position of the sign and movement are significant factors in generating and distinguishing meaning. In this video, look at how the speakers use movements of the hands, head, face, and body, along with position and speed, to communicate meaning to the audience. Sign languages are considered multi-modal communication since they combine linguistic/alphabetic text with movement.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=225

5. Spatial Mode: includes physical arrangement—spacing, position, organization, proximity, direction, and distance of elements in a text

Writers use the spatial mode of communication in the **physical layout** and **organization** of a text. For example, this tri-fold pamphlet, printed and folded on paper, presents information spatially on six panels. Physical arrangement impacts the way the audience can interact with your work.

Websites also rely heavily on the spatial mode to communicate meaning. Writers make strategic rhetorical decisions about how to arrange digital information in a user-friendly way within a mobile "space." Features like menus, headers, physical layout, and navigation tools (such as links) help the audience to interact with the site spatially. Websites are considered multi-modal texts since multiple modes are used in combination to communicate with the audience.



Take a few minutes to browse the SLCC website. As you explore, pay attention to how the authors

arrange the information within the digital space. What does this communicate to the reader? How does the spatial arrangement enhance or hinder the user experience? These are important rhetorical decisions to consider as you work.

MULTI-MODAL CONSIDERATIONS

Now that you have a further understanding of the five modes of communication and how they work individually and in combination, how can you apply them into your writing?

Start by researching the rhetorical situation. It is essential that you have a firm understanding of the purpose, audience, and context surrounding the writing task. Understanding the rhetorical situation will help you to make decisions as to which mode or combination of modes might best help you to connect with your intended audience.

As the writer, you'll need to determine which modes could add value to your work. Be careful not to add modes just because you think you should. Each mode you use should add meaning to the text. Consider the opportunities, challenges, and constraints of any writing task and assess and revise your work to meet the needs of the audience.

Some questions you may want to consider:

- Does the rhetorical situation call for a certain

mode? Or, do you have some creative freedom in how you present your ideas or make your argument?

- How does a certain mode affect the way your audience will receive or experience the message? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a certain mode for this particular writing task?
- Could you use a combination of modes? Would a multi-modal approach enhance your message or help you to better get your point(s) across?
- Do you possess the technological skills necessary to effectively use a specific mode? Will you need to learn additional skills in order to create your work? If so, how can you best learn these skills in the given time frame?

In conclusion, modality affects how the audience will interact with and generate meaning from your work. Writing in the five modes can help you to think "outside the box" as you make rhetorical decisions about the kinds of communication that you could use as you venture beyond the printed word.

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43. Definitions, Dilemmas, Decisions: Making Choices in Writing

LYNN KILPATRICK

- Definitions
- Dilemmas
- Decisions

DEFINITIONS

When you sit down to write, you need to think deeply about **why** you are writing (exigence), **who** you are trying to reach (audience), **what** you want them to know or do (purpose) and **how** you can reach them (genre and medium). All of these elements will be heavily influenced by your content, the topic or issue you want to write about.

It may be helpful to review what all these terms mean. You can look here for a review of the "The Rhetorical Situation." And

here for some definitions of genre: “On Genre” and “Genre in the Wild.”

Whether you know what it means or not, you start with **exigence**. What is exigence? I love Lloyd Bitzer’s definition, “a thing which is other than it should be.” Often in our lives we are confronted by things that are other than they should be, situations, issues, problems that we want to change. That is exigence! As students, your exigence often arrives in the form of an assignment: your teacher tells you to write something, so you do.

In real life, we often write in response to situations that exist in our professional lives or in the world around us. A quick glance at a news website or any form of social media demonstrates the many variations of things other than they should be. A politician says something, and people respond in writing. A law is passed, or not, and citizens respond.

In some assignments, you may be asked to look for a reason, for exigence, in the world around you. Sometimes, often in real life, you find your exigence, or it finds you.

That’s the first step: the **why**. But once you have a reason to write, then what? Next, you need to find the **what** and the **who**.

The what, it turns out, is **genre**. What kind of text are you going to produce?

My working definition of genre is pretty basic—it’s a type or kind of text. When we think of genre, we may think of film or novels. We know what an action movie is and how it’s different from a romantic comedy: those are different genres. We know that fantasy novels are different from mysteries: different genres. It may help to remember that different genres have different rules and audiences’ expectations differ based on the genres they are reading.

In writing, genre is a bit more broad. It means the kind of text you are going to produce: it could be a letter, or it could be a short video. It might be a poster or a social media campaign. All of these are examples of different kinds of genres.

While it may be tempting to think that you can run down a list of elements, make your choice, and be done with it, writing doesn't work that way. With most writing assignments, the different aspects of the rhetorical situation intermingle; you can't think about one without thinking about another. If you are trying to choose a genre, you will also need to think and rethink your audience, your purpose, and your content. Writing is a recursive practice [see "Writing Is Recursive"]; that is, when writing, we often think through problems or ideas and then revisit them again and again throughout our process. Writing is not a straight line. If I had to choose an image to represent writing, I'd choose a spiral.

The image of a Chambered Nautilus provides a striking visual representation of the process of forward momentum along a cyclical path. A Nautilus begins life inhabiting a small chamber, but then creates new, larger chambers to accommodate its growth. As it grows, the Nautilus seals off the old chambers, but continues to use them for buoyancy. The beautiful image we see when we cut a Nautilus shell in half can help us to think about the recursive nature of writing.

“Nautilus Shell” by sailor_smb is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

When we write, we start out in one place. But as we write, we return to the problems, ideas, or questions that inspired us to write in the first place. When we come back, we’re not the same person we were when we first chose a topic, and we’re not in exactly the same place. We’ve grown. We know more, we have new questions, and we are closer to completing a draft, but we recognize that we need to rethink some of our ideas or assumptions. So we’re further along in the process, but we haven’t moved in a straight line; it’s more of a cycle that we go through over and over until we’re done. Thinking, rethinking, seeing, revising, changing. All of these stages are predictable parts of writing.

DILEMMAS

When we have a writing project, whether it is an assignment or a self-motivated activity, we are faced with a series of dilemmas. I like to represent these dilemmas as a series of questions. As we answer each question, we learn more about more about the elements of our specific **rhetorical situation**.

Any writing project starts with **exigence**. What situation is other than it should be? What do you want to change? How can you do that?

In thinking about a situation you want to change, you need to think about **context**. What's going on right now? Who is already thinking and talking about this issue? What have they said? This is where your research starts. You need to understand the big picture before you can begin to write.

In thinking about the big picture, or **context**, you will begin to understand who cares about your issue, and who can do something about it. That will help you narrow down your **audience**.

As you think about **audience**, you need to consider who can change the situation you care about, and also who else might help you enact change. With many issues, there are primary and secondary audiences.

As you think about who you want to reach, you will also begin considering what you want them to do. That's your **purpose**. You may want to persuade, but you also might want to inform. Understanding your purpose, or purposes, will help you figure out how to reach your audiences.

That brings us to **genre**. In considering different genres, you should look at this piece: "Rhetoric & Genre: You've Got This (Even If You Don't Think You Do …)"

Choosing a **genre** means holding many different ideas and questions in mind all at the same time. It's difficult, but writers think about context, audience, and purpose as they consider

which genre will be the most effective in helping them achieve their goals.

So how does a writer decide?

All these questions might feel overwhelming. So let's think through a specific example:

Case Study

Dylan receives an assignment from their professor: choose an issue and audience, then produce a document that serves the writer's purpose.

How can Dylan make choices about this assignment?

First Dylan needs to decide what inspires them to act. When they look around the world, what situation do they think needs changing? It can be something individual, such as an issue that affects a family member or friend, like a medical condition. The issue might be something happening in their community, such as a local issue like air pollution. Or maybe Dylan belongs to a specific group, which could be a specific heritage, a regional affiliation, or a more loosely defined group, such as people who play a certain sport, share a hobby, or practice the same art form. The issue doesn't have to be political; it just has to be something that Dylan cares deeply about, deeply enough that they are willing to spend weeks reading and writing about that same issue. So Dylan finds an issue or topic that is compelling.

Let's say Dylan lives in a large city, and has volunteered with a variety of organizations, such as the community garden and the food pantry. Dylan has taken a film-making class and also

is interested in science. They're not sure yet what they want to write about, but those are their interests.

So Dylan does some research, by doing a simple search, talking to friends, looking at a library database. They discover many conversations about food and poverty: the relationships between community gardens and food banks, community gardens at elementary schools, and the prevalence of childhood hunger in their city. The research provides many options.

Then what? Dylan needs to think about the audience and purpose. If Dylan believes more money should be devoted to community gardens or childhood hunger, they may want to target government or large corporations. If Dylan decides to focus on hunger in their city, they may want to write to local nonprofit organizations or local citizens. There are many decisions to make!

Each of these options would have different purposes, which would lead to different audiences, and therefore most likely different genres.

Let's say Dylan decides to focus on childhood hunger in their community. But what can Dylan do about this problem? In an ideal world, Dylan knows, there would be no hungry children. But Dylan is just one college student.

In talking to classmates, Dylan discovers most of them don't know that much about childhood hunger. They also don't know much about the food pantry or community gardens.

Dylan decides that one purpose could be simply to inform others in the community about this problem. Another purpose could be to persuade the government to devote more money to this problem.

For the first purpose, Dylan might target college students or others in their community. For the government, Dylan wants state senators and representatives as their audience because they have some input on the state budget.

In thinking about how to contact legislators, Dylan knows

that often constituents write letters or emails about bills or issues. In thinking about genre, a letter might be effective for this audience. But if Dylan also wants to reach college students or other voters in his community, a letter wouldn't be as good. They might think about writing an opinion column to be published in the college or local newspaper. But Dylan also might think about using social media to reach a wider audience, or even a short video.

No matter what genre they choose, Dylan needs to have a clear purpose in mind, and to convey that purpose clearly. Each genre has its benefits and drawbacks. Letters are direct, they can be sent to one person and convey a very clear point. But legislators are busy, they won't read a very long letter, so the letter has to be short and can contain limited information. An opinion column can be longer and contain more research, but the audience can be unclear. Dylan won't know who read the column. A social-media campaign is also limited, in terms of word count, but a campaign can continue for several weeks, allowing Dylan to include short bits of information, along with compelling images, and links to local organizations.

Ultimately, Dylan decides to write a letter to state legislators asking for more money to be devoted to childhood hunger. Dylan also begins a social media campaign, informing followers about the number of hungry children in their community. Dylan encourages followers to volunteer with local organizations and also to write their own letters to state legislators. While Dylan can't solve childhood hunger with letters and social media posts, Dylan can achieve their purpose of informing others and getting them involved, having a ripple effect in the community.

DECISIONS

Now that you're more familiar with the definitions and dilemmas of the writing process, it's time to think through your own rhetorical situation and make decisions about your writing project. Use the following checklist to determine your **exigence**, **context**, **purpose**, **audience**, and **genre**.

Checklist for Making Decisions about the Rhetorical Situation

What is my EXIGENCE?

- What situation in my community is "other than it should be" or is in a state that I would like to change?
- What issue or problem do I want to address?
- In an ideal world, what is the way this situation should be?

What is the CONTEXT?

- What is going on, right now, with this issue or topic?
- What is the conversation?
- Who is involved?
- Who cares about this issue?
- Who has already added their voices to the conversation?

What is my PURPOSE?

- What do I want to have happen?
- Thinking back to exigence, what is the ideal outcome for my project? (It's okay to dream big; the ideal might not be achievable with one class project, but it will help you think about a short-term outcome that is realistic.)

Who is my AUDIENCE?

- Who can have an effect on this situation?
- Who can bring about change?
- Who are some secondary audiences who may be able to help bring about this change?

What is the best GENRE?

- How can I reach my audience and move them closer to my purpose?
- What are some genres that have been used to reach these audiences?
- For what purposes are these genres best suited?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each genre?
- What content do I need to include? (Think about the ways text and visuals can work together in different genres. Some genres require images, or more attention paid to graphic design.)

44. Consider My Rhetorical What?!! Please, Just Tell Me What You Want

RON CHRISTIANSEN

- A Complex Move: Moving Beyond the Pro/Con Debate
- Writing as a Resource
- Why Messiness Matters
- The Messiness of Decision-making and Unwarranted Solutions
- Appendix

During my twenty years of teaching, students (that's you, my primary readers) have often pushed me to be more explicit about what I want in my assignments.

While I think this is a fair demand from students and one we can learn from as teachers, I also see how this interchange is much more complex than many students and teachers realize. You may believe I'm up to some trickery, hoping to trip you up if you aren't paying close attention. And, if I'm being honest with you, I may believe you are being a tad lazy, wanting the instructor to do your work for you.

A COMPLEX MOVE: MOVING BEYOND THE PRO/CON DEBATE

Let's take an example from a common introductory composition assignment (see the appendix beneath this essay), which asks students to identify at least three distinct points of view concerning their research question. Often, we can easily develop two viewpoints, usually a pro and con, but many of us struggle to develop the third point of view. In discussions with students, I'm often asked, "Is this a good third viewpoint? Is this what you want?"

Again, these are fair questions. I assume in the past you have engaged an assignment on your own terms, believing the teacher wants your unique take, only to get burned by a low grade. Still, I also get a bit frustrated, especially with the second question. My frustration isn't simply with you, but with my own teaching abilities and the overall educational system that sometimes encourages such simplistic thinking. This system often focuses on so-called discrete skills that will help students get a high score on the ACT or pass the AP exam or gain usable job skills. While these endeavors have some merit and pragmatic applications, they do not prepare students to engage in complex writing situations that come out of specific contexts.

First, these two questions assume that I only want one kind of viewpoint. Second, they assume that each topic or issue has three correct viewpoints. Third, the questions attempt to remove your decision-making from the equation. Without your decision-making, you are simply using language to prove knowledge mastery rather than actually creating something.

Fourth, the questions focus more on you being right than being clearly understood.

WRITING AS A RESOURCE

Because I view writing as a resource that people use to do and be things in the world, the answer to the question "Is this what you want?" is complex and demands engagement with the overall context of writing. If I simply see language as a tool used to demonstrate knowledge about a subject then the answer is straightforward. I can say, "Yes, let me clarify. I want you to identify and explain two polarized views and then a middle ground position on your issue." I'm sure many of you have had teachers who are primarily focused on how students use language to demonstrate knowledge.

But I'm usually unwilling to answer the question in this way and to clearly and simply define the problems you are wrestling with, as heartless as this may seem. I believe clarifying and identifying three viewpoints doesn't have a correct answer; there are many ways to establish these viewpoints as long as there is a rationale that you can articulate.

When you understand this, you can focus your energies on figuring out the messiness instead of pursuing the right answer while waiting for the teacher to clarify the assignment. Trust your own personal knowledge from your own experiences of talking with people, reading online, watching movies...you know, doing life. You have experience that will help you understand your assignments. I believe this process will make your writing experience more meaningful and will often create a more positive response from instructors. And I'm certain in many work situations employers will want you to

confidently engage with the situation you are given on your own rather than immediately ask them what they want. Even if they don't say it out loud, my guess is they are often thinking, "Figure it out yourself!"

WHY MESSINESS MATTERS

From this perspective, many writing tasks not simply about using language to demonstrate knowledge. Rather, I want to open up spaces where you can actually use language for your own purposes. This may sound daunting and messy but I think that's exactly why it's so important.

Even as an instructor I'm a tad overwhelmed with the task at hand. Nevertheless, it's what we writing instructors say we want and it's what we believe will actually help students become better writers, not just with our assignments, but down the road in another course or in a job situation. For me to impose my understanding of an issue and its context is to deny you the opportunity to learn to think your own thoughts.

Just take a look at one of the threshold concepts for this course:

> "The meanings and the effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes."

When applying this concept, we often focus on the situation of the debate itself but situation is actually uniquely defined by each individual. So if your overall question is what should the minimum age be for drinking alcohol, you would probably,

depending on your overall purpose, want to know something about the National Minimum Drinking Age Act passed by President Reagan in 1984. This is part of the situation or, more specifically, the historical context, and is fairly straightforward after some research. But another important part of the "situation" is that YOU the writer are asking the question and formulating a response. The viewpoints you arrive at and choose to include in your project reflect what you know about your issue and how you are thinking about it. In this case, maybe you have personal experience with the issue that informs your ability to understand the context and create various viewpoints. It's not a question of wrong or right.

A more specific example: a student exploring drinking age laws previously lived in Germany where the legal age for drinking beer and wine without a legal guardian is sixteen. This experience shaped the student's construction of the debate in ways that many teachers in the U.S. can't begin to understand. For the student, having a glass of wine at a young age with his family or a beer with friends was normal and not fraught with issues of illegality or shame. Some teachers may not even recognize this as a potential viewpoint because they did not have early experiences with alcohol or they primarily identify teenage alcohol consumption with parties, excess, and getting drunk. For the teacher to clarify the assignment at this moment, to lay out how they see the landscape of this debate, is to deny a student's knowledge and experience, ultimately denying the student an opportunity to use language in a productive manner.

One last example: A student in a colleague's class was researching, "Does the American Dream still exist for immigrants?" The student had immigrated and saw herself as living the American Dream. Yet a family member, at least as capable as herself, had really struggled and had been advised to move back to Peru. Yet another family member is in the US on DACA, on what he thought was a clear path to the American

Dream, until his dream was suddenly called into question by federal policies introduced by President Trump to revamp DACA. All of these views are valid in the sense that they are embedded in personal experience and various contexts. Again, these various contexts are most likely not available to many instructors. In this interaction, I find it best for me as an instructor to first ask questions and listen before I offer my ideas on the debate, even though this requires more time and locates the student as the expert.

THE MESSINESS OF DECISION-MAKING AND UNWARRANTED SOLUTIONS

There's no removing the messiness of the individual making decisions about how to enter a conversation and how to interpret the evidence and strategies being used. Yet this messiness can make us feel confused and frustrated. In one way or another, you might say something like:

"I'm so confused and don't have time for this. Just tell me what the hell you want and I will give it to you!"

The anger and confusion are sometimes palpable and can lead well-intentioned instructors to come up with unwarranted "solutions." For example, often when I've had confused students, I've revised and added more explanation and examples to my assignments. While these revisions to an assignment handout may be necessary at times, I have also witnessed how this default move can lead to an ever-amassing list of criteria, which narrow options. Nothing is necessarily wrong with a long assignment description unless instructors take away students' opportunities to make decisions about

their writing and/or if teachers then proudly proclaim, "Surely there will be no questions now—it's all there." If only learning were so simple.

As several writing teachers from La Guardia Community College write in an essay about messy teaching, teachers avoid, "the unexpected, messy, and slippery process through which our classes unfold in favor of clean solutions, well-designed lessons, and so-called 'best practices.'"[1] But it's still *not all there* and never will be because the "all there" includes you, the student.

The messiness often doesn't merely derive from a faulty assignment explanation, but surfaces in the doing, in the application. There will always be questions, always some confusion, always some frustration. Learning, deep-real-life-consequential learning, requires some false starts and failures. I believe both teachers and students would fare better facing these simple truths. But following this advice does cause complications. Teachers still must assign and grade, and students are, rightfully, concerned about how they will be evaluated. Ultimately I place the responsibility for creating an environment where this kind of learning can happen on teachers. We must gain your trust that we are evaluating fairly, to the best of our abilities, and not favoring certain students or types of responses. A simple way to do this is for teachers to allow students to explain their thinking (metacognition) and the decision-making behind their writing projects through self-reflection and self-assessment assignments.

"Is this a good third viewpoint? Is this what you want?"

"It depends." Explain why you believe it's a valid viewpoint.

1. "The Messy Teaching Conversation: Toward a Model of Collegial Reflection, Exchange, and Scholarship on Classroom Problems." Johnsen, Heidi L.; Pacht, Michelle; van Slyck, Phyllis; Tsao, Ting Man. TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE, v37 n2 p119-136 Dec 2009

Because it depends on the issue; it depends on your experience; it depends on what you know; it depends on what you can find through research; it depends...on what you want to do.

APPENDIX

Research Project Part II: Viewpoint Synthesis

Showing multiple viewpoints and connecting them to your own view

At this point you should have completed extensive research into your research question, exploring multiple perspectives and constructions of the issue. This research is represented in your evolving Annotated Bibliography. The purpose of research and annotated bibliographies in persuasive writing is to come to a fuller understanding of the rhetorical context and situation. That is, the purpose is not simply to find support for the views you already hold about an issue, but to also explore others' viewpoints. Your Viewpoint Synthesis paper will discuss various ways of looking at a topic, not just pro and con.

Synthesis means "putting together." In this Viewpoint Synthesis paper, you will flesh out your own view on your issue in the context of what you have discovered about your research question in this unit. This paper is not a researched argument but rather a brief overview of your own view shaped by your research and the notebooks/discussions from Unit #3. Still, you must compare and contrast *your view* with the research you

have explored in your Annotated Bibliography. In doing this you should utilize your writing and thinking from the various assignments during this unit.

The last two Notebooks (Rhetorical Context/Viewpoint Summary and Clarifying Your Position within a Debate) are actually rough drafts, in a sense, of this assignment. Use your work on these notebooks to shape your Viewpoint Synthesis.

Organization

The only criteria we give you is that you must show at least three viewpoints plus your own informed viewpoint about your issue.

We imagine that the opinion summary can take on various forms. Your specific approach should come out of your engagement with your particular debate. Here are two possible ways of approaching the assignment:

1. Differing viewpoints—organize your paper based on the differing viewpoints of sources or stakeholders you researched. (Think back to Week 14's discussion and the Summarizing the Positions "templates.")
2. "Story" of my research—if your own view has changed quite a bit during your exploration you might choose this option. Recount the journey of your research and exploration of the issue: how your views changed and were reshaped & how you arrived at your current view.

Guidelines

As you write, consider the following guidelines:

1. Remember that this is a new paper, not your Annotated Bibliography. While you may use some of the passages and language from your bibliography, this is a different paper that is meant to show us the range of positions on the issue as well as the position you take and your reasons/evidence for this position.
2. Finding an organization that shows the complexity of the issue is part of the learning task for this paper (see above). Do not just transfer your annotations into this paper; think, instead, about grouping them to show similarities and differences in various positions.
3. The rhetorical analysis you did in the bibliography does not show up in this paper as such. You may certainly point out flaws in arguments, and you can indicate you think a source is very credible in the way you introduce it. For example, you might say, "Noted psychologist and professor at Harvard University, John Bramble, argues that . . ."
4. If you do not introduce your sources within your text, use in-text citations after any ideas or short quotes you use. Rely on paraphrase and quote sparingly, but ALWAYS signal to the reader when you are summarizing someone's viewpoint.
5. Remember that while this paper is meant to show you understand some of the viewpoints of your issue, it is also meant to give you the chance for you to "put in your oar" as Graff and Birkinstein say. Do everything in your power to be credible and persuasive in giving your reasons for your position. Make sure to include evidence that adds to your ethos and logos.

Requirements

1. 1,000–1,250 words (4–5 pages)

2. Use your rhetorical analysis of these sources and the debate itself to make an argument about credibility
3. Carefully contextualize your views with and against the research you have found
4. Use attributive tags (As Johnson argues … OR In contrast to Johnson …) to situate your view amongst your sources

45. Establishing Tone in Your Writing

CHRIS BLANKENSHIP

- Word Choice and Tone
- Sentence Structure and Tone
- Perspective and Tone

More than 100 years ago, Lev Kuleshov, a Soviet filmmaker, discovered that viewers interpreted an actor's facial expression differently depending on what they were shown before it. They interpreted a man's facial expression as showing hunger when paired with a steaming bowl of soup but as lustful when paired with a pretty woman on a couch. In fact, the shots of the actor were identical. We can see this in modern movies too. Leonardo DiCaprio's intense stare seems distraught in *Titanic*, disturbed in *Inception*, and deranged in *Shutter Island*.

Leonardo DiCaprio in SHUTTER ISLAND

Similarly, the human voice is an amazing tool for conveying meaning with a flexibility we often take for granted. By changing small things in the sound of our voices, such as the pitch, the volume, or the length of the sounds, we can convey a wide variety of meaning, even when we use the same words. Imagine all of the ways you've ever heard someone say words like "fine" or "whatever," and you'll get a sense of just how much meaning is communicated purely through the way that the human voice produces words. And that communication DOES happen, just like my mom tried to teach me when she would say "don't take that tone with me!" in response to my teenaged "fine" and "whatever" comments.

Tone is how we let the people we communicate with know our attitude about our topic or even about the reader. It lets our reader know that we're passionate, angry, interested, indifferent, or any other emotion about the topic of discussion. It also lets the reader know how we view them: as a novice or expert, interested or apathetic, respected or not. And we establish tone in a variety of ways using sight and sound.

When we communicate in person, we use our body language as well as the sound of our voice to convey meaning. We lean forward and make eye contact to tell someone we're interested in the topic; we lean back to indicate disinterest; we cross our arms to show resistance; we smile to show that we're supportive.[1] What may seem like a very simple in-person conversation is actually a very rich medium of communication where all of these elements work together to produce a specific effect.

Another filmmaking technique to establish tone is the reaction shot. Here, a director shows the audience how they

1. These are examples common in the United States. While tone of voice is a little more universal, all language varies widely from culture to culture.

should interpret the actions of the actors in the scene by having the background actors react in a certain way. During a marriage proposal, we know whether to be hopeful, worried, or angry depending upon how any friends or family in the background react to the event.

We can even see this effect in narrative writing. Novelist and screenwriter Steven Brust describes how he writes these types of reaction shots:

> "He held out his arm, and she took it. Her friend glanced at them and gritted her teeth."

vs.

> "He held out his arm, and she took it. Her friend glanced at them, then looked away, suppressing a smile."

The reaction of the friend in the first scene tells us as readers that we should feel frustrated or worried, whereas the second scene tells us we should feel happy or hopeful about the scene.

So, if tone is such a complex thing to build in media that are rich in sight, sound, and narrative possibilities, just how can someone establish a tone in a research paper or analytical essay where we only have printed words to work with? We use the tools at our disposal: words.

WORD CHOICE AND TONE

Word choice is one way that we set the tone for our readers. Consider three ways to refer to supporters of a politician:

> "The loyal citizens working hard for President Smith"

vs.

> "The delusional acolytes of President Smith"

vs.

> "President Smith's political supporters"

In the first example, we can tell that the writer has a favorable opinion of President Smith's supporters. She identifies them as loyal, a positive trait in our society; as citizens, which focuses on a positive relationship between the supporters and their country; and points out that they are working hard, an admirable trait for most people.

In the second example, the writer certainly has a negative opinion about President Smith's supporters. She refers to these supporters as delusional, meaning that they have false or unrealistic beliefs, and as acolytes, which can refer to followers of a religion but can also be used to describe someone who acts purely on belief rather than reason, often considered a negative for those governing a country.

While the first two examples refer to the same group of people, the attitude that the writer has about this group changes dramatically between the two. The third example, however, is more neutral, simply referring to people who support President Smith politically. Professors often expect this more neutral tone in more informative writing because it demonstrates that the writer is setting aside her personal biases about the topic and is trying to present information fairly. Journalists are also expected to use this kind of tone in their reporting, as are scientists in their research writing. The ability to be (or at least appear) unbiased carries quite a bit of weight in many types of written communication in our society.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND TONE

Another way to set the tone is through **sentence structure**. The ways that sentences are assembled can show different attitudes and priorities in a text. Consider these two sentences that express very similar ideas in different ways:

> "The senator made some very serious mistakes."

vs.

"Very serious mistakes were made."

In the first sentence, it's very clear who made the mistakes: the senator; however, in the second sentence, we know that someone made some very serious mistakes, but it's not clear who. This change is a grammatical one, changing the active voice to the passive voice, but this grammatical change also changes the tone. In the first sentence, the writer wants the reader to know who is responsible for the mistakes; however, in the second sentence, the writer wants show that they aren't interested in who caused the mistakes, just that they were made. On the other hand, if the reader feels that the writer SHOULD be concerned with who's responsible for the mistakes, then this tonal choice comes across as an attempt to obscure the truth rather than simply shift the emphasis.

There are many other ways sentence structure can establish the tone of writing. Long, complex sentences can tell the reader that the writer believes the topic is a complex one and needs careful attention. Combined with word choice, short sentences can provide a more sarcastic or ironic tone, such as

an online comment on a *The Salt Lake Tribune* story about a visiting politician that simply reads "Utah is full. Go home."

PERSPECTIVE AND TONE

A third common way that we can set a certain tone in our writing is through **perspective**. Take these two examples from student e-mails to their professors:

> "I looked at my grade. Most of your comments are unclear or confusing, so I don't know what to do to revise my paper."

vs.

> "I started to revise my paper from your comments, but I'm not sure I understand some of them. Could we meet, so I can ask some questions?"

Both of these students are trying to accomplish the same goal: to get clarification on the feedback they received on their papers before they revise them. The first example, though, establishes a tone of blame and certainty. The way that the writer has described the problem shows that he blames the professor for it: "your comments are unclear." On the other hand, the second example uses a tone of uncertainty and responsibility: "I'm not sure I understand some of them." The

first writer is stating, with absolute certainty, that the professor's writing is confusing. The second writer is showing that she has tried to understand the feedback but doesn't think she has succeeded.

So, who's right here? Was the professor confusing or was the student just confused? Trick question. It isn't about right or wrong; it's about effective or ineffective. Tone, just like the other elements of style, is a rhetorical choice that writers make when considering their audience and purpose for writing. The attitude we express about a topic in our writing is just another way that we attempt to accomplish goals in our communication. The real question is, how do you think the professor might respond to these two different tones?

Audience, like in all rhetorical situations, matters here. Professors, although they hold the authority in a classroom, are professional teachers who want to see their students succeed. The professor might be willing to overlook the accusatory tone in service to the higher goal of helping a student who is clearly frustrated. On the other hand, imagine the same situation, but this time with the e-mail sent to a supervisor at work, whose primary goal is to manage employees and serve the business. Are they likely to be as forgiving?

Context also matters. The professor might take more offense at the tone of the first student if that student had skipped their one-on-one meeting where those comments could have been explained in detail and discussed. A supervisor might be more forgiving of that same tone if they had once had the writer's job and understood their frustration with a difficult task.

Ultimately, tone is just another tool in your rhetorical tool belt. Even though we don't have the rich sight and sound resources that we do in spoken communication, we can carefully consider how word choice, sentence structure, and perspective help a reader to understand our attitude toward our topic and audience in order to craft more effective written communication.

46. Liven It Up with Anecdotes

LISA PACKER

> "Don't tell me the moon is shining. Show me the glint of light on broken glass." —Anton Chekhov

I knew I was going to be late. It was almost 6:30 p.m. and I wasn't even close to where I needed to be to pick her up. I got more and more stressed as I neared the school, realizing that her best friend had not gone to practice that day and that she was alone. As I neared the pickup area at 6:36, I saw her ponytails and when she turned, I instantly waved, letting her know that I was there.

Then I saw it. An emotion that I had felt before, and now I saw it written all over her face. She started to run, ponytails flopping in the sun, and then the tears started to flow. Those six minutes had been an eternity to her. My thoughts turned to a time when I had told my own mother that I would never be late for my kids when I was a mom.

I teach college writing, and at the beginning of every semester, my students and I spend some time talking about narrative writing, specifically how to write a **memoir**. We discuss how narrative writing tells a story, and more specifically, how

memoir writing is a first-person account of a memorable event in a writer's life.

One of the narrative techniques I have my students practice is to "show not tell." This is a method where instead of saying that someone is lazy, you show *how* they are lazy. In other words, I ask students to use **anecdotes** in their writing. To be clear, anecdotes are little stories that writers or speakers use to demonstrate or show something to the reader without having to "tell" how it is. Anecdotes are also defined as short and interesting stories, often intended to support or demonstrate a point.

In the piece above, I could have just told the reader that I was late picking up my daughter from school. Instead, I started out by sharing an anecdote about me as a mother. It is one of many small incidents that show I am definitely not perfect—and I may have a problem with being late for appointments.

In the following sections, I want to share a few more anecdotes about mothers to "show" rather than "tell" about who they are, and what I know about them. My goal is to show my reader specific things about each mother, rather than just say it (or tell it point blank).

As you read the next anecdote, think about how you get invited into the story, versus standing outside of it.

> *We were all at a little restaurant having breakfast, and when Mom noticed that the orange juice was way over our price range, she got right up and excused herself out of the booth. She grabbed her purse and tromped over to the grocery across the street. Dad and my two sisters and I saw her through the diner window as she came out a few minutes later with a large can of orange juice. She returned to the booth, asked the*

waiter for three glasses of ice, and proceeded to pour each one of her children a large glass of orange juice. She made sure to comment on how important it was that each of us had our daily dose of vitamin C.

By including this small incident (or anecdote), the writer is able to show that his mother was very concerned about her children's health, enough to embarrass all of them that day in a public restaurant. (When my husband's Uncle Vaughn shared this story at Great Grandma Phyllis's funeral a few years back, he said that in that moment, he knew that he was loved.)

The next anecdote is one about my own mother. Notice again how you, the reader, are invited into the scene, and how you even get to hear what was said in that moment. When a writer uses quotation marks to "show" actual conversation, they are using **dialogue**. Dialogue is the easiest way to invite your reader into your piece.

I looked around in the crowd of Jazz fans and could not locate her. Where did she go? How did I lose her already? The game had just ended and I was by her side a minute ago ... It was then that I noticed a large group starting to grow around two men. They had obviously had a few too many and were yelling and throwing punches. That was when I heard her voice—that voice that I knew all too well. "Now boys, let's break it up. You don't want to do this!" Mom had both of them by the arm, and the look of shock on their faces was priceless.

"That's my mom," I whispered to myself with pride.

I share this anecdote quite often when I tell people about my mom. This shows others how, in my eyes, she might be the

bravest mom in the world. It was at that moment that I knew I wanted to be just like her. (If you are wondering what happened after, luckily she didn't get punched. After she broke up the fight, she quickly found me, and we went for ice cream.)

The following anecdote is written a bit differently. So far, all of the anecdotes have been written in **first-person point of view**, meaning the writer has used "I" to tell the story firsthand. The next anecdote is written in **third-person point of view**, meaning the author is narrating the story about the characters or people involved. Writers can choose if they want to use first person or third person. It can make a big difference in how the story comes across to the reader and how much the reader gets to know about each character.

> *Brad and Karlie walked into the room. Karlie hadn't expected this many people to be there. There were at least thirty couples in the room, talking and waiting for the meeting to start. Karlie thought to herself, "Did they all want to be foster parents too?" She had no idea that these meetings would be so crowded. The group leader instructed them to interview another couple. The woman was Karlie's same age, in her early forties. They were trying to have kids, but in the meantime they wanted to foster a child. Karlie was struck by this woman's strong desire to mother—whether her own child or someone else's child didn't seem to matter. She told Karlie with tears in her eyes, "I don't care if it is a girl or a boy, or how old they are, I know when they call me I'll take them."*

This story shows the real desire couples have to start a family, even if it is in an unconventional way. As the reader, I can't help but get caught up in it because the writer allows me to

hear the woman say how ready she is to care for any child who needs a family. As discussed earlier, the use of dialogue shows the reader the type of person this mother is. Dialogue can bring the story to life—inviting the reader to the scene—in such a way that we feel like we are there.

Further, when the writer describes the "tears in her eyes," they are providing the reader with descriptive details that help us to visualize and "see" the person being described. Descriptive details are often referred to as **sensory details**. They are called "sensory" because they refer to one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch. Use of sensory details in writing anecdotes is a surefire way to invite your reader in and help them feel as if they are watching a film in their head.

In addition to all of these essential elements for memoir, don't forget that your writing style comes from the choices you make. They are your words, your sentences, and your paragraphs—nobody else's. When the reader, your audience, can hear your personality and **voice** behind the words, they can't help but feel connected to you and thus feel connected to your writing. In narrative writing, your voice is vital and is what makes your piece unique to you.

In conclusion, practice using dialogue, point of view, and sensory detail, along with your own voice behind the words, and you will be sure to be a more successful writer. Using anecdotes as you write will allow you to show your readers something in a lively and interesting manner rather than just telling them matter-of-factly. Even more, anecdotes give the reader a story to visualize in their head as they read.

LET'S PRACTICE ...

EXERCISE #1: Anecdote showing characteristics rather than merely telling

DIRECTIONS

Make up a single incident to illustrate one type of person below:

– a compulsively neat person
– a rude driver
– a rude sales clerk
– a rude customer
– an honest customer
– a mean fifth grader
– an overly cautious driver
– a selfish brother or sister
– a slick salesperson
– a generous friend
– an angry husband
– a sexist employer

You will be writing a very short story, or anecdote, to exemplify their defining characteristic.

EXAMPLE

The Selfish Basketball Player

East High trailed by one point with nine seconds left in the basketball game—long enough to inbound the ball at midcourt and pass it up court for a shot. During the time-out, Coach told Brooke to inbound the ball to either Natalie or Jackie, who was to relay it to Erin, positioned for her best shot just outside the free-throw line. Brooke tossed the ball to Jackie, who whirled to face the home basket—but didn't pass. Instead she put the ball to the floor, cutting sharply past the defending guard with a move that got her almost to the three-point line. She heard the fans chanting down the seconds, "Five, four, three ... " Erin waved her arms in the air. She was on her spot, open. "Here! Here!" she screamed. Jackie glanced at her, hesitated a split second, then put the ball in the air from 20 feet out as the last second ticked off the clock. It was wide, off the rim. East lost, 48–47.

Which player is the selfish one? How do you know?

REMINDERS

– Decide whether you will write your anecdote in first person (using "I") or in third person (using character names or "they/them"). Think about

how your choice for point of view will affect the story.
– Use descriptive and sensory detail to "show" versus "tell." For example, in order to describe an angry husband you could write: *His jaw locked as he slammed his fist down on the cracked table.*
– Try adding some dialogue to bring the reader into the scene.

Here are two student examples of Exercise #1. Try to guess which character trait the student is "showing."

Every Sunday, every week, I always do my shopping for groceries with my wife. It is a common thing we do to prepare for the week of dieting and workouts. It's quite an exasperating thing to do sometimes, but we know that it will benefit us later.

After some time of doing this, I noticed my wife becoming more irritated with me whenever we shopped. It seemed like everything I put in our cart made her mad. I just didn't get it … was it the food I was buying or was it not something that she liked? It continued like this for a while.

Eventually, I paid attention to what I bought. We bought similar items, so there was no reason for her to be upset with me. Every 2–5 minutes, I noticed her rearranging the items in the cart. She whispered under her breath, "Veggies go here, snacks go here, drinks go here, household necessities are to be here." I let those words slip from my mind as we kept shopping.

"I need to get bananas!" Grabbing the bananas, I put them on the baby seat. "All right, we ca—" There she went again, getting irritated with a loud grunt. She placed the bananas where the vegetables were.

We went home in silence.

On a Monday, a day when no one wants to be at school, my friend asked if I wanted to go out to lunch. We were both feeling a little off because it was a Monday after all, but also because we stayed up too late. As soon as the lunch bell went off I met him at his car. We got in and off we went.

"What do you want to eat?" he said.

I replied with, "I don't have a lot of money right now so something cheap I guess."

We decided on Astro Burger, but as we were pulling into the parking lot I was thinking if I had enough money to get something here. We went inside and looking at the menu I figured out that I could get some fries, and that was about it.

"What are you getting?" he asked.

I shrugged and said, "Probably a thing of fries." He walked up to the register and ordered two cheeseburgers.

I teased, "Wow, you must be pretty hungry."

He replied, "No. One is for you."

EXERCISE #2: Anecdote to show your reader a real moment you have experienced in the past

DIRECTIONS

Think about a time in your life that is important to you. Think of a specific moment or scene that you can describe to show your reader versus tell them. Sandwich that scene or anecdote in as you tell your story.

REMINDERS

– Be sure to be "you" as you write it by including your voice and personality behind the words.
– Include some of the essential elements we discussed earlier: point of view, descriptive and sensory detail, and dialogue. (In this piece, you will be writing in first-person point of view because it is your story you are telling.)

It is important to note that your entire memoir can't be an anecdote. Anecdotes are small slices of story that demonstrate a specific point in your story or how you were feeling. You will have to "tell" parts of the story as well. I have labeled how this works in the example below, which is a selection from a student memoir titled, "A Fresh Start."

> [Writer starts with **dialogue** to draw the reader into the scene.] *"I went to your school and gave them a piece of my mind."*

"What did they say and what are they going to do about Carter?" I asked.

"They said they are going to have a conversation with him and his parents, and that they are going to suspend him for a time."

[Writer **tells** the story.] *The next day at school I didn't see him, he wasn't at dance practice either which made me happy to see. Not seeing him all day gave me relief and I could tell that I was much happier. But what I didn't know is that the school had decided to only have Carter suspended for a day. This meant that the following day at school he was the first person that I had ran into and of course he had something to say. This time he had some harsher things to say because he knew that I was the one that reported him.*

[Writer continues with **dialogue** to draw the reader into the scene with an **anecdote**.]*"Hey fat ass, you reported me but obviously it didn't do anything," he snarled.* [Writer uses **descriptive words** like "snarled" to show how the dialogue was said.]

"Leave me alone, Carter."

"Or what, are you going to run and hide in your shack?"

When I got home, I wanted to punch something or even throw something. I was hiding in my room cussing out the wall pretending that it was Carter. I would try to do homework or even play some video games to help calm myself down, but it didn't help. I couldn't focus and I just gave up on everything that I could think of doing. I ended up laying down in my bed, and just looked up at my ceiling. [Instead of saying he was angry, this writer uses an **anecdote** to show that he was angry with **descriptive detail** and **voice**.]

[Writer narrates or **tells** information.] *The school basically slapped Carter's hand and told him to stop*

and not to do it again. Which of course did not stop Carter. Every chance that Carter got he would shoot me down and did it with pride.

47. You're Not Bad at Grammar: Social Rules for Using Language in College Writing

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

- Definitions of Grammar for College Writers
- Social Rules for Using Language in College Writing
- Beliefs about Language Correctness
- Exploring How Language Works with Your Own Writing

At the beginning of each semester, I ask students in my college writing courses to reflect on their previous experiences with reading and writing. Some students write that they learned to love reading through favorite books or a family member's stories. Others explain that teachers helped them develop a positive attitude about writing or language. However, many of my students describe negative experiences with writing in school. They begin college believing that they aren't "good" writers. When I ask students to describe their experiences with writing, one of the most common reasons

that they give for not having confidence in their work as writers is that they are "bad at" (or at least not good at) grammar.

None of my students are bad at grammar or writing. *You aren't bad at grammar.* Before coming to college, you learned how to use your native language(s) in complex and interesting ways. You probably know a lot more about grammar than you think you know. You might use language in ways that are different from what some high school teachers or college professors expect, but that doesn't mean that something is wrong with the way that you use language. You might need to learn how to adapt language to different courses and writing situations in college. You might speak a variety of English at home that is different from what you learned about English in school. English might not be your first or second or third language. But you are not bad at grammar.

This article provides an overview of basic concepts for understanding different perspectives on grammar and explains how the social rules for using written language change based on the audience and purpose of a writing situation. It also describes strategies for learning about how language works through practice, using your own college writing projects.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What are your personal perspectives and beliefs about grammar?
- What experiences in your life shaped your thinking about grammar and how written language works?

DEFINITIONS OF GRAMMAR FOR COLLEGE WRITERS

Understanding different ways to define grammar can be a helpful starting point for exploring what you already know about how language works. **Grammar** is a term for describing *the structure of a language*. Grammar is a complex concept that has more than one meaning. Here are three of the most frequently used definitions for grammar:

The first type of grammar is the patterns and knowledge that native or fluent speakers of a language use. Most of your learning about this type of grammar happened outside of school. Humans begin to figure out how language works when they learn to speak one or more languages as small children. You learned to follow complicated patterns for using grammar in your native language(s) from interacting with your family and your community. In other words, you learned most of what you know about grammar and the structure of language from actually using language–not from school. Most of your knowledge about this type of everyday grammar is subconscious. You probably don't think about how language works or identify grammar rules when you talk or write. You simply use your knowledge of language patterns whenever you use words to communicate with other people. You can

build on your existing knowledge of language from this first type of grammar to learn more about how language works as a college writer.

A second type of grammar is the formal study of patterns, structures, and systems of a language. Grammar can be a subject of study that helps people become more aware of how language works. Most of your learning about this type of grammar probably took place in a formal educational setting. The grammatical terms and concepts that students learn in school are useful for discussing language in an academic situation and for learning a new language. However, native speakers of a language don't need to know about this second type of grammar to use language for communication. For example, students who study grammar in a formal way learn that a verb is a word that describes an action or state of being. But people don't need to know what a verb is to use verbs in their own speech or writing. If you had the opportunity to study English grammar in a formal way before enrolling in college, you can apply that knowledge to your work as a college writer as you explore increasingly more complex ways of using written language. However, if you haven't had many opportunities to study English grammar, you can still explore grammar and discover more about how language works through your own work as a writer and from your

college writing courses. If you are interested, you can also take more advanced courses that focus on grammar and writing style. But you don't necessarily need to know about grammatical terms or have experience studying this second type of grammar to become a successful college writer.

A third type of grammar refers to the rules that determine socially acceptable uses of language (or usage). Much of the time, when people use the word grammar or talk about "mistakes" in writing, they are thinking about social rules related to correctness. People learn about these rules both from school and from using language in their everyday lives. The social rules for using language vary from one cultural or social situation to the next, and they change over time. For example, it's socially acceptable to use text messaging language (for example, "Where RU?" or idk) on social media but not in many formal workplace writing situations (for example, when writing an annual report or preparing a document for a client). For instance, readers who expect writers to start a sentence with a capital letter and end it with a period in formal writing situations may not have that same expectation for text messages from a close friend. In college, many of the concepts that writers learn and practice related to grammar focus on this third type of grammar. Becoming a successful college writer

requires most students to learn social rules for using language for varying audiences, purposes, fields of study, types of writing, and types of learning tasks.

These three concepts aren't the only definitions for grammar, but they are the most common. Writing studies expert Laura Micciche suggests that these various definitions for grammar describe different mental activities:

> Often grammar is used in a way that assumes we all understand and agree upon its meaning—and, in fact, grammar referred to loosely seems to signify traditional "school grammar" and its focus on repetitive, decontextualized, drill-and-kill exercises. However, grammar has a range of referents (i.e., prescriptive, descriptive, rhetorical) that describe very different kinds of intellectual activities, differences that matter tremendously. (715)

Typically when my college writing students say that they are "bad at" grammar, what they really mean is that they haven't mastered what Micciche calls "school grammar." They are still working on learning about how language works and developing strategies for applying what they already know to their own writing. They haven't yet learned the vocabulary for studying and talking about the structure of the English language at an advanced level. They also don't know some of the rules for using grammar that some professors expect for formal college writing situations. However, not knowing school grammar is completely different from not knowing how language works. An incomplete understanding of school grammar doesn't make you bad at grammar or bad at writing. You know how to use grammar for everyday purposes even if

you don't feel confident about school grammar. You can be a college-level writer and use writing in complex and interesting ways even if you are still learning about the structure of language and how written words work together to create meaning for readers.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What did you learn about grammar in your previous educational experiences?
- How have your experiences with "school grammar" influenced your thinking about successful writing and what it means to be a good writer?
- How have your experiences with grammar in school influenced your thinking about yourself as a writer?

SOCIAL RULES FOR USING LANGUAGE IN COLLEGE WRITING

Usage is another term for the third type of grammar—or *social rules about language correctness*. Usage refers to the ways in which members of a language community use language for particular situations and purposes. When my students tell me that they need help with grammar or with fixing mistakes, they

are usually referring to English usage. They want to figure out how to follow stated or unstated rules about correct ways of using language.

English usage includes

- socially accepted ways of using words and phrases,
- the meanings of words in particular situations (contexts),
- conventions (rules) about language correctness,
- the ways that people actually use language (which may be different from how some people think that language should be used),
- constantly changing social rules about how language should (and shouldn't) be used.

Writer and dictionary editor Ammon Shea explains the difference between patterns of language (the first type of grammar) and usage (social rules): "Grammar refers to the manner in which the language functions, the ways that the blocks of speech and writing are put together. Usage refers to using specific words in a manner that will be thought of as either acceptable or unacceptable" (xiii-xiv). Usage rules are *socially constructed*, which means that people develop ideas about socially acceptable ways of using language over time within communities of language users. The social rules for writing are different from the rules for speech, and different communities (including academic fields of study) have their own usage rules. Because people invented usage rules, people can also change, break, or ignore them.

College students need to know how to adapt social rules for using English to different types of writing and courses. Some usage guidelines for college writers are general, which means that you can apply them to different courses. The following are examples of general usage rules for college writing:

When quoting questions, put the question in quotation marks.
The student asked, “How is usage different from the structure of language?”

Write in the active voice instead of the passive voice.
I quickly wrote the essay. [active voice]
vs
My essay was written quickly. [passive voice]

Use a semicolon to join two complete ideas together.
Use a semicolon to show relationships; it helps join ideas together.

Identify an abbreviation before using it in an essay.
Salt Lake Community College (SLCC)

When referring to people, use *who* instead of *that*.
The tutor who helps me in the writing center

Italicize the titles of books.
Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation

Use consistent grammatical forms when writing items in a list (parallel structure).
Our class discussed library research, online sources, and evidence. [parallel]
vs
Our class discussed researching in the library, online sources, and how to use evidence. [not parallel]

These rules are examples of usage conventions (social rules) for college writing that help writers communicate with readers in a clear and consistent way. However, native speakers of English don't necessarily know about them or follow them consistently. Some professors might expect you to follow one or more of these usage guidelines, but others won't. If you know some of these rules, you probably learned them in school—not through your everyday use of language.

Other usage guidelines for academic writing depend on the situation. The social rules for using language in school vary for different fields of study, types of writing, levels of higher

education, and cultural groups. For example, usage rules for writing in psychology, nursing, education, and other fields in the United States follow the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, which include rules for citing sources and making choices about usage and writing style. In humanities courses, students typically need to follow usage rules from the Modern Language Association (MLA). These types of guidelines for academic language are easy to identify because they are available in writing handbooks and on websites for college writers. However, they aren't easy to follow or use in writing. These specialized guidelines are very different from the social rules for using language that you use outside of school, and they are probably more complicated than the usage rules you learned in high school. They require ongoing practice. You will learn about and use social rules for using language for academic purposes slowly over time as you take courses in your chosen areas of study.

Not knowing or not following usage rules for college writing doesn't make you a bad writer or bad at grammar. It might just mean that a teacher expects you to use language in a way that you haven't learned or practiced yet. Sometimes an instructor even has unreasonable expectations for what college students can and should know about language before enrolling in college. You won't always be able to adapt to an instructor's expectations for using language, but you can learn how to make effective language choices as you gain experience through completing college-level writing tasks and responding to feedback from instructors and other readers. In your work as a college student, you might also purposefully make choices as a writer that are different from social expectations for academic writing.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What did you learn about usage in your previous educational experiences that you can apply to your work as a college writer
- In your experiences as a college student, what have you noticed about the social rules for using written language?
- For the courses that you are taking, how do the rules for using written language change depending on the course and the assignment?

BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE CORRECTNESS

Some college students think about grammar from the perspective of mistakes and errors because that's what they remember most from their previous experiences with learning about language. Their experiences in school or in their communities suggest that there are correct and incorrect ways of speaking or writing. Some people believe that there are right and wrong ways of using language. This type of thinking is called **prescriptive grammar**. Prescriptive approaches to grammar focus on rules about *how people think that speakers of a language should use it*. Richard Nordquist gives this definition: "The term *prescriptive grammar* refers to a set of norms or rules governing how a language should (or should not) be used rather than describing the ways in which a language is actually used" ("Prescriptive Grammar"). Thinking about grammar in a prescriptive way can limit how college

writers view their own language choices. Students who believe that they always have to approach grammar from a perspective of correctness or avoiding mistakes sometimes have an incomplete understanding of how language and writing work.

In contrast, **descriptive grammar** is the study of *how native speakers use language in their everyday lives*. Nordquist explains this approach to grammar: "The term *descriptive grammar* refers to an objective, nonjudgmental description of the grammatical constructions in a language. It's an examination of how a language is actually being used, in writing and in speech. Linguists who specialize in descriptive grammar examine the principles and patterns that underlie the use of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences" ("Descriptive Grammar"). This approach to thinking about grammar is more useful for college writing than a prescriptive approach. As a college writer, you need to move away from thinking about right and wrong ways of using language. Instead, you need to adapt how you use language to different situations both inside and outside of school. You also need to explore different ways of using language to express ideas in your own writing.

Correctness in academic writing typically means *using language that meets a reader's expectations and needs for a particular communication situation*. It doesn't mean that there's a good or a bad way to use grammar. Sometimes students notice significant differences between social expectations for formal edited college writing and how most people actually use language in their everyday lives and in less formal types of academic writing. Experienced college writers often follow usage rules for academic writing while ignoring those same rules in informal writing. For example, most professors expect students to use complete sentences in essays, and students typically try to use that rule when writing for college courses. However, practically no one writes in complete sentences all of the time. People frequently use

incomplete sentences in writing for non-academic purposes and in some academic situations (for example, in responding to short answer test questions).

In some situations, not following a usage rule for academic writing can be the most appropriate choice for a non-academic situation. For instance, writing a series of complete sentences in a reply to a text message might annoy a reader who expects a short yes or no answer. Further, breaking rules for formal writing can also be a deliberate choice that a writer makes. Some experienced writers purposefully decide to use sentence fragments (incomplete sentences) for emphasis even in formal writing. Writing incomplete sentences isn't wrong, but sometimes it's not the best choice for a particular writing situation.

Some people have beliefs about language correctness that don't reflect how people actually use language. Students sometimes learn usage rules that experienced and professional writers regularly ignore. Here are three examples:

Never start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction. Writers can use *and*, *but*, *or*, and *yet* to start sentences. It's a style choice that experienced writers sometimes purposefully use for emphasis.

Don't use the first person *I* in an essay. Academic and professional writers regularly use *I* to discuss their own thinking and experiences.

***They* is always plural.** Writers increasingly use the word they to refer to a single person in both professional and academic writing. The American Psychological Association recommends using they in the singular as a gender neutral pronoun (Lee).

People share these beliefs and teach them to others because they believe that they represent a correct or right way to write. However, these ideas about language don't reflect how experienced writers actually use language. I regularly ignore all three of these grammar ideas and others like them in my own writing.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What are some additional examples of beliefs about language correctness that people regularly ignore?
- Are there any usage rules that you sometimes ignore in your own writing? If so, why?
- How can an understanding of the social nature of grammar and usage help you develop as a college writer?

EXPLORING HOW LANGUAGE WORKS WITH YOUR OWN WRITING

As you become more experienced with college writing, you will increasingly develop an awareness of how to make choices about how to use language based on the audience for a text, type of writing, and your purpose as a writer. The following strategies can help college writers learn more about how language works through their own writing.

Identify the level of formality for an assignment. Before you start a writing project, find out whether the professor expects you to produce a polished and edited final product. For example, some online discussions require students to use a formal academic style. Other types of discussions permit students to use language in an informal way. By figuring out how formal your assignment needs to be, you can determine how much time you need to spend editing your writing.

Start with your ideas. The most important part of most college writing tasks is the message (information and thinking) that a writer shares with readers. When you start a draft, work through your ideas first before worrying about grammar. Make sure that you understand the requirements for the project, and then work on recording your ideas for

each required part of the assignment. You can come back later and take a closer look at grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure when you edit the final draft.

Focus on clarity (writing clearly). Instead of worrying about the grammar and punctuation mistakes that you might make, pay close attention to how you communicate your message to readers. *Will your audience understand your ideas? Will your sentences make sense to readers? Are you using language that is appropriate for the audience and purpose of your writing task?*

Revise content and organization before working on grammar. I frequently have students ask for help with grammar and punctuation in the early stages of revising a completed draft of an assignment. Most of the time, these students need to work on developing their ideas more fully, adding more evidence, or completing missing parts of the assignment. The problem with focusing on sentence-level issues like grammar and punctuation in the early stages of revision is that you might need to completely revise or delete sections of your work. For most college writing assignments, it's a better

use of your time to start revision with your ideas and organization.

Use your own writing to learn about how language works. If you want to learn more about sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice, explore how your language choices shape your own writing style. For example, practice using commas to help guide readers in understanding how to process the sentences that you write. Experiment with different ways of arranging words within sentences. Take a close look at the words that you use and explore how using other words changes your writing style.

Select language patterns to practice. If you want to make changes to how you use formal edited English, focus on specific language strategies and patterns in a writing project (instead of worrying about multiple grammar issues at the same time). For example, if you want to learn how to use a consistent verb tense in an essay, read through the essay sentence by sentence and look specifically at how you use verbs. Make changes so that you use the same verb tense throughout the essay. Repeat that process with a few different writing projects

until you become comfortable using the language pattern that you selected.

Seek help from the writing center. Peer consultants and professionals who work in a college writing center can provide you with support in adapting your writing to meet the expectations of college professors. Before you go to the writing center, identify the specific types of help that you would like to receive. Bring your draft writing project and a copy of the assignment instructions. Start by looking at the assignment instructions and discuss whether you are meeting them before you start working on grammar and punctuation.

Exploring new approaches to using language through practicing with your own writing will help you (a) become a more advanced writer and (b) learn how to adapt your writing to different types of writing situations. You will become more confident in the choices that you make as a writer as you explore strategies for using language based on your own interests and writing goals.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What strategies have you used in the past for exploring how language works through your own writing?
- What would you like to learn about grammar, usage, and/or punctuation in your college writing courses? How might you explore those language issues through your own writing in the courses that you are currently taking?

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PART V

ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE UTILIZE LITERATE PRACTICES TO WRITE

Meaningful writing is achieved through sustained engagement in literate practices (e.g., thinking, researching, reading, interpreting, conversing) and through revision.

48. Critical Reading

JESSIE SZALAY

- Skimming Is Not Enough
- Before You Read
- While You Read

SKIMMING IS NOT ENOUGH

You've probably heard teachers say that the best way to learn how to write is to read. I think that's true. But what does that mean? Reading novels taught me about pacing and maintaining a reader's interest; reading magazine articles taught me about starting pieces with attention-grabbing anecdotes; reading newspapers taught me about objectivity, tone, and the importance of clarity.

But when teachers say that you can learn a lot about writing by reading, they're talking about even deeper lessons. By being an engaged, critical, and inquisitive reader, you'll become a more engaged, critical, and inquisitive writer.

In order to formulate the kind of complex, analytical arguments that college professors want, you need to train your mind to examine, question, analyze and evaluate things you encounter in the world. This is called critical thinking, and it applies to pretty much everything you encounter in life:

statements you hear in person, media you consume, events and phenomena you witness … and texts you read. Annotating your readings will help you engage in critical reading and thinking practices.

The English department at Massey University identifies the following core elements of critical reading:

- carefully considering and evaluating the reading
- identifying the reading's strengths and implications
- identifying the reading's weaknesses and flaws looking at the "big picture"
- deciding how the reading fits into the greater academic and/or cultural and historical context

Critical reading is important in college because you will be assigned readings in almost every class you take. You will also be asked, often, to find your own sources, read them, and use them in your papers. But it's also important because even in our age of memes, TV, and podcasts, we still consume a very large amount of written material almost every day.

Plus, studies have shown that students who read actively and critically will better remember what they read (Mueller). Which means less time re-reading.

So how do you critically read?

Here are some strategies that will help you become an effective critical reader—which will help you become a better writer, and, I believe, a more informed citizen of the world.

BEFORE YOU READ

I know, you're busy. You want to dive right into your reading, consume it, and move on. But taking a few minutes to survey the landscape in which the piece you're reading lives will immensely help your understanding of the text. Plus, you'll get a sense of what to expect from the text, which can help you estimate the amount of time and effort reading it will take.

Here are some features of a text to pay attention to:

Preview the text.

Check out the abstract, introduction, table of contents, headnotes, or other prefatory material. I resisted reading book introductions for years, but one day during my sophomore year of college I decided to check one out—and it helped the rest of the reading click into place.

Who's this writer, anyway?

Find out who the author is. Check out their reputation, credentials, and look at the publication they are writing for. Sometimes the reading itself will include a biography or editor's note. Other times, a Google search will tell you a lot.

Contextualize.

Look at the publication date. Do you know what was going on with the topic of the reading then? Placing a

text in its historical, cultural, and biographical contexts can lead to better understanding and more insight. A piece about civil rights written in the 1960s has a different context and requires a different interpretation than a text about civil rights written in 2018. Reading the 1960s text with a 2018 perspective can lead to valuable interpretations, but only if they are done purposefully and with the awareness that the '60s were different than today.

Consider the title and subtitles.

This can tell you a lot about what to expect, and what to look for, in your reading. It's especially true of scientific and social science studies.

WHILE YOU READ

Just because you're probably sitting still while you read doesn't mean you're not being active. A good, critical reader will be consistently engaged and alert, noticing, thinking, and questioning as they read.

Ask Questions.

As you read, don't just let the words wash over you.

Constantly ask yourself questions like these:

- Does this make sense?
- Why am I being asked to read this?
- What does this mean?
- Why is the writer drawing that conclusion?
- How might the writer's life have influenced this position or choice?
- How might the cultural, historical, and societal context have contributed to the writer's position on this?

These are general engagement and comprehension questions, but you will also have different questions to ask depending on your purpose and goals for reading. Are you reading rhetorically, for instance? If so, the questions you ask will be of a particular kind. You will look specifically for clues to the writer's identity and goals, the audience, and the purpose, etc. Are you reading to understand and evaluate an argument? Then you might want to pay particular attention to when, where, how, and why the writer tries to root arguments in particular values or perspectives. The questions we ask are ideally those that can lead us (directly and indirectly) to our goals for reading.

Write down your questions, and your answers, if you have them. This gets to my next point …

Mark it up.

Get out a pen or pencil and start scrawling on the text. Whether it's a print-out or a book, it's okay to write on it (unless it's from the library. This is why your professors will ask you to buy books or print out readings). Underline things. Draw symbols and make up your own key to them. Here is one writer's symbol system. Mine looks different and includes lots of ☺ ☹, *, <3, etc. Margins are your friend!

The reader's notes and doodles written in the margins and front and back pages of a book are called marginalia. As marginalia-lover Sam Anderson says, noting your observations, questions, disagreements, and agreements in the margins of the text is a way of engaging in a conversation with the author. If you're lucky enough to be reading a used and marked-up book, you're also engaging in a conversation with previous readers.

As Mortimer J. Adler writes in his seminal essay "How to Mark A Book," writing in your book keeps you awake, truly awake. Marginalia also acts as notes for review later, when you're prepping for a test or to write a paper.

Some things that you might want to write about in the margins of your readings:

- Your emotional responses. If I loved a passage, I don't just make a heart. I write a little note about what I loved about it. Same thing if I hated it.
- Explications, illustrations, or elaborations on the text's theme.

- The text's thesis, evidence, and arguments and your evaluations of them.
- Symbolism and figurative language.
- Questions you have. Something doesn't make sense? Is one element of an argument left unconsidered? Not sure what the main point of a paragraph is? Not sure what a certain point has to do with the rest of the text? Unsure of what you're supposed to get out of a passage? Write it down! This can help you come back it later.
- Challenges or affirmations of your beliefs.
- Patterns and repetitions. These might be recurring words, phrases, images, types of examples, types of evidence, or consistent ways of characterizing an issue or person. Ask yourself why the writer chose to repeat these things.
- Uses of logos, pathos, and ethos.
- Background or contextual information.
- Audience appeals.

As you can probably guess, to effectively mark up a text, it can be helpful to ...

Read slowly.

Take your time. Pause and go over a sentence or paragraph again if you don't understand it, or just to make sure you do. Look up words you don't know. Take a second and ask yourself the questions mentioned above. As with

many tasks, doing reading well requires slower, intense concentration rather than speedy, superficial attention.

Summarize.

If you're unsure of what you read, try summarizing it on a separate piece of paper. This forces you to take apart the information and arguments of the text, examine it, and put it back together in your own words. You can't do that well until you understand the text.

Keep an open mind.

Let's say you got married at age 18 and are super happy—great for you! If you're reading a scientific study showing that marriages among young people are more likely to end in divorce, resist resistance. Your perspective on this topic is valuable, but as you read, especially during your first reading, it is not your responsibility to rewrite the text. Rather, give the writer a fair chance to develop his or her ideas and read what is on the page, rather than what you wish was there.

Compare and contrast readings in this class, others, and life.

Ask yourself why you're reading this text now, at this point in the semester. What relationship—implicit or explicit—does it have with the other texts in the class? To the course goals? To your assignments?

Ask yourself if the reading changes the way you think

about an issue you've heard about in your life. Why and how?

Ask yourself if there is a relationship to this reading and readings you've done in your other classes. One of the magical things about college is that your classes will sometimes speak to each other across campuses and semesters. The text you read for history class might help you see the text you read for economics in a totally new light. When that happens, you know you've learned something.

As you can see, critical reading is work. But it's fundamental, and, if done right, very fulfilling work that will help you engage with texts both in college and for the rest of your life.

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49. Writing Is Recursive

CHRIS BLANKENSHIP

In a recent interview, Steven Pinker, Harvard professor and author of *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*, was asked how he approaches the revision of his own writing. His answer? "Recursively and frequently."

What does Pinker mean when he says "recursively," though?

You're probably familiar with the root of the word: "cursive." It's the style of writing that you may have been taught in elementary school or that you've seen in historical documents like the Declaration of Independence or Constitution.

U.S. Constitution

"Cursive" comes from the Latin word *currere*, meaning "to run." Combine this meaning with the English prefix "re-" (to do again), and you have some clues for the meaning of "recursive."

In modern English, recursion is used to describe a process that loops or "runs again" until a task is complete. It's a term often used in computer science to indicate a program or piece of code that continues to run until certain conditions are met, such as a variable determined by the user of the program. The program would continue counting upwards—running—until it came to that variable.

So, what does recursion have to do with writing?

You've probably heard writing teachers talk about the idea of the " writing process" before. In a nutshell, although writing always ends with the creation of a "product," the process that leads to that product determines how effective the writing will

be. It's why a carefully thought-out essay tends to be better than one that's written the night before the due date. It's also why college writing teachers often emphasize the idea of process in their classes in addition to evaluating final products.

There are many ways to think about the writing process, but here's one that my students have said makes sense to them. It involves five separate ways of thinking about a writing task:

Invention: Coming up with ideas.

This can include thinking about what you want to accomplish with your writing, who will be reading your writing and how to adapt to them, the genre you are writing in, your position on a topic, what you know about a topic already, etc. Invention can be as formal as brainstorm activities like mind mapping and as informal as thinking about your writing task over breakfast.

Research: Finding new information.

Even if you're not writing a research paper, you still generally have to figure out new things to complete a writing task. This can include the traditional reading of books, articles, and websites to find information to cite in a paper, but it can also include just reading up on a topic to learn more about it, interviewing an expert, looking at examples of the genre that you're using to figure out what its characteristics are, taking careful notes on a text that you're analyzing, or anything else that helps you to learn something important for your writing.

Drafting: Creating the text.

This is the part that we're all familiar with: putting words down on paper, writing introductions and conclusions, and creating cohesive paragraphs and clear sentences. But, beyond the words themselves, drafting can also include shaping the medium for your writing, such as creating an e-portfolio where your writing will be displayed. Writing includes making design choices, such as formatting, font and color use, including and positioning images, and citing sources appropriately.

Revision: Literally, seeing the text again.

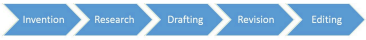
I'm talking about the big ideas here: looking over what you've created to see if you've accomplished your purpose, that you've effectively considered your audience, that your text is cohesive and coherent, and that it does the things that other texts in that genre do.

Editing: Looking at the surface level of the text.

Editing sometimes gets lumped in with revision (or replaces it entirely). I think it's helpful to consider them as two separate ways of thinking about a text. Editing involves thinking about the clarity of word choice and sentence structure, noticing spelling and grammatical errors, making sure that source citations meet the requirements of your citation style, and other such issues. Even if editing isn't big-concept like revision is, it's still a very important way of thinking about a writing task.

Now, you may be thinking, "Okay, that's great and all, but it still doesn't tell me what recursion has to do with writing." Well, notice how I called these five ways of thinking rather than "steps" or "stages" of the writing process? That's because of recursion.

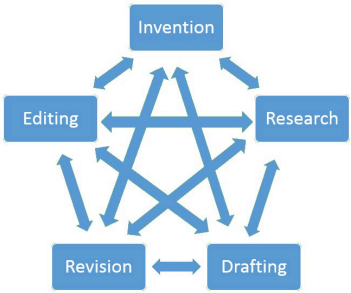
In your previous writing experiences, you've probably thought about your writing in all of the ways listed above, even if you used different terms or organized the ideas differently. However, Nancy Sommers, a researcher in rhetoric and writing studies, has found[1] that student writers tend to think about the writing process in a simple, linear way that mimics speech:



This process starts with thinking about the writing task and then moves through each part in order until, after editing, you're finished. Even if you don't do this every time, I'm betting that this linear process is probably familiar to you, especially if you just graduated high school.

On the other hand, Sommers also researched how experienced writers approach a writing task. She found that their writing process is different from that of student writers:

1. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers" in *College Composition and Communication* 31.4, 378–88



Unlike student writers, professional writers, like Steven Pinker, don't view each part of the writing process as a step to be visited just once in a particular order. Yes, they generally begin with invention and end with editing, but they view each part of the process as a valuable way of thinking that can be revisited again and again until they are confident that the product effectively meets their goals.

For example, a colleague and I wrote a chapter for a book on working conditions at colleges, a topic we're interested in.

- When we started, we had to come up with an idea for the text by talking through our experiences and deciding on a purpose for the text. **[Invention]**
- Although we both knew something about the topic already, we read articles and talked to experts to learn more about it. **[Research]**
- From that research, we decided that our original idea didn't quite fit with the research that was out there already, so we made some changes to the big idea. **[Invention]**
- After that, we sat down and, over several sessions on different days, created a draft of our text. **[Drafting]**
- When we read through the text, we discovered that the order of the information didn't make as much sense as we

had first thought, so we moved around some paragraphs, making changes to those paragraphs to help the flow of the new order. **[Revision]**

- After that, we sent the rough draft to the editors of the book for feedback. When we got the chapter back, the editors commented that our topic didn't quite fit the theme of the book, so, using that feedback, we changed the focus of the ideas. **[Invention]**
- Then we changed the text to reflect those new ideas. **[Revision]**
- We also got feedback from peer reviewers who pointed out that one part of the text was a little confusing, so we had to learn more about the ideas in that section. **[Research]**
- We changed the text to reflect that new understanding. **[Revision and Editing]**
- After the editors were satisfied with those revisions, we proofread the article and sent it off for final approval. **[Editing]**

In this process, we produced three distinct drafts, but each of those drafts represents several different ways that we made changes, small and large, to the text to better craft it for our audience, purpose, and context.

One goal of required college writing courses is to help you move from the mindset of the student writer to that of the experienced writer. Revisiting the big ideas of a writing task can be tough. Cutting several paragraphs because you find that they don't meet the purpose of the writing task, throwing out research sources and having to search for more, completely reorganizing a text, or even reconsidering the genre can be a lot of work. But if you're willing to put aside the linear steps and view invention, research, drafting, revision, and editing as ways of thinking that can be revisited over and over again until

you accomplish your goal, you will become a more successful writer.

Although your future professors, bosses, co-workers, clients, and patients may only see the final product, mastering a complex, recursive writing process will help you to create effective texts for any situation you encounter.

50. Movies Explain the World (of Writing)

NIKKI MANTYLA

- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions

Movie clips are one of my favorite teaching techniques. For example, to emphasize the importance of audience in an argument, I love to show the rainy scene from Focus Features' *Pride and Prejudice* in which rich Mr. Darcy makes the **claim** that poor Lizzy should marry him. His **reason** is that he loves her "most ardently" and the **evidence** is his agony.

But Lizzy says whoop-dee-doo.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=254

Despite the complications of British accents, archaic phrasing, and speedy dialogue, we get the idea: claim, reasons, and evidence aren't enough if we haven't considered the audience's **values**. Lizzy isn't the type to swoon at money or any old declaration of love. In contrast, when Darcy comes back with a humbler-voiced letter addressing her **objections**, it's much more effective at persuading her to trust him.

By seeing it and hearing it as a movie clip, we remember the concept better. Who's going to forget that intense of a proposal gone wrong? And hopefully the next time we sit down to write, we'll think more about our audience's beliefs, opinions, objections, etc.

My goal with this article is along those lines: to use movie clips and the movie-making process (which I would argue mirrors any type of composition process) to present writing

concepts in memorable ways. We know focused reading can expand our repertoire of writing moves; now let's see how analyzing the rhetorical strategies of cinema can improve our understanding of **ideas**, **organization**, **voice**, **word choice**, **sentence fluency**, and **conventions**—and translate into better writing from top to bottom.

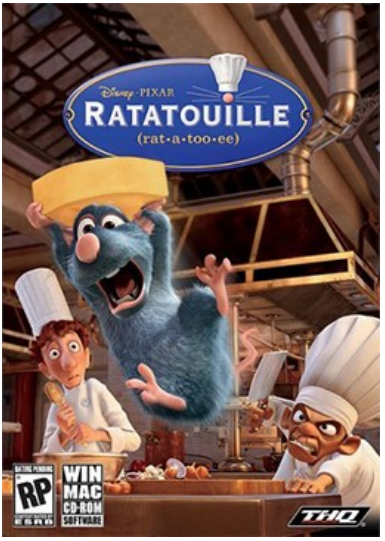
IDEAS

How often have you been enticed by the premise (the idea) of a movie, only to have it fail to meet your expectations? Isn't it wild that an idea can have so much potential and then totally flop if that potential isn't developed?

Pixar is a movie producer that really sets the standard here, refining their ideas until they hit peak potential. For example, the premise for *Ratatouille*—a rat who wants to be a gourmet chef—was first pitched in 2000. By the fall of 2004, the script still wasn't palatable enough. As one entertainment news hound put it,

> While individual elements of the film … were admittedly charming and quite entertaining, its narrative as a whole fell flat. You never really got caught up in Remy's quest to become one of the greatest chefs in France. … [The director and his] story team were then sent back to their drawing boards with some very specific orders: Make the story stronger and make us really care about the characters' struggles. (Hill para. 11–12)

The team had to completely revamp until they had a story and characters—fiction's biggest idea ingredients—that would deliver. Pixar even brought a second director on board to come up with a new vision. The effort paid off: *Ratatouille* went on to win the 2008 Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film.



Pixar believes that story is king, so they don't settle for mediocre. Even with amazing computer-animated visual effects, movies need solid ideas first.

What makes ideas solid?

Think about how well your favorite movies do the following:

- excite/entice you
- provide something/someone to care about
- delve deep into the premise
- deliver on expectations
- resonate with you

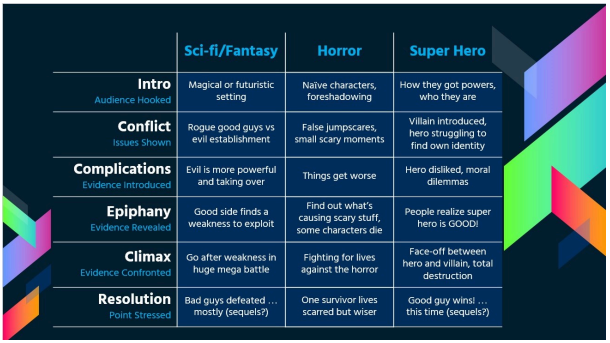
These five criteria apply to all genres of writing. Consider the *Pride and Prejudice* clip above with its failed proposal: the idea of marrying Darcy did not entice Lizzy, did not offer her a fiancé she would care about, did not delve into the deeper issues she needed addressed, and did not meet her expectations for a good match—even though at the end we can see some emotional resonance. One out of five wasn't enough for Lizzy.

But like *Ratatouille* did, Darcy is able to overcome his flaws—and so can we. Step by step he corrects each problem: addressing the issues thoroughly, making himself more likeable, exceeding her expectations, and becoming absolutely enticing to her. As we do the same, with our particular audience in mind, our writing can likewise win over our readers.

ORGANIZATION

Once we've got winning ideas, the next arena is organization. Great building blocks (fully developed ideas) won't do as much good if they aren't arranged well. Ideal arrangements match natural human expectations, and these expectations, believe it or not, are based on our brain's programmed preference toward storytelling.

First, consider the basic six-step outline of storytelling: intro, conflict, complications, epiphany, climax, and resolution. Then look at how familiar movie genres use these steps:



	Sci-fi/Fantasy	Horror	Super Hero
Intro Audience Hooked	Magical or futuristic setting	Naïve characters, foreshadowing	How they got powers, who they are
Conflict Issues Shown	Rogue good guys vs evil establishment	False jumpscares, small scary moments	Villain introduced, hero struggling to find own identity
Complications Evidence Introduced	Evil is more powerful and taking over	Things get worse	Hero disliked, moral dilemmas
Epiphany Evidence Revealed	Good side finds a weakness to exploit	Find out what's causing scary stuff, some characters die	People realize super hero is GOOD!
Climax Evidence Confronted	Go after weakness in huge mega battle	Fighting for lives against the horror	Face-off between hero and villain, total destruction
Resolution Point Stressed	Bad guys defeated … mostly (sequels?)	One survivor lives scarred but wiser	Good guy wins! … this time (sequels?)

Slide created with input from my students in English 2010: Intermediate Writing

As the slide above shows, each step has a purpose that applies to more than just storytelling.

Proceed step by step through each purpose to achieve ideal organization:

1. INTRO — hook your audience
2. CONFLICT — show what the big issues are
3. COMPLICATIONS — introduce the type of evidence/solution needed
4. EPIPHANY — reveal the evidence/solution
5. CLIMAX — explain/apply the evidence
6. RESOLUTION — stress the point

From hook to resolution, the organization builds the tension as it proceeds, keeping the audience in suspense for the final reveal. It's why our ears perk up when someone starts a story. We want to know what happens. And that hard-wiring is why

story-based organization is most effective—even beyond story genres.

For example, a recipe might **hook** us with the name and a great photo and a description of its yumminess. The main **conflict**/hurdle will be gathering the ingredients, so those are usually listed next. The **complications** are yield and time involved, often spelled out before we get to the steps that reveal why the dish takes so long to prepare. The **epiphany** is the steps themselves ("Oh! That's how you make it!"). The **climax** is often the final step of baking/simmering/etc (when we'll wait to see if the recipe worked). Finally, the **resolution** could be tips on how to serve the finished dish.

Good organization moves the ideas forward by creating momentum that carries us to the resolution. Nifty, huh?

VOICE

The popular indie flick *Juno*, which won an Oscar for Diablo Cody's brilliant screenwriting, might be a perfect way to begin understanding voice. Just check out the trailer:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=254

Voice is pretty much viewpoint, personality, and tone squashed together. It's what gives a piece of writing its overall feel.

A good voice should be four things:

- strong
- appealing
- appropriate
- consistent

I've heard dissenters claim that Juno's voice is too unrealistic and too exaggerated, but even an over-the-top voice can be awesome, so long as it meets the four criteria above.

Satire is one example of exaggerated voice. Writers attempting it must consider their situation and whether or not satire is a **strong** way to make their point, whether or not it's **appropriate** for their topic, whether or not they can make it **appealing**, and whether or not they can maintain a **consistent** voice throughout the piece.

The last trait, consistency, doesn't mean you can't pull off a range of emotion, from funny to tragic. *Juno* manages to. I cry every time I watch it, and I laugh at the great lines, and I get angry at a certain character who will not be named (since it'd be a spoiler). Those disparate emotions all fit in the movie because they're brought together by the same quirky, complex point of view: Juno's.

To understand how that translates into writing, take a look at the examples below showing how various nonfiction genres also adopt a particular voice.

From Sharon Begley's report, "Why Your Brain Never Really Rests":

> Oops. Neuroscience is having its dark-energy moment, feeling as chagrined as astronomers who belatedly realized that the cosmos is awash in more invisible matter and mysterious ("dark") energy than make up the atoms in all the stars, planets, nebulae, and galaxies. For it turns out that when someone is just lying still and the mind is blank, neurons are chattering away like Twitter addicts. (para. 2)

From Jason Gay's set of New Year's resolution tips, "27 Rules of Conquering the Gym":

> This is the time of year when even people who hate the gym think about going to the gym. Many of us are still digesting whole floors of gingerbread houses, and jeans that fit comfortably in October are now a denim humiliation. (para. 1)

From Chris Jones's *ESPN* profile of Zac Sunderland:

> The crossing was the last great hurdle in his quest to be

> the youngest person to sail solo around the world. It was a desolate, often windless stretch—4,278 nautical miles that, on a good day, he covered at just six nautical miles an hour. The math could make seasoned sailors talk to themselves, let alone a 17-year-old California kid who'd just realized he'd lost his radar. (para. 1)

In the first article, the voice is a snarky but enthralling; in the second, it's self-deprecating and funny; and in the third, it's sympathetic and tense. All three are strong voices, appropriate for the topic, appealing to their audience, and consistent throughout.

WORD CHOICE

While voice is the overarching feel, word choice is the specific, detailed **texture**. The big considerations of voice have to come first, and then you can sprinkle in the details.

It's similar to how you choose actors for a movie based on the feel you want, and then you reinforce that feel with their costumes. The actors (and their skills) are the voice; the costumes (and the sets) are like word choice.

Scenes from GLADIATOR and MY FAIR LADY

Again, both need to be appropriate for the piece. We don't want gladiators wearing frilly dresses covered in bows (unless we're creating a parody). We have to find the words that fit the texture we're going for.

In the following excerpts from young-adult novels, notice how the individual words dress each unique character and setting like wardrobe and sets.

From James Dashner's *The Maze Runner*:

> He heard noises above—voices—and fear squeezed his chest.
>
> "Look at that shank."
>
> "How old is he?"
>
> "Looks like a klunk in a T-shirt."
>
> "You're the klunk, shuck-face."
>
> "Dude, it smells like feet down there!"
>
> "Hope you enjoyed the one-way trip, Greenie."
>
> "Ain't no ticket back, bro." (3)

From M. T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: The Pox Party*:

> I was raised in a gaunt house with a garden; my earliest recollections are of floating lights in the apple-trees.
>
> I recall, in the orchard behind the house, orbs of flames rising through the black boughs and branches; they climbed, spiritous, and flickered out; my mother squeezed my hand with delight. We stood near the door to the ice-chamber.
>
> By the well, servants lit bubbles of gas on fire, clad in frockcoats of asbestos.
>
> Around the orchard and gardens stood a wall of some height, designed to repel the glance of idle curiosity and to keep us all from slipping away and running for freedom; though that, of course, I did not yet understand.
>
> How doth all that seeks to rise burn itself to nothing. (3)

From Laini Taylor's *Faeries of Dreamdark: Blackbringer*:

> "How you holding up, my feather?" she asked the crow she rode upon, stroking his sleek head with both hands.
>
> "Like a leaf on a breeze," he answered in his singsong voice. "A champagne bubble. A hovering hawk. A cloud! Nothing to it!"
>
> "So you say. But I'm no tiny sprout anymore, Calypso, and sure you can't carry me forever."
>
> "Piff! Ye weigh no more than a dust mouse, so hush yer spathering. 'Twill be a sore day for me when I can't carry my 'Pie." (4–5)

Each excerpt makes me want to keep going. Voice and word choice together bring writing to life as surely as actors, wardrobe, and sets in a movie.

While the above examples are from fictional works, that transformative effect can happen in any genre. Whether in fiction or nonfiction, you can potentially pen words that will outlast you, like this famous editorial from 1897, responding to

eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon's letter to *The New York Sun*, "Is There a Santa Claus?":

> Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished. (para. 2)

Beautiful, right?

But of course, well-chosen words alone do not make good writing. It's like Will Ferrell's character in *Bewitched* blaming the wardrobe department for the failure of his latest movie. Yeah, maybe the Sherpa hats were ridiculous-looking, but even great costumes wouldn't have made up for his terrible acting (the character's, not Will Ferrell's).

The newspaper snippet shows how a writer has to do everything we've discussed so far:

1. Introduce a powerful **idea** — comparing Santa Claus to joy
2. Shape the **organization** —
    - Intro: "yes, Virginia"
    - Conflict: existence of Santa Claus
    - Complications: his connection to love, generosity, beauty etc

- Epiphany: without him the world is dreary
- Climax: facing how much goodness we would lose
- Resolution: childhood faith lights the world

3. Find a perfect **voice** — tone of wonder and sincerity appropriate for responding to a serious child's question
4. Choose the best **words** — *exist, abound, alas, childlike, enjoyment, eternal, light*

Revising on only one level, such as only worrying about the words, wouldn't be enough.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

Next, let's try a little experiment of observation. As you watch this clip below from the movie *Stranger Than Fiction*, I want you to notice the cuts. Usually, we don't—unless the film editors have done a poor job. Usually, the cuts are so natural that we easily shift from one angle to the next. But if you force yourself to notice, you can observe a lot about how they make it smooth.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=254

For one thing, did you notice how Harold (Will Ferrell) walking around the store creates a sense of flow? If each shot had cut straight to him already in front of each guitar, it would be more jarring. Instead, they cut one angle as he starts to move away from a guitar and then pick up the next angle as he's walking toward a new one. It creates **flow** between the shots, and the cuts become nearly invisible, leaving us to focus on the meaning of how the scene impacts the story.

Sentences have to be the same way. They have to flow so smoothly that we hardly notice them—unless to occasionally notice a sentence as breathtaking as a beautiful shot in a movie. Other than that, the sentences should simply be working together to feed us a story, piece by piece.

Look at how that happens in the following excerpt from Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*:

> There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife. The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately.
>
> The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet.
>
> The street door was still open, just a little, where the knife and the man who held it had slipped in, and wisps of nighttime mist slithered and twined into the house through the open door. (2–5)

This passage is a great example of what is called the **known–new contract**, in which each sentence builds on the one before. Neil Gaiman begins with "there was" and then adds something new: "a hand in the darkness." Then he refers to the hand as "it"—something now known—and adds the next new piece: a knife. The knife again (now known) leads us to its handle and blade (new). Notice how subtle changes reinforce this: when it's new, it's *a* knife, but once it's known, it becomes *the* knife. The sentences are one long chain of known–new–known–new, flowing as smoothly as movie shots.

Creating that chain sounds tedious at first, but astute writers naturally point back to what's known so that the sentence fluency is smooth. When they encounter an out-of-place sentence, they look for breaks in the known–new chain and add the necessary pieces to fix it.

Below is a nonfiction example from a sports article called "The Man in the Van" about baseball pitcher Daniel Norris. As you read the opening paragraph, pay attention to how the author takes you from one sentence to the next.

> The future of the Toronto Blue Jays wakes up in a 1978 Volkswagen camper behind the dumpsters at a Wal-Mart and wonders if he has anything to eat. He rummages through a half-empty cooler until he finds a dozen eggs. "I'm not sure about these," he says, removing three from

the carton, studying them, smelling them and finally deciding it's safe to eat them. While the eggs cook on a portable stove, he begins the morning ritual of cleaning his van, pulling the contents of his life into the parking lot. Out comes a surfboard. Out comes a subzero sleeping bag. Out comes his only pair of jeans and his handwritten journals. A curious shopper stops to watch. "Hiya," Daniel Norris says, waving as the customer walks away into the store. Norris turns back to his eggs. "I've gotten used to people staring," he says. (Saslow para. 1)

Did you catch the chain?

You might sum it up like this:

- wakes up in a *van* (**known** from title) and wonders what's to *eat* (**new**)
- rummages for *food* (**known**) and finds *eggs* (**new**)
- starts cooking the *eggs* (**known**) and begins to *clean* (**new**)
- pulls out items to *clean* his *van* (both **known**) and sees a curious shopper *stare* (**new**)
- returns to *cooking* (**known**) and comments on the *staring* (**known**): he's gotten *used to it* (**new**)

The end of one sentence, like "wonders if he has anything to eat," connects us straight to the beginning of the next sentence: "He rummages through a half-empty cooler." That way readers never feel lost—and probably don't even notice the "cuts." Like an editor splicing the shots, the author creates congruence from each sentence to the next so that they flow.

CONVENTIONS

Finally, we get to the arena of visual effects—the stuff that makes movies look so cool. As a simple example, let's examine the brief animation sequences sprinkled throughout the movie *(500) Days of Summer*. These scene-changes were some of the very last things to be completed for the movie, and they help orient viewers to the point in time of the next scene (within the 500 days).

Conventions in writing are like everything that happens after the footage has been pieced together. Once all the frames have been sequenced—all our sentences strung—the last job is to coordinate the extra pieces that will help pull the whole movie together. These last additions are everything from overall **design** down to **punctuation**. Notice how even the title of the movie coordinates with the scene-changes by placing the number in parentheses—a punctuation choice that makes the isolated numbers on the screen simple to understand.

Similarly, the occasional split screen in the movie is an unusual convention that's both appealing and clarifying for these scenes. By playing Tom's expectations and reality side by side, the split screen ups the heartbreak.

Larger convention choices like that also happen in writing when we tailor our images, layout, and so on to make the point clearer. And sometimes they can be unconventional, like the four pages in Stephenie Meyer's novel *New Moon* with only one word each: the name of a month. That method for showing the empty-feeling passage of time was so effective for the story that they used it in the movie too.

And of course, as writers, we also have to coordinate every little piece of punctuation for **clarity** and **appeal**. Just like we wouldn't want a boom mic hanging down into the shots,

distracting from the movie, we want our conventions to work for us, not against us.

Notice the conventions this article uses for aesthetic appeal and content clarification:

- relevant videos
- text boxes with key points
- eye-catching pictures
- headings
- lists
- frequent paragraph breaks
- bold terms
- em dashes for emphasis
- parentheses for interesting side notes

In the end, the job of the six traits we've examined is to make our grand ideas really shine and leave our audience with plenty of valuable takeaways, so they won't walk away saying whoop-dee-doo.

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51. Peer Review

JIM BEATTY

- How to Give Feedback
- How to Receive Feedback
- Make Peer Review a Part of Your Life
- Conclusion

Peer review is a daunting prospect for many students. It can be nerve-wracking to let other people see a draft that is far from perfect. It can also be uncomfortable to critique drafts written by people you hardly know. Peer review is essential for effective public writing, however. Professors often publish in "peer-reviewed" journals, which means their drafts are sent to several experts around the world. The professor/author must then address these people's concerns before the journal will publish the article. This process is done because, overall, the best ideas come out of conversations with other people about your writing. You should always be supportive of your peers, but you should also not pull any punches regarding things you think could really hurt their grade or the efficacy of their paper.

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK

The least helpful thing you can do when peer reviewing is

correct grammar and typos. While these issues are important, they are commonly the least important thing English professors consider when grading. Poor grammar usually only greatly impacts your grade if it gets in the way of clarity (if the professor cannot decode what you are trying to say) or your authority (it would affect how much readers would trust you as a writer). And, with a careful editing process, a writer can catch these errors on their own. If they are convinced they have a good thesis statement and they don't, however, then you can help them by identifying that.

Your professor may give you specific things to evaluate during peer review. If so, those criteria are your clue to what your professor values in the paper. If your professor doesn't give you things to evaluate, make sure to have the assignment sheet in front of you when peer reviewing. If your professor provides a rubric or grading criteria, focus on those issues when giving advice to your peers. Again, don't just look for things to "fix." Pose questions to your classmate; let them know where they need to give you more to clarify and convince you.

HOW TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK

Resist the powerful urge to get defensive over your writing. Try your best not to respond until your reviewer is finished giving and explaining their feedback. Keep in mind that your peers do not have all the information about your paper that you do. If they misunderstand something, take it as an opportunity to be clearer in your writing rather than simply blaming them for not getting it. Once you give a paper to another person, you cannot provide additional commentary or explanations. They can only evaluate what's on the page.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in peer review is deciding

what advice to use and what to ignore. When in doubt, always ask your professor. They know how they will grade, so they can give you a more definitive answer than anyone else. This holds true for the advice you get from a writing tutor too.

MAKE PEER REVIEW A PART OF YOUR LIFE

Don't think of peer review as an isolated activity you do because it is required in class. Make friends in the class that can help you outside of it. Call on people outside the class whom you trust to give you feedback, including writing tutors. Integrate peer review into every step of your writing process, not just when you have a complete draft. Classmates, writing tutors, and your friends can be an invaluable resource as you brainstorm your ideas. Conversations with them can give you a safe, informal opportunity to work things out before you stare at a blank screen wondering what to write. A writing tutor can help you talk out your ideas and maybe produce an outline by the end of your appointment. A friend can offer another perspective or additional information of which you are initially unaware. Again, you can get the most direct advice by visiting your professor during office hours to go over ideas and drafts. Take advantage of all the formal and informal resources surrounding you at SLCC to help you succeed.

CONCLUSION

Far from being scary or annoying, peer review is one of the

most powerful tools at your disposal in the life-long process of becoming a more effective public writer. No good writing exists in isolation. The best writing comes out of a communal effort.

52. Citations: Why, When, How?

ANNE CANAVAN

- Why Do We Cite Sources?
- Okay, So Citation Seems Important, But When Do I Do It?
- So How Do I Cite Where This Information Comes From?

PLAGIARISM.

This word can terrify even the bravest of students. If you went to school in the United States, you know that plagiarism can lead to failing assignments, repeating courses, or possibly even being expelled from school. You have heard it called "stealing," "fraud," and "cheating," and you may have even accidentally done it once or twice. Plagiarism is a tricky subject. There are many different types of plagiarism, ranging from taking an entire essay from a website or friend and passing it off as your own work to forgetting to do an internal citation or missing a source from your works cited page.

Writers from more pluralistic societies, such as China, often have radically different views about source use. Once an idea is published, or otherwise in the public domain, it is considered public property—anyone can build on the idea, or use it in their own research, without giving explicit credit to the original author (Bouman 2009, Polio and Shi, 2012). As a result, explicit

citation—"This information came from _____, and here is where I found it"—is unusual, even in academic writing. While this reading will be focusing on American expectations of citation, other views of citation are not incorrect, simply different.

WHY DO WE CITE SOURCES?

To answer this question, it is necessary to understand some of the ideas Americans (among others) have about intellectual property. According to the US Patent and Trademark Office, intellectual property is considered "creations of the mind—creative works or ideas embodied in a form that can be shared or can enable others to recreate, emulate, or manufacture them."

This definition may sound a bit complicated, but it's saying that ideas or other creative products, like writing or art, are protected just like "real" property (e.g. cars, personal possessions, etc.).

Because we view ideas and the expression of those ideas as a kind of property that can be "owned" and protected by trademarks, patents, and copyright, when we use other people's words and ideas, we have to give credit to where those ideas came from. One very basic way of thinking about this is the analogy of borrowing your friend's car. You would definitely ask their permission first, and if someone asked you if it was your car, you would tell them it's not yours but your friend's. You would also (hopefully) return the car in the same condition you borrowed it. This last part is relevant to when we talk about using sources "responsibly."

To use a source responsibly, you have to take into account the context in which it was written and that the author has chosen, as well as what the meaning of the overall piece is. You

don't want to just take a sentence or two that seem to fit your beliefs or needs. Sometimes, this can be tricky. For example, an author might use irony to make a point (for instance, an author writing a pro-dog piece might write, "Everyone knows dogs make terrible pets, which is why they are so unpopular in American homes.") If you were to only quote this sentence, in which the author is saying something that doesn't fit with the overall argument/tone of the rest of the piece, you are misrepresenting the source to your reader.

The final reason that we cite sources is so that our readers know where to go to find more information on the topic. Wikipedia makes a great example here; sometimes when we are beginning a research topic, we might visit Wikipedia to get an overview of the topic and to see what some of the big discussions about the topic are. However, we know we can't cite Wikipedia because it's not an authoritative source on its own. This is why the References section of Wikipedia is so useful. While you can't quote what Wikipedia has to say about dogs, you can visit some of the sources it has listed as references.

OKAY, SO CITATION SEEMS IMPORTANT, BUT WHEN DO I DO IT?

Whether you are writing an academic paper for a college course or making a flyer for our job, the principles behind citation remain the same: whenever you use someone else's ideas, you need to give credit to that person. In order to do that, you need to tell the reader which part of your work came from another source and where the reader can find that information themselves. Whether you quote the words or not depends on whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting the

words of the original author. Whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting the words of the original author, you need to cite your source (say where the information comes from and where to find it).

Summarizing

This technique involves taking a large amount of text (anywhere from several paragraphs to a whole chapter, essay, or even an entire book) and condensing those ideas into your own words. The hallmark of summarizing is that you start with something very large and change it into a more concise version that only hits on the main ideas.

Example

In the film *Jurassic Park*, visitors to an amusement park find themselves in danger when the genetically engineered dinosaurs break free.

This example is an extremely short summary of the film, and it leaves out a number of details, such as who the main characters are, how and why the dinosaurs were created, how the dinosaurs escaped, etc. You could do a more detailed summary that addresses those questions, or you could paraphrase a smaller part of the text, as in the next section.

Paraphrasing

Typically when someone paraphrases a source, they are working with a much smaller section of the source, often only a sentence or two. Having a shorter piece of text to work with means you are much more likely to be able to put all of the main ideas in your own words. The paraphrase is also likely to be roughly the same length as the original source.

Example

Original quote from *Jurassic Park*:

> "You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish something as fast as you could, and before you even knew what you had, you patented it, and packaged it, and slapped it on a plastic lunchbox, and now you wanna sell it."

Paraphrase of the original quote:

> In this scene from *Jurassic Park*, Ian Malcolm makes the point that science should be accomplished in a thoughtful, orderly way and that scientists should consider the ramifications of their work before they try to

profit from it.

In this example, the ideas from the quote are represented in the paraphrase, but the language is entirely changed from the informal tone of the original. A good rule of thumb for when you are paraphrasing is to read the original source once or twice, and then try to write it down in your own words without looking at the original. Once you have your version written down, take another look at the original source to make sure you have all the main ideas.

Quoting

Sometimes we run across a source that communicates an idea so clearly that we want to preserve not just the original idea but the language as well. In those circumstances, we want to quote the work.

Example

In the film Jurassic Park, the park staff is experiencing problems as they prepare to open, and the park's owner, John Hammond, says, "All major theme parks have delays. When they opened Disneyland in 1956, nothing worked!"&

However, Ian Malcolm responds, “Yeah, but John, if The Pirates of the Caribbean breaks down, the pirates don’t eat the tourists.”

You can see that there is some framing around these quotes to give the reader context for the information, but everything within the quotation marks is clearly indicated as being the words of the original source.

SO HOW DO I CITE WHERE THE INFORMATION COMES FROM?

This question largely has to do with the style of citation you are working with. Two of the most common citation styles are Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA). Your teachers may discuss these styles in more depth. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) has great references to help you as you research and lots of information on how to use MLA and APA.

Purdue OWL MLA Guide

Purdue OWL APA Guide

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53. Collaborative Response: An Alternative to Peer Feedback

TIFFANY ROUSCULP

- Consider the Context
- Collaborative Response Process
- And, What If We Don't Know What We Are Doing?

I've been teaching composition for more than 25 years. Each semester, I ask students like you to provide "peer feedback" to each other on their drafts. And, each semester, I'm as disappointed as my students are in how it goes.

A few years ago, when I was introducing this part of the writing process, I said, "Today, we're going to do a **'fear peedback'** activity." The room went silent. I stood still and whispered, "Did I really just say 'fear peedback'?" Nervous laughter could be heard from all around the room.

This spoonerism was enough of a Freudian slip to show me that the way I was asking students like you to do feedback needed to change. I reached out to a compassionate teacher who was a semester away from retiring after three decades of

teaching. She gave me wise advice, and it changed how I ask students to go about this important part of the writing process.

But first, let's go through a few reasons why peer feedback often feels unsuccessful. You will probably find these to be very familiar.

#1: Students often feel unprepared and insecure.

The nature of student-hood is that you are learning, stretching, and pushing your limits of understanding and abilities. When we are unsure about our own progress, we can feel like we are faking it when we give feedback to our peers. While a little bit of "faking it" is okay—and normal—when we don't understand what we are doing, we can give fairly useless feedback to our peers. This makes them frustrated, and makes us wish we could disappear.

#2: Even students who are confident are unsure in giving feedback.

Sometimes we might feel confident in our own writing and even understand the assignment, but it's still hard to give meaningful feedback to others. What often happens in this situation is too much talking, not enough listening, and too much giving "correction"-based feedback, which is not very useful at the drafting stage of writing.

#3: Students are smart enough to know how the system works.

Even if we feel like we can give meaningful feedback on an assignment, all of us are smart enough to know that what the teacher thinks of our writing is what really matters (in terms of your grade). Since everyone will interpret a piece of writing somewhat differently, a peer might give you advice that your teacher disagrees with. Then, not only are you are confused by the different responses, you are also irritated by the peer feedback process.

CONSIDER THE CONTEXT

In contexts other than school, we might feel more comfortable giving writing feedback to someone. For example, at work, if you are experienced with a type of writing and someone asks you how to do it, you will likely have the confidence to provide

meaningful feedback to them. Maybe you show them how to fill out a form or finish paperwork on a job. You give them advice and show them what they should do. They listen and learn and are appreciative of your help.

On the other hand, if you don't know how to do what your colleague is asking, you'll tell them that you don't know or that you don't feel like you can help them. Perhaps you will offer to figure it out together, especially if you also need to know how to do it.

In school, you're most often in the latter situation because you are in "learning mode." But, you're not allowed to say that you don't know how to do it because peer feedback means that you are supposed to help your peers improve their drafts, right? But, if you don't know how to help them, then, well, let's just say it can get very frustrating.

It's within this context that we can provide each other with useful collaborative support on our writing. Like I learned from my colleague, the point is to change what may end up feeling like "fear peedback" into a positive experience for everyone involved.

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE PROCESS

Instead of "**peer** feedback," I call this process "**collaborative** response." This may seem insignificant: just a two-word change. But, the key is in the word **collaborative**. No longer are you a student passing judgement on another student's writing. You are working together, as a team, to understand an assignment's expectations and support each other's success.

In collaborative response, you will read each other's drafts, but **you won't give each other advice on what they should do or how they could make it better**. Instead you will

1. go over the evaluative criteria with each other
2. read each other's drafts
3. note how they are similar or different from each other
4. analyze how the similarities and differences address the evaluative criteria for the assignment

In other words, in collaborative response, **you compare your drafts to each other, not in terms of "how good" they are, but in how they approached the assignment's criteria**.

There is no correction, no "you should do this," no "yours is so much better," etc. The point of collaborative response is to share what you've done, get ideas from each other, and work together to understand how to meet the assignment's expectations and criteria.

AND, WHAT IF WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING?

The best part of collaborative response is that you are working together in a supportive manner, not in competition or judgement. So, if you don't know something, you just ask the teacher! If you find that you have taken different approaches

to the assignment, and you're unsure what to do, explain the differences and listen to what the teacher has to say. It's a conversation, not an evaluation.

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54. Writer's Block? Try Creative Play and Freewriting

BENJAMIN SOLOMON

- Start with Creative Play
- Next, Freewrite!
- What Next?

You're stuck. You're blocked. You're empty. You're stalled out. You need to write but you can't. You're unsure what to do next. The deadline is looming. You've done research. You've taken notes. You've read over the assignment instructions (again!) and you're still stuck. The words won't flow. The ideas won't spill. This is agonizing. Even writing just a few meager sentences seems impossible.

What can you do?

In desperation, you turn to Google. You type *writers block* and find an endless stream of articles, blogs, websites, and videos promising to help. Here's a small sampling of what the internet thinks you should do when you have writer's block:

Go for a walk. Go for a run. Eliminate distractions. Exercise. Play. Read a book. Outline. Brainstorm ideas in bullet points. Listen to music. Listen to rain sounds, ocean sounds, forest or fire or night time sounds. Brew some coffee. Brew some tea. Brew some hot chocolate. Create a routine. Call an old friend. Call a new friend. Talk to someone about your project. Shuffle around the room talking to yourself. Record yourself speaking your ideas onto your phone. Use dictation software. Read some inspiring quotes. Curse like a sailor. Forget about your audience. Remember your audience. Plan. Don't plan. Make a mess. Go to a random movie. Watch a random channel on TV. Go to a museum. Go to a bookstore. Make a routine. Ignore routine. Do the dishes. Sweep the floor. Walk around in circles. Pace up and down your room. Take a shower. Take a bath. Take a nap. Shut off your computer. Disconnect your internet. Use a pen and paper. Forget about grammar. Goof around on social media. Dance. Listen to a podcast. Bribe yourself. Start in the middle. Make a story map. Make a brain map. Make a cluster map. Procrastinate. Stop procrastinating. Meditate. Listen to music. Write in a cafe. Write in a McDonalds. Write near a window. Write in a windowless room. Make lists. Take more notes. Keep a journal. Talk to your pet. Pet your pet. And so on . . .

What most of these suggestions have in common are the ideas of movement and disruption. Writer's block is a rut, a ditch, a

trap, a swampy mire, and in order to lift yourself out, you need to DO something—anything!—to jog yourself into motion.

But what *exactly* should you do? There's no single answer, of course. What works for one person doesn't always work for another.

But after twenty years as a working writer and ten years as a writing teacher, I've noticed two strategies in particular that seem to have more success than others. If you're blocked and you need to get unblocked, try this two-step approach that combines creative play with freewriting, and only takes about twenty minutes.

START WITH CREATIVE PLAY

Okay, I know you've got a deadline. And you probably aren't being asked to produce something "creative" for the assignment that's looming. So why use your precious and limited time for something as frivolous as play?

Here's why: ALL writing is inherently creative, no matter if you are working on a lab report or a memoir, a rhetorical analysis, a poem, or a sociology paper. In order to write, you need to create words, sentences, and paragraphs, willing them into existence, bringing them to life, using them to generate ideas, connections, and thoughts.

But creativity is elusive. It can't be forced, prodded or pressured out of us. It needs to be coaxed. Activated. Sparked. If you can do that, you've got a good chance of beating back some of the second guessing, overthinking and anxiety that causes writer's block.

Try this: choose a single creative play idea from the prompts below. Don't agonize over your choice too much—just choose one that looks doable (i.e. you have what you need for it) and at

least a little bit fun or interesting to you. Do this activity for at least ten minutes (more is fine). Try your best to let the activity absorb you. Don't think about your assignment. Don't think about your life. Think about what you are doing. But also, be kind to yourself. Don't worry about what you produce here. It's about the process, not the product.

Note: If possible, I recommend doing your creative play *alone*, so you can really focus. If you're working with limited time, set a timer for 10 minutes, and do your best to stay focused on your activity *the whole time*.

Ideas for Creative Play

VISUAL ART — Painting, drawing, doodling, scribbling, and comics are all options. Use whatever you can find: pens, pencils, markers, crayons, watercolors, food coloring, ketchup etc.

DANCE — Movement improvisation, interpretive dancing, or just dancing to your favorite music can work. Try dancing with your eyes closed. Try dancing with props.

CHILD'S PLAY — Bust out the Legos, blocks, figures, dolls or any other toys. Play like a child. Talk to yourself. Do voices. Make explosions sounds.

ACTING — Scene improvisation or play-acting can be liberating. You probably don't have time to memorize lines, so focus on something improvisational.

MUSIC — Give singing, drumming, or instrument

playing a try. It doesn't matter if you know how to play one. Focus on experimentation.

SCULPTURE — Find playdough, clay, paper clips, balled up paper, cardboard or random objects and make something. Use scissors, glue, tape, staples, pins, etc.

OTHER — Come up with your own creative play activity. Be resourceful. It's less about what you do and more about how absorbed you can become.

NEXT, FREEWRITE!

Immediately after your creative play, jump straight into freewriting. Set a timer for ten minutes and commit to writing, non-stop until it goes off.

Here's how Peter Elbow—a writer (and writing professor) who cared deeply about freewriting—describes it:

> The idea is simply to write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write "I can't think what to say, I can't think what to say" as many times as you want; or repeat the last word you wrote over and

over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop.

—Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*

Freewriting is the bridge between your creative play and the writing assignment you need to complete. In order to write, you need to activate your creativity, energizing your ability to generate thoughts, ideas, observations, and connections. But it's not enough to only activate those creative energies. You need to translate them into real writing, and for this there is nothing better than freewriting.

You can write by hand or type—whichever you prefer. Remember, just like the creative play, it's about the process, not the product. When the timer goes off, you can crumple up the paper and throw it in the trash or delete the text on the screen if you want to.

WHAT NEXT?

Creative play and free writing won't write your paper for you. And they won't magically fill your brain with all the words, knowledge, and ideas that you'll need to complete your writing project. But used in combination, creative play and freewriting can help you lift yourself out of the ditch of writer's block and start fresh.

When you're done, try easing back into your writing assignment with list-making. Make a list of ten or more things you want to cover in your writing assignment. Write out your ideas in complete sentences instead of just single words—this will help prepare you for the work of writing a paper with whole sentences and paragraphs.

At this point, you can return to your notes, your research, the

assignment instructions, or your blank page/document and try to get started writing again. Or, if you want, you can repeat the creative play + freewriting cycle once again. Think about them as warm-up exercises before a game. Sometimes you need a little longer to get warmed up and that's okay.

Creative play and freewriting are unblocking strategies. Once unblocked, you're ready to move on to invention—the act of actually generating your content. Invention Strategies can help with this.

55. “Intertextuality”: A Reference Guide on Using Texts to Produce Texts

CLINT JOHNSON

- Ways Texts “Connect” or Reference Each Other
- How to Reference Completely and Ethically

“Intertextuality” is the term for how the meaning of one text changes when we relate it to another text. It is one way to understand how writing is contingent upon other factors: in this case, how another text influences the way we understand, or struggle to understand, a given text.

Scholars debate the extent and significance of intertextuality in how we understand language. Some literary theorists argue that any text is just a combination of other texts. Julia Kristeva, for example, writes, “Any text is the absorption and transformation of another.”

How you typically experience intertextuality in your reading and writing is likely to be far simpler than such theories suggest. After all, texts combine with other texts all the time to create meaning, and they do so in specific ways.

Understanding these ways helps us better understand what we read and better achieve our goals when we write.

WAYS TEXTS "CONNECT" OR REFERENCE EACH OTHER

Quotation

What it is: When one text uses ideas and words of another text.

How to do it: A quotation is literally copied language from one text that is used in another. The copied words are put within quotation marks to show the language originally comes from another source. The source is also cited.

Why do it: Quotation is common in many genres because it allows us to adopt others' language for a variety of purposes. We quote others for their eloquent use of language, or to distance ourselves from statements we need to communicate but do not want to own, or to acknowledge the existence of other perspectives and voices. As a general rule, we only quote when both the words and ideas of a source are valuable to our writing.

Examples

According to The New York Times, "Things have

gotten worse. Much worse."

"I never really thought about it that way," admitted Gerald Henshaw, the driver of the train.

"There is no such answer," says psychologist Joanne Wardell, who adds, "and looking for one simply increases frustration."

"Walk softly and carry a big stick." This famous saying from former President Theodore Roosevelt is a fine summation of the man. Roosevelt is likely the brashest president in American history. His personal mantra—"Get action. Do things; be sane"—illustrates his voracious appetite for activity and productivity. Yet, Kathleen Dalton with The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History describes him as "a man full of contradictions." He condemned censorship of political criticism as "morally treasonable to the American public" yet regarded those who opposed him as corrupt or weak—in Roosevelt's own words, possessing "the spine of a chocolate eclair." Yet his complexity arose from utter confidence in both himself and the destiny of America. "We can have no 50–50 allegiance in this country," he proclaimed. "Either a man is an American and nothing else, or he is not American at all."

Paraphrasing

What it is: When one text includes ideas from another text put in new words.

How to do it: When paraphrasing, a writer uses their own language to communicate an idea found in another text. Paraphrasing does not require quotation marks because the words are not borrowed from another source. Paraphrasing references specific ideas from a text rather than all ideas in the text. The original source is cited.

Why do it: We paraphrase others to give credit or assign responsibility for ideas and to use others' identities in our writing. Paraphrasing can also allow us to easily integrate important ideas from other sources into our writing without changing our style. This creates a consistent feel for the reader. As a general rule, we paraphrase whenever we wish to use the ideas of a source but don't feel that the source's words add additional value. We might also paraphrase if the source's words somehow detract from our work, such as if their language is too technical or biased for our purposes.

Examples

The Declaration of Independence concludes with a formal announcement of independence from Britain that calls upon both God and the unanimity of the colonies to preserve that independence.

Batman sorrowfully recounts how the woman he

loved, Rachel, promised to wait for him before she died.

America has defaulted on a check written to African Americans, according to Dr. Martin Luther King.

Summarizing

What it is: When one text uses the main ideas of another text in the order they are originally presented. The source is cited.

How to do it: A summary presents another text's major ideas in their original order but without minor details. It essentially condenses a text, shrinking it down by communicating only the most important information. To preserve confidence that the writer summarizing the text hasn't changed the meaning, summaries are typically written in an objective style. Summaries can be various lengths, from as short as a sentence to as long as needed without giving unnecessary detail.

Why do it: We summarize to give our reader a sense of another text in its entirety, at least in terms of main ideas, in a short time and space. As a general rule, we summarize whenever we wish to demonstrate that we comprehend a text's overall meaning or when we ask a reader to interact with the text extensively in our writing.

Examples

Lengthy Summary

In Star Wars: A New Hope, Luke Skywalker lives as a moisture farmer on the desert planet Tatooine but dreams of adventure in the galaxy. When his uncle purchases two droids, R2-D2 and C-3PO, carrying plans that can help the Rebel Alliance destroy the evil Galactic Empire's superweapon, the Death Star, Luke's family is killed by Imperial troops searching for the plans. With the help of forgotten Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi and smugglers Han Solo and the wookie Chewbacca, Luke successfully flees with the plans from Tatooine for Alderaan, seat of the Galactic Senate. On the trip, Obi-Wan begins to instruct Luke in the ways of the Force, an energy field that gives the Jedi order tremendous powers. After finding Alderaan destroyed by the Death Star, the heroes are captured. During an escape attempt, they discover Princess Leia, a high-ranking rebellion official, imprisoned on the Death Star. They rescue her, but Obi-Wan is killed by Darth Vader, a mechanical-suited former Jedi—and Obi-Wan's former mentor—who has turned to the Dark Side of the Force and is now second in command of the Empire. The Empire tracks the adventurers to Yavin 4, the hidden base of the rebellion. As the Death Star moves into position to destroy Yavin 4 and end the rebellion, Luke joins the resistance while Han

and Chewbacca refuse. Referencing the plans hidden in the droid R2-D2, the rebellion launches an attack of small fighters designed to take advantage of the Death Star's small and well-protected weakness: a shaft providing access to the huge machine's core. During the assault, Han and Chewbacca unexpectedly join the battle and damage Vader's fighter as it attacks Luke, giving him time to assault the shaft. The voice of Obi-Wan instructs Luke to trust the Force rather than his technological aiming system, and by doing so, he delivers the shot that destroys the Death Star. On Yavin 4, Princess Leia awards Luke, Han, and Chewbacca for their bravery with great celebration.

Moderate Summary

In Star Wars: A New Hope, farm boy Luke Skywalker is drawn into a rebellion against the evil Galactic Empire when his family is murdered. With the help of former Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi (who begins teaching Luke about the Force before being killed by the fallen Jedi Darth Vader) and smugglers Han Solo and Chewbacca, he saves the rebel leader Princess Leia. With his new allies and blossoming powers using the Force, Luke destroys the Empire's superweapon, the Death Star, bringing hope to the galaxy.

Brief Summary

In Star Wars: A New Hope, Luke Skywalker begins to learn to use the Force and—with the help of former Jedi master Obi-Wan Kenobi, smugglers Han Solo and Chewbacca, and rebel leader Princess Leia—he defeats the fallen Jedi Darth Vader and destroys the Empire's awesome superweapon, the Death Star.

Allusion

What is it: An indirect reference to another text.

How to do it: The writer does not quote, paraphrase, or in other ways explicitly communicate how the text alludes to, or indirectly connects to, what they are writing. Instead, they trust the reader to be able to identify the connection using their own knowledge.

Why do it: We allude to a text when we are confident our audience is familiar with the text mentioned. As a general rule, we allude when we want our reader to relate their own knowledge to what we are writing. If our readers are not familiar with the text we allude to, we will likely confuse them.

Examples

He's her muse. [Greek mythology]

Avoid making this a personal Ides of March. [Shakespeare's Julius Caesar]

I can MacGyver something, just give me a minute. [MacGyver TV series]

HOW TO REFERENCE COMPLETELY AND ETHICALLY

Attribution

What it is: Specifying who originated a statement, idea, or text, either by authoring or publishing it. Occasionally, we attribute by citing a text's title.

How to do it: Writers attribute by including the name of the person or organization that authored the text they are using in their piece. The name of the author of the original text is connected to the language or ideas the writer references. This may take the form of a parenthetical citation, a signal phrase (e.g., *according to*), or a speech tag (*John says*). Attribution is routinely combined with quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and more (but not allusion).

Why do it: We attribute when we want readers to know where a statement or idea comes from or who it belongs to. Attribution allows us to give people credit for their work, to use others' credibility in our own writing to increase our own authority, and to separate what we say and believe from what others say and believe. As a general rule, we always attribute the first time we reference a text and often again for texts we reference multiple times.

Examples

"I never really thought about it that way," admitted Gerald Henshaw, the driver of the train.

The Declaration of Independence concludes with a formal announcement of independence from Britain that calls upon both God and the unanimity of the colonies to preserve that independence.

In Star Wars: A New Hope, Luke Skywalker begins to learn to use the Force and with the help of former Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi, smugglers Han Solo and Chewbacca, and rebel leader Princess Leia. He defeats the fallen Jedi Darth Vader and destroys the Empire's awesome superweapon, the Death Star.

[Find more attributions in the rest of the example sections above.]

Avoid Plagiarism

What plagiarism is: Using someone else's words and/or ideas and, intentionally or unintentionally, passing them off as one's own.

How NOT to do it: There are a number of ways to plagiarize, including quoting or paraphrasing without giving credit to the original author, failing to use quotation marks for language taken from other texts, summarizing without attributing, or using someone else's reasoning or organizational structure as your own. When using exact language from a source, always put that language in quotation marks. Similarly, when using language or ideas from a source, use attribution to give credit to the author of the text. At Salt Lake Community College we stress that writers should never plagiarize intentionally and must be willing to correct unintentional plagiarism if it occurs by revising their writing.

Why NOT do it: In the United States and much of the rest of the world, especially the west, words and ideas are considered intellectual property, similar in many regards to physical property. Because language and ideas can be trademarked, much like inventions, using them without obeying fair-use rules is considered theft. Plagiarism is a dishonest act and is considered a form of cheating in the academic and professional worlds. While plagiarism is a serious academic offense for which a student may fail an assignment or class, unintentional plagiarism will usually be met with correction and instruction on how to ethically and effectively reference other texts. Intentional plagiarism is cheating and will not be tolerated.

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56. That's All I Have to Say! Writer's Block, Invention, and Revision in the Writing Process

BRANDON SCHEMBRI

- The Writing Process
- Examples of Writers and Their Process
- Student Process — A Quick Test
- Some Simple Ideas for Jumpstarting Your Writing Process
- Writers Toolkit

Have you ever found yourself staring at a blank computer screen? And you wait. And wait. Go to the refrigerator. Come back. And wait. And wait? After a while you forgot what you were waiting for. At some point you may wonder why you signed up for this English class in the first place! Well, rest assured, the symptoms you are describing suggest writers block, and it happens to every writer. And it's normal. But this may be something you can relate with:

Let me illustrate another way.

Several years ago, I was working at the boys and girls club on Salt Lake City's west side. My task was to facilitate a writing workshop for young teens — an after-school program of sorts. Around a large table were several early teenage kids and me. I was there to teach writing. Halloween was a week away, and we were doing a short story about goblins, ghouls, and other freakish monsters. One boy in particular, with blonde hair and steel-blue eyes, I remember, was not getting into the assignment. He was writing on the table, distracting other kids, doing anything he could to *not* write. I walked over and discovered he had only a few short sentences. So, in attempts to curve his energy back to the task, I leaned over and asked: "Looks like you have some interesting sentences there." He scoffed in response and kept trying to play with the boy next to him. Then, remembering that open-ended questions often prompt new thoughts or discoveries, I inquired: "What else can you say about this monster you wrote about? What were his eyes like? Or his hands? Does he growl?" I waited a few moments, hoping to get his mind jogging.

After a few moments of this questioning, the boy, flustered

and frustrated, looked me in the eye with his steel-blue eyes and said angrily: “That’s all I wrote ’cause that’s all I’s got to say!” I had been reprimanded by a 13-year-old. He had used up his reservoir of words and was done.

It was kind of like Forrest Gump, from the movie *Forrest Gump*:

This student did not have a writing process to rely on. He wrote what was in his mind, then stopped. In this article, instead of stopping, we will be exploring several areas of the writing process. By the end of this article, you should be able to

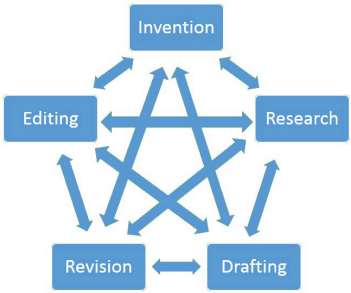
1. explore what the writing process is,
2. understand how professional writers use the writing process,
3. discover your writing process,
4. find solutions for jumpstarting your writing process,
5. and save a writers toolkit (resources) for future use.

In essence, the writing process is a method of discovery. Even the most seasoned writers have committed to a process. The process is individual, after all. And you’ll notice that even your assignments and essays can help you discover your process as a writer. It will pay dividends in the long run — by helping you know how you tick.

THE WRITING PROCESS

College students are like the young boy I mentioned earlier, marching into an English classroom and realizing this may be a little over their heads. Or perhaps thinking, "I really don't know how to write that." Hopefully, your vocabulary, patience, and maturity have expanded, and you are not in the same circumstance as my youthful counterpart.

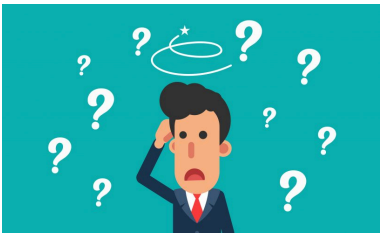
A good article that offers play as a method of unwinding from that mental space is "Writers Block? Try Creative Play and Freewriting," found right here in *Open English @ SLCC*. And let's borrow an image from "Writing Is Recursive," another chapter in this textbook, to illustrate my next point:



The graphic shows that writing is recursive — which means each step can be used repeatedly, in any order. Typically, writer's block comes with the **drafting** part of the process. Often **revising** what is already written or going back to the **invention** stage is what is needed to "get out" of the mental stalemate. Meaning: the writing process does not need to start with brainstorming and end with **editing**. For example, you could start with the middle (or what you expect to be the middle of your paper) and write (**drafting**), then start **researching** your topic. Or another example: **revise** an old

paper to see if you notice any differences from when you wrote it until now, then **draft**. The point is to develop a writing practice.

But then you say, "Wait! What does this have to do with finishing my paper?"



Here it is: Writing is recursive. Remember that as we go on.

BIG IDEA: Writing is recursive.

EXAMPLES OF WRITERS AND THEIR PROCESS

All writers, even the professional ones, have a process in which they write. They trust in the process, and as a result they can produce. Look at the writing process as a method of discovery. How do other writers do it? Let us look at a few of them, courtesy of *Literary Hub* (Temple). Some of them you may know, and others you may not.

Richard Bausch, a short story writer, says, “The impulse, of course, is try to be faithful to what you initially had in mind — but the process, instead, calls for you to let go of all of your opinions and all the things you think you think.” Richard Bausch is suggesting that the final outcome is always different than what he originally intended. He **invents**, **drafts**, **revises**, then **drafts**.

J.K. Rowling, responsible for the Harry Potter series, drafted this sheet below. This is a great example of the **invention** stage of the writing process. Notice the organization, the plotting of events or circumstances. Before writing her novels, J.K. Rowling mapped out the plots, prophecies, etc. ... throughout the series:

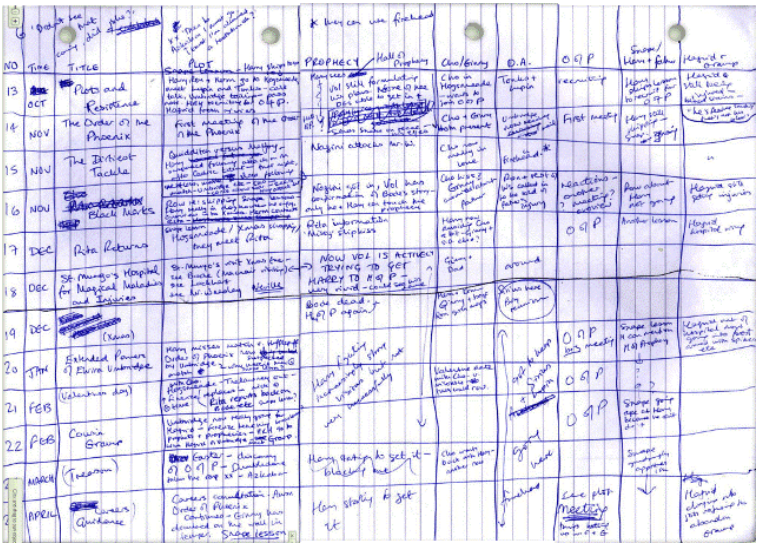


Image from "12 Contemporary Writers on How They Revise" on Literary Hub. Click image to view article.

And, finally, Tina Chang, a poet, says that her writing process changed when she had children. Instead of writing and drafting at whim throughout the day, she collected her ideas during the routines of her day, "then summoned [her creativity] within a two-hour time span" once her kids were in bed. She identified a concentrated amount of time to capture or **invent** content, then outlined a designated writing time to write down (**draft**) those ideas.

Each writer, however and wherever they write, has committed to a writing process — a creative process that allows them to

overcome some of the pitfalls of writing. You can use a process too. See what works well for you as you go throughout this semester. In the next section there is an informal mini-test that may help you articulate your writing process.

BIG IDEA: Writers commit themselves to a creation process — a writing process.

STUDENT PROCESS — A QUICK TEST

These questions are not designed to be total and definitive, but they can give you a good sense about your style and preference when it comes to writing. Remember, this is about overcoming writing obstacles through the writing process.

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper or think through them:

- What time of day do you write the best? Mornings, afternoons, evenings?
- Is there a time of the week that is ideal? Monday before everything gets started? Friday/ Saturday?
- What texts (pieces of writing) do you tend

towards and why? What does that say about your tastes and style as a writer?

- What is it that you dislike about writing the most?
- Are there times when you are inspired to write? Describe the instance.
- Are there times you definitely do not like to write?
- Do you prefer to type or write by hand?
- Do your ideas on what to write come on the go or in a deliberate, planned, and concentrated space?
- Do you like just one or multiple people giving you feedback for revision?
- Are you one to go back and adjust/revise a piece of writing, even multiple times?
- Are you more structured (need a plan) before you begin or go with the flow?
- Do you tend to think in shapes or words when prewriting strategies?
- Do you enjoy drafting in a public or private space?
- Do you like working alone or collaboratively on writing projects?

Hopefully some of these questions will make you aware of your process as a student and writer. Part of your experience at SLCC is to determine how and when you are most effective and productive — which leads to another point that your writing process is individual and creative.

BIG IDEA: The writing process is individual and creative.

SOME SIMPLE IDEAS FOR JUMPSTARTING YOUR WRITING PROCESS

Now that you have taken a brief test, here are some solutions for you. I have found that students either really enjoy planning or do not particularly fancy structured methods. Regardless of your preference, there are solutions for any writer. Figure out which works best for you. Remember to check out the writer's toolbox below for more ideas on organization and learning strategies.

Like planning? Try these:

- Map out on your calendar planning time, drafting time, and revising time — dedicate the time, and your brain may make connections for you while the deadline approaches for each phase.
- Start with the end in mind: how do you see your piece ending or impacting someone?

- Create an outline with structured bullet points that compliment and expand on each other.
- Try using mind maps or word webs (see toolbox below).
- Write in chunks. Do the beginning one day, the body on day 2, and conclusion on day 3.

Not the planning sort? Try these:

- Draw the concept.
- Use Venn Diagrams — are there any overlapping concepts among your many thoughts and ideas?
- Pick a special spot on campus (or at home) and make it your writing spot — your place of inspiration.
- "Feel" your way through a text or an essay. Many writers just know that they have arrived at something. Maybe apply this rule of thumb: if you do not like it, they (the readers) won't like it. Arguably, this skill is sharpened and realized with practice.
- Craft from the middle of the essay and work your way out.
- Sing the concept.

For anyone, try these:

- Start writing — I have found this to be most practical. Just start, write anything, and see what comes.
- Explain or teach your ideas to a friend/family member.
- Tell your dog about the paper.
- Go for a walk or walk the dog.
- Talk to a friend — get your mind off the topic you are grappling with. Oddly enough that frees up your mind to explore undiscovered connections.
- Write, then sleep on it.
- Know when to stop — this is important.

Try some of these and see if you find something that clicks. To reemphasize what was mentioned earlier, the writing process is an individually tailored method of discovery. Authored by you. Use it as such. The best writers have figured out how to write, even under an impending deadline. Really this is all about you and your process. The quicker you discover it, the better you will be able to manage your many writing assignments. Also, it is important to know when to stop and put your writing away. The process does end. So, wrap it up and know you have done well.

I go full circle, to the young boy at the table mentioned earlier: while his reservoir of words or writing may have been used up, there may have been more that I could have done. Here is what I wish I would have done: asked the young boy

to draw a picture of the monster or use construction paper, scissors, and coloring tools to decorate the monster he had envisioned in his head. Permitting him that mental disconnect, or redirection, could have allowed him to further elaborate with words. Essentially, helping him make his own writing process. And who is to say you cannot use scissors and tape? After all, it may just be part of his process. And that is all I've got to say about that!

WRITER'S TOOLKIT

Try these other *Open English @ SLCC* chapters for more ideas:

"Writer's Block? Try Creative Play and Freewriting"
"Writing Is Recursive"
"A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies"
"Organizing Texts in English Academic Writing"

Works Cited

Temple, Emily. "12 Contemporary Writers on How They Revise." *Literary Hub*, 10 Jan. 2017. lithub.com/12-contemporary-writers-on-how-they-revise/.

57. Making a Peer Review More Than a Waste of Time

JASON ROBERTS

Students, you are here because you have probably been assigned a peer review. You may also be looking at this title as an oxymoron. In this short video, however, I hope to give you some insight into what you can both give and receive in a peer review to make this a positive experience for your writing development. As you watch the short presentation, please keep an open mind and consider what you can use in your upcoming reviews that will allow you to change your perspective on getting and giving criticism.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/openenglishatslcc/?p=276

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT]

Ok, you have to do peer reviews. You know this is going to be a terrible waste of time, right? If your previous experiences with peer review were anything like mine, then it went something like this:

- I had to bring in three copies of my "polished" writing.
- I reluctantly moved into a small group and stared at the other members.
- The teacher made us trade our papers with the other

members of my group.

- I was supposed to read them and find two things that were good and at least two that were bad.
- I quickly read the papers and marked some stuff that seemed wrong, then I got my papers back from all of the other students and they had given comments like "good introduction," "I like your ideas," "it's great!" They marked a few spelling or grammar errors to fix.
- I went home and fixed those and then my stupid paper was done. ☺

Unfortunately, I hadn't actually reconsidered how I had written anything. I wasn't sure if it was important or meaningful, and my peers had not really commented on what I said, only what the teacher wanted. The feedback I had gotten from the other students and even the comments I made on my peers' papers were meaningless and confused since I was just doing the requirement for the teacher, so I wasn't interested in what they were saying and didn't really know what I could possibly say. In fact, I didn't feel like I even understood what we were supposed to be doing on the paper.

So frustrating!

But now, you have to do a peer review again. "Why?" you may ask. Well, as a long-time teacher of so many students at SLCC, I will try to explain the benefits of a peer review and then how you can actually have a positive experience with the review process.

- You can see other students' work and how they interpreted the assignment.
- You can have another person see your work who has no authority to grade your work, so there is much less risk.
- You can use this opportunity to find questions and get them answered.
- You can learn valuable workforce skills of collaboration and

learning to give effective feedback.

However, if you just give the same feedback that you always have before, then you will continue to find this to be a fruitless, frustrating, and time-wasting activity.

A lot of what makes any learning activity better is preparation. So before you begin reading their writing, there are some things to understand.

UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION

As a peer: A peer is a person in the same power position. You have no authority to demand that a person has to change. You probably have about the same knowledge and abilities as the person whose paper you will review. You don't have any special skills that allow you to give special feedback aside from being a person with a brain and an opinion. Your position is only to offer suggestions and recommendations.

As a reader: As a student, you may feel inadequate to review another student's work. If you were supposed to grade their paper, you would be correct; however, you already give evaluations on so many other things that you are not an expert in. You discuss movies, give evaluations on restaurants, assess professional sports teams and how they are run. The only qualification you have in those regards is that you as a person know what you enjoy and what bores you. You know if you are confused or inspired. As a reader, you are not grading on if they did the assignment but more if what they produced works for an audience.

As a safeguard: Often we are worried about giving

criticism to another person because we don't want to hurt their feelings**.** Imagine then that your friend is about to give a speech to a large audience. They ask you how they look. Imagine that they have missed a button on their shirt, or their hair is out of place, or their zipper is down. What kind of friend would not tell them that they needed to fix their appearance?! Now consider that they are going to be publishing their writing; it is going to a teacher to be graded. Wouldn't you want to give that person all the advice you could, so they would be as successful as possible?

UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT

Now that you understand your position, you need to make sure you understand the writing situation.

Requirements: What are the absolute requirements for the writing assignment? You should have them in front of you while you are reviewing the paper; also, if you don't understand them yourself, make sure that you ask questions of the instructor.

Intentions: Besides understanding the specific requirements, you should have an idea of why the teacher is giving this assignment. What is the purpose of the writing and what is the instructor hoping for as a result? For example, is this supposed to be creative, or informative?

Learning outcomes: What is the assignment trying to teach? If you know what the purpose of the writing is, you can give better feedback, by helping your peer in their writing development. It happens often that we

write to the requirements, but miss the point of the writing.

UNDERSTAND THE AUTHOR

Background: The better you understand who the author is, the better you will understand their writing.

Voice: When a person is writing, it is important to be able to hear their own style in the writing. If a person is faking a paper or if they are using terms or even copying texts, then being able to recognize their voice is important to make a paper more authentic and honest.

Purposes: Recognize what drives the author of the piece. It's important as you give feedback to give it in a way that it will be received. If the person is just looking for some key points, then too much feedback can be overwhelming, but if they are lost, if you don't give direction, they will be frustrated as well.

UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION OF THE PIECE

I know that we just discussed a lot of things that may seem like the situation of the writing, but in school the writing situation is often different than the assignment situation. The student is writing to the teacher, about a subject they don't care about, to get a good grade, but the writing may be to write an opinion letter to a congressman on a recent law that was passed.

Because school often puts us in hypothetical situations, it is important that you understand your peer's writing situation.

Audience: Who is the writing supposed to be written for?

Purpose: What is the specific purpose of the writing: persuasive, informative, instructive, or entertaining?

Subject: What is the writing supposed to be about? Do they stay on that subject?

Context: Is it clear what, who, why, when, where, and how this writing is situated?

Ok, I know that's a lot. It's almost too much, you may say. I am not giving this to you as a list. These are just understandings. You have to remember that you are there to help. You can only give what you see, but if you realize how helpful you can be to your peer, you will be prepared to make a very positive impact on their writing.

Now that you have your own position firmly in your mind, you can read the paper. Make sure you have a place to write down ideas. If you can write on their paper or give online feedback or even if you are just discussing the ideas, if you have an idea or share a thought, but you don't write it down, YOUR IDEA WILL BE FORGOTTEN!

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Making positive comments: It's important that the person you are reviewing hears what is going well. Discuss parts specifically that you liked. Considering the purpose of the paper, what informed, instructed, persuaded or entertained you in the text? Use "because" in every sentence.

EXAMPLE: I liked the introduction *because*...

If you only say you liked something or didn't like something, it doesn't help the writer to know what worked for them.

Giving constructive criticism: Constructive criticism is identifiable because it doesn't just point out what's wrong, but it gives suggestions on how it could be better.

- **Focus on requirements**: First of all, did they meet the requirements? If they missed something, be sure to point it out. Those are points they will miss for sure if you don't help.
- **Focus on meaning**: After you know that you have covered the requirements, look at what they are saying. Is it clear what they are saying? Did they give enough evidence to support their ideas? Were there parts that you wanted to hear more, were there parts that you still had questions? Put those comments in to give ideas of how to revise their paper.
- **Look for "speed bumps":** Something I like to explain is to look for speed bumps in the writing. When you are reading something, was there anything that seemed to stop your reading, that confused you, that bored you, that distracted you, that tied your tongue? Pay attention to what your brain is doing. It will usually tell you when something could be revised. Remember that when you give feedback, you don't have to be right, just point out your thoughts and let the author decide if they want to take your advice or not.

Peer reviews can be some of the most rewarding parts of writing. Sharing with others can make us feel vulnerable, but getting feedback that encourages and directs us to be able to

have a stronger message helps us to feel more confident about what we are writing and more likely to be excited to publish.

58. On the Importance of Prep Work: How Automotive Painting Can Teach You to Polish Your Paper

A. J. ORTEGA

- Let's Start
- The Basic Automotive Paint Process
- But What Does This Have to Do with Writing?
- The Basic Writing Process
- The "Why?" of It All
- Avoiding Missteps in the Process
- The Final Buff

A NOTE ON ACTIVE READING AND CRITICAL THINKING

As you read this article, keep a notepad and pen, or a word

document, handy. There will be writing prompts that I hope will encourage you to think outside of the box, so to speak. Write thoughtfully, but without pressure. More importantly, write for yourself, and don't be afraid if your first draft is subpar; you'll have time to revise before you show your work to anyone else.

LET'S START

Oftentimes, when we are figuring out writing at the college level, it can seem like the answers to good writing are a bit of a mystery, locked away with only some people having the key. The truth of the matter is that writing, when looked at from a birds-eye view, can be simplified if you think outside the box.

For this exercise, we will simplify a general writing process and learn why it works by comparing it to painting a car. I know that sounds odd, but think about this with an open mind. No one is born a great writer, and like most activities, the step-by-step process of becoming a good writer can be learned.

Write

How can you tell if a car has a good paint job? When you see a car that really catches your eye, what makes it look good to you?

Similarly, when you read a piece of writing, either

from an article, a chapter of novel, a book of poems, or even an essay for school, what qualities make it clear and strong? In other words, how can you tell if a piece of writing is “good”?

When writing, just like when painting a car, leaving out any single step will expose flaws.

THE BASIC AUTOMOTIVE PAINT PROCESS

When painting a car, the process is adjusted depending on the condition of the paint, the body work, the age, and so on. Still, in general, the basic steps are outlined below:

- remove rust and dents
- sand
- clean
- mask car with tape
- prime
- sand
- paint basecoat
- apply clear coat
- wax

Again, this can be expanded or compressed according to the situation at hand. It can be broken down even more and made more specific, but for our purposes, the basic process will work fine for this example.

BUT WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH WRITING?

The process of painting a car takes place in a garage, with no pen or paper. So, what is the connection to writing? In short, the idea is that writing is also a process. A process that, usually, needs to be done in order. [For a different take on this, see the chapter "Writing Is Recursive."] Painting a car seems like a complex process, one that most people generally hire out to be completed. Writing seems like a complex process, one where only certain people have the skill, and we ask them for advice, hire them for their expertise. Depending on the type of writing being done, the intended audience, and your own writing style, the process may need to be adjusted or even done multiple times, but the basic steps are generally the same. But, in both cases, the general process is easy to follow.

THE BASIC WRITING PROCESS

You may be familiar with some or all of these steps below, but you may also include more steps in your process according to the writing situation:

- brainstorm
- read/research
- discuss
- outline
- draft
- revise
- rewrite
- edit

- proofread

THE "WHY?" OF IT ALL

In both of the above examples, the prep work is most important. If you skip steps in the process, specifically in the prep work, it will show in the final product in both writing and automotive painting.

As we revisit the list of basic steps for painting a car, I've highlighted the prep work for you:

- **remove rust and dents**
- **sand**
- **clean**
- **mask car with tape**
- **prime**
- **sand**
- paint basecoat
- apply clear coat
- buff

And as we revisit the list of steps in the basic writing process, I've highlighted the prep work for you here, too:

- **brainstorm**
- **read/research**
- **discuss or collaborate**
- **outline or plan**
- **draft**
- **revise**
- rewrite

- edit
- proofread

How important is this?

There's a common expression in the car-enthusiast community that goes, "Painting a car is 90% prep work. The last 10% is actually painting the car." While I think the expression stretches the truth a tiny bit for a stronger effect, I think we can safely say that most of the labor in painting a car is in the prep work. Similarly, most of the labor in the writing process is the prep work, or what some call prewriting. By my estimation, it looks/feels like 70% or more of the time and energy is dedicated to everything before the piece of writing looks mostly complete.

Write

If you skip the prep work in writing, what happens? What errors can occur when specific steps are skipped or rushed through?

AVOIDING MISSTEPS IN THE PROCESS

As stated above, most processes need to be done in order. When you got up this morning, you put on your socks then your shoes, not vice versa. That is an obvious error in the steps

to getting dressed, but it serves us to slow down and think about what we are doing and why, at least every once in a while.

When painting a car and rushing the prep work, the results will always show in the final product. If you don't remove the rust, and paint over it, the rust will come through in short time. If you don't clean the surface and rid it of the oils from your hands, the dust in the air, or other debris, the primer or paint won't adhere correctly. If you don't tape the parts you don't want painted, you will have overspray on places you don't want.

Similarly, when you rush the prep work in writing, the results will show in the final product. If you don't spend time thinking about what your task is, what the writing situation is, and brainstorming on your approach, the latter steps may be more difficult. If you skip the planning or outlining process, you might end up with organization issues in a later draft. If you don't revise your draft, you end up with a sloppy, error-filled paper.

THE FINAL BUFF

When you finish waxing a freshly painted car and stand back to admire your work, you're filled with a sense of pride. It is the same with a polished final draft of a piece of writing. But if you do not complete each step in the process, you miss out on that moment of pride.

Write

What processes are you familiar with that could also be analogous to the writing process? Write a paragraph or so about something you are familiar with, something you know, that can be compared in some way, even in part, to the writing process.

Or, you can deviate from the analogy idea and write about anything that helps with the writing process that doesn't seem clearly related to writing. What sort of things outside of English class help you understand the writing process?

59. Finding the Right Spiderman: An Introduction to Reference and Citation Formats

ANNIKA CLARK

- What Is Citation?
- Why Is It Important?
- How Do You Cite?
- In-text Citation
- Source List

INTRODUCTION

"Before we get started, does anyone want to get out?"
—Captain America: The Winter Soldier

Research. Reference. Citation. MLA. APA. Turabian. These are concepts that you are bound to encounter in your English Composition classes and many other classes throughout your college career. They're dull, confusing, and slightly off-putting academic terms that can seem like more trouble than they are

worth, chock full of over-specific rules. But they are essential to your academic life. College means research, and research means citation.

Citation can be a challenging thing to learn, let alone do correctly. Even more so when you've never needed to use any kind of formal citation guidelines before. When your professor says, "Write this paper in MLA," do you panic? Blank out? Or does your mind whirr with questions: What is MLA? Why do I have to write in it? What does MLA even mean? Parenthetical what now? If so, don't worry: you aren't alone. This chapter will help introduce you to the practice of reference and academic citation, hopefully making it a bit less daunting.

First, let us consider the word "reference." Even in casual conversation, we reference things all the time — whether it be a news article we just read, a tweet that was shared with us, or pop culture references of songs, shows or movies. Information is constantly being exchanged and shared, both in casual and academic settings. I'm sure most of us can think of someone we know who is constantly dropping movie quotes at parties. They can casually create punchlines and talking points out of these cultural references with sometimes amazing ease. But have you ever had a friend drop a reference you don't know? Or make a joke using the latest internet trend that you haven't heard of? Frustrating, right? With so much information out there, almost endless media, entertainment, publications, and references inside of references, it's pretty much impossible to easily know where everything comes from. But if the millions of documentation styles and their various rules prove anything, it's that academia sure has tried.

Meme based on THE AVENGERS 2012

Consider the vast world of nerd-dom that is the Marvel Universe. If you have a friend who is really into Marvel, odds are they will constantly be bringing up quotes, events, or even knowledge that is exclusive to the comic books, bragging and lauding their own knowledge of how this or that object in the background of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* is really a nod to volume 12 of blah blah blah. If you are just a casual watcher of the movies, you are probably at a loss. But what if you actually wanted to get on that same level of lore knowledge? What if you also wanted to be able to make references to every character and plot within the massive Marvel universe? Having

your friend tell you where they got their information might be a good start. You might ask, who, where, or what are they referencing exactly? These questions bring us to citation, which is — put simply — telling your audience where you got your information.

WHAT IS CITATION?

"Nothing goes over my head. My reflexes are too fast. I would catch it."

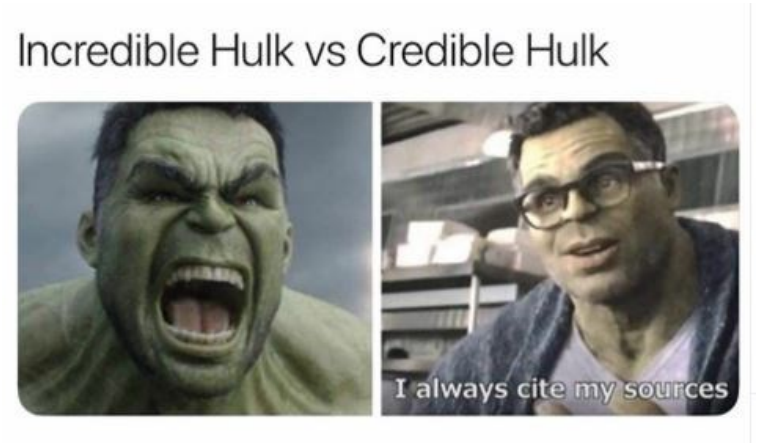
—Guardians of the Galaxy

Social media is another casual-yet-common example of reference and citation in everyday life. Every time you share your friend's hiking pic on Facebook or retweet a joke from a celebrity, you are in fact taking part in the exchange of information. You are also engaging in the practice of citation. Luckily, the citation part of this exchange is largely automatic on social media, as the original post is embedded within the share, so it is easy to see who made the post. Still, it illustrates the practice of citation perfectly. By showing the original post, it gives credit to the original poster and leads a viewer directly to that person's page or profile, where more of their "work" can be found. Alternatively, there is the dreaded

and oft-unauthorized "repost," where your carefully crafted thanksgiving post is copy/pasted, or a picture you took is downloaded and re-uploaded on to someone else's wall. Rude, right? Even on the seemingly wild and lawless plains of the internet, it's considered common decency to at least "tag" the person who came up with the content.At its most basic, citation is the method by which a writer shows where the information in their work comes from, or where their referenced material originates. If your friend drops the quote "I choose to run towards my problems, and not away from them. Because that's what heroes do," and afterwards helpfully tells you the quote is from the hit *Thor: Ragnarok*, that is a form of citation, though a casual one. You then don't have to search and search to find said movie if you happened to be interested in seeing it. Now you can experience the film yourself, see if it's really as good as your friend claims, or make sure that the quote really did come from that movie (even I sometimes think there are too many Marvel movies). Similarly, academic citation allows the reader to find your source, read it for themselves, and verify the information within: namely if it is valid, used correctly, and where it fits with the rest of the research on the subject.

This practice of citation on social media, not to mention the internet at large, is also essential amid the current cultural climate of "fake news." Because of the ease at which misinformation spreads, understanding how reference and citation work is more important than ever. However, it can also be more easily misused. "Facts" can spread without verification at alarming speeds, and rumors quickly become accepted as truth. Marvel fans may remember the lead up to *Avengers: Endgame* as a particularly chaotic time on the internet. Marvel

Studios kept information tighter than a drum, preventing any leaks or spoilers. Fans were determined to get even a crumb of what to expect, which led to rumors upon rumors. This particular group of nerds (myself included) became expert-level researchers, digging into every possible hint. Nebula becomes the real villain instead of Thanos? False, just some person's conspiratorial blog post. One of the biggest and most-loved characters dies at the end? True. Straight from the mouth of Tom Holland, our dear spoiler-spewing Spiderman. Obviously, an actor in the film is going to have more credibility than a random fan, and knowing where the information originated helps verify any claim. If you are sharing that last tidbit of information with your friends, saying you heard it from Tom Holland means you are more likely to be believed, becoming more credible yourself. The fan's Nebula theory, based only on personal speculation, is not going to have that same weight, even if it might be interesting to discuss. Getting into the practice of always checking the original source of information, then deciding whether that source is credible, helps avoid false information. If a source is not provided, the information should always be looked at with skepticism.



One version of "Angry Hulk vs Civil Hulk" memes

In academia, these same practices done so casually on the internet are simply given a more specific form and function. That "form" is the various formats you may encounter: APA, MLA, Turabian, etc. The function still adheres to the basics: telling your audience where you got your information. As stated in the MLA Handbook, "the purpose of any documentation style is to allow authors to guide their readers quickly and unobtrusively to the source … of borrowed material" (19).

Far Too Many Formats?

Different citation formats exist for different subjects and academic fields. The most common are APA, MLA, and Turabian (also called Chicago). All of these formats have different rules and conventions, which are entirely based on what information is most important within the field. For example, a science article detailing medical information would want to emphasize the most recent research, which is why APA always requires that you state the year both in in-text citation and as one of the first pieces of information in the works cited. Conversely, MLA emphasizes names and titles more. Publication styles can sometimes seem like feuding cousins, but the ultimate goal is the same.

APA, or the American Psychological Association, is primarily used in the field of Science.

MLA, or the Modern Language Association, is usually used in Humanities fields, such as English, Philosophy, and Sociology.

Turabian/Chicago is commonly used in History and Fine Art.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

"I know my worth."

—Marvel's Agent Carter

Consider again your Marvel friend. What does he gain by constantly referring to obscure plot points from volume 78 of *Spiderman*? Clout, for the most part. The right to situate themselves within this particular plane of knowledge and prove that they are well-versed in it. Failing to provide context for a particular reference is, at worst, plagiarism and, at best, self-aggrandizing. It's going to be pretty obvious that your Marvel friend is not the main source from which the vastly popular comic universe springs. Not telling you where a particular Thanos

quote came from because “you should just know” indicates a hefty level of pride, or could even hint that they don’t actually know either, and are just throwing around obscure information to make themselves look knowledgeable. It’s irresponsible, and just plain rude. Again, it’s a kind of fraud, greatly decreasing any credibility your friend may have as a Marvel fan.We’ve all heard professors break out that horrible word: *plagiarism*. It is the absolute no-no of the academic world. Every student is told to avoid it at all costs. If caught, you could face a zero grade on your assignment, fail the class, or worse, be expelled or suspended. So what exactly is plagiarism? Here is SLCC’s definition: “Presenting within one’s own work the ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of that person’s authorship is considered plagiarism. Students who are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism should consult with their instructors. Claims of ignorance will not necessarily excuse the offense.” The offense of plagiarism directly violates the student’s responsibility towards academic integrity, and, depending on the circumstance or institution, has a variety of consequences, such as the ones listed earlier. Additionally, the MLA Handbook explains, “plagiarism is presenting another person’s ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one’s own. It is thus a kind of fraud: deceiving others to gain something of value” (6–7). Granted, for most students plagiarism is accidental, usually because they are simply unaware of what constitutes plagiarism, but it is a serious topic to consider. Failing to tell your reader your sources, whether by accident or on purpose, makes it seem like you are claiming that information as your own, which as mentioned earlier, is

a kind of fraudulent behavior. Proper citation shows that "the writer knows the importance of giving credit where credit is due" (MLA 6). In other words, it is respect for the author's work and a form of thanks for their contribution to your own work.

The same can be said for academic reference. Dropping quotes without sources or names without context is phony knowledge. Citation practices like MLA and APA exist to avoid and prevent this very type of situation. Citing, and thereby giving credit where credit is due, shows that you have done the research and can contribute to the ongoing academic conversation, and it proves you value and respect the exchange of knowledge and creativity. With so much information running rampant through the world, particularly in the age of the internet, it is especially important to cite as accurately as possible. Citation puts each source in context, and shows how individual sources build on and interact with each other. In her article "Citing References: The Big Picture," Jasmine Bridges states: "Citing sources is an acknowledgement that even original findings build on prior knowledge" (391). For your Marvel friend who doesn't take responsibility for their references, they are likely doing so to claim some kind of superiority, though the effect is actually the opposite.

Citation is a vital part of academic discourse. It not only helps your readers find information, but also elevates and validates you as a writer. You may have noticed that I have made a few references thus far. I do this for the same reasons stated above — to add credibility to my writing and verify my knowledge. To further back me up, Ohio State University's article "Choosing and Using Sources" states these three primary reasons to cite: "To avoid plagiarism and maintain academic integrity … to acknowledge the work of others … [and] to provide credibility to your work and to place your work in context." Now you know I'm not the only nit-picky professor telling you how important citing is. See how that worked?

"Why Can't I Just Put a Link?"

Simply copy/pasting a link into your paper does not count as citation. Links change, websites evolve, move, or disappear entirely. Maybe your reader simply wants to know the author or title of the article, but can't access the internet at that moment, or is reading your article on printed paper, which would make it pretty hard to click the link. How would they know what source you used? Remember, the primary goal of citation is to lead your reader to your sources. A link is confusing and unreliable. You should always give as much information as possible to make it easy on your reader. Giving the name of your source, rather than the clusters of letters and numbers in a link, also increases your credibility, showing your reader you know exactly who are referencing.

HOW DO YOU CITE?

"Don't do anything I would do, and definitely don't do anything I wouldn't do. There's a little gray area in there, and that's where you operate."
—Spiderman: Homecoming

So then, how the heck do you cite? If you've ever perused the MLA handbook, or done a tentative google search of "APA format," what you found might have seemed intimidating: eye-

crossing lists of rules for every little thing. However, no matter what format you are using, there are generally two main components to citation. One is an in-text indication of the source. For MLA, that is the in-text parenthetical citation, which gives the author's last name and page number, if available, immediately after the referenced material, which could be a quote or paraphrase. The second component is a collective list of all your referenced material. Bridges explains these two essential components as first, a "reference in the body of the article that marks the place where information from another source is being used," and second, an "entry on a reference page where complete information about the source is listed" (392). So, while there are indeed many rules for documentation styles, the practice still boils down to these two parts: the in-text citation, and the source list.

Tip

Write down, in some form or another, where you got your information while you are going about your research. If you can, cite as you go, organize your references by source, and don't lose track of your quotes or their location! It can help to keep a document that is entirely made up of your sources and their citations, so they don't get lost among your many drafts. Some word processors, like Microsoft Word, have built-in tools to help you do this!

IN-TEXT CITATION

First, let's go over in-text citation. Whatever you may be writing, every time you use information that is not yours, whether as a direct quote or summary, you must specify where that information came from. There are a few different ways to do this. The easiest method, which can always be used, regardless of format, is the attributive tag. Similar to tagging someone in a post online, the attributive tag gives the name of the author of your source (if an author is not listed, you give the title or publisher). When writing a paper, you introduce that attribution as part of your writing, so that it flows in the sentence. I've used a few attributive tags in this article so far, and would encourage you to go back and try to find them. Here, however, is one example:

> As stated in the MLA Handbook, "the purpose of any documentation style is to allow authors to guide their readers quickly and unobtrusively to the source … of borrowed material" (19).

The attributive tag in this particular example is "as stated in the MLA Handbook." I named my source within the sentence, prior to giving the quote. This is an attributive tag. It is the simplest way to avoid plagiarism, and gives credit to the author while placing your source in context with your own writing. But what about the little "(19)" that I placed after the quote? The number in parentheses is an MLA-formatted parenthetical citation, indicating the page number on which I found the quote, marking the precise location. If I had not used an attributive tag, instead simply giving the quote with no introduction, I would use that same parenthetical citation to

provide the name of my source. Here's what it would look like in that case:

> "The purpose of any documentation style is to allow authors to guide their readers quickly and unobtrusively to the source … of borrowed material" (MLA 19).

Using in-text citations and attributive tags immediately tells your reader where you got your information. It also helps indicate what information is yours, and what comes from your research. Additionally, the name given in the parenthetical citation and/or the attributive tag should lead your reader directly to the next essential element of citation: the list of sources.

SOURCE LIST

The second vital component of citation is your list of sources. In MLA, this list is called the "Works Cited." In APA, it is simply "References." "Bibliography" is another common word used to refer to this list. More informal publications like internet articles don't necessarily have to call it anything, but any properly documented, and therefore credible, piece of work should always include a collection of the referenced sources.

While different formats, again, have different rules for exactly how to write out your list of sources, all contain the same basic elements: the name of the author, the title of the source, some kind of location information (generally a publisher or name of a website), and the date of publication. This is considered the

minimum amount of identifying characteristics that will help a reader locate the source. Similarly, while different formats vary, the basic order of information in a bibliographic citation is more logical than it seems at first glance. When referencing any piece of work, what is the most important information? Who created it, and what the piece is called. Virtually all citation formats begin with the author and are followed by the title (APA does, however, require the year of publication to be listed early on in the citation). Other identifying information such as publisher, year, volume number, edition, etc. are also important markers for your readers. It is generally good practice to provide whatever information is available about your source. Documentation styles vary on how to include these details in your list of sources, but once you know what you are looking for and why (helping the reader find the exact same source you did) the practice starts to make more sense.

Let's use one of my sources as an example: *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide* by Stuart Greene and April Lidinsky. Since I use quotes and various writing advice from this book in this article, it must therefore be listed in my Works Cited section at the end (which if you take a quick peek, it certainly is). But let's go over what that citation would look like right now as well, shown in both MLA and APA format:

MLA:

Greene, Stuart and April Lidinsky. *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide*. 3rd ed, Bedford/St Martin's, 2015.

APA:

Greene, S. & Lidinsky, A. (2015). *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide*. (3rd ed).

Bedford/St Martin's.

For both MLA and APA, the author is the first identifier in the citation, with the last name listed before first. As mentioned earlier, one of the uses of the in-text citation is to direct your reader to the full citation in your list of sources. Therefore, the information given in the in-text citation, usually the last name of the author, is the first piece of information in the bibliographic citation. If you notice that I use a quote and either give an in-text parenthetical citation, (Greene), or write the attributive tag, "according to Greene," then you know you can scan my Works Cited at the end, search for "Greene" and easily find the right source. Within the bibliographic citation itself, all the most important identifying information is given, in order to guide your reader to the right place.

CONCLUSION

"Part of the journey is the end."
—Avengers: Endgame

If this seems overwhelming still, consider this advice from Greene: "the important thing is to adhere faithfully to your chosen (or assigned) style throughout your paper." The key therefore, is not necessarily accuracy, but consistency. Whether or not there is a comma in your in-text citation, or if the year comes before or after the title in the Works Cited, is far less important than making sure your citations are clear and understandable. This concept supports the overall goal of citation: to have your sources be easy to find. Having a clear

and consistent style will give your readers the best chance of locating what they need. This is also why there are so many different styles relative to each discipline. MLA, APA, Turabian, etc. are simply patterns of citation that work best for different types of research and writing.

While it is important to practice the conventions of academic citation formats, clarity and consistency is the more crucial, and more attainable goal. As Ole Bjorn Redkal puts it, "good citation practice is about being as honest, accurate, and thorough as possible" (570). It can help to think of the practice of citation as a roadmap, guiding your reader to whatever information they need. Therefore, when you are citing, be sure that you are accurately citing the necessary information to the best of your ability. Not giving enough information, say, not providing a page number, "is like inviting someone to your house and just giving them the street name but not the house number" (Redkal 572). Granted, the proliferation of online sources that have no page number complicates this, but the principle remains the same: make sure your readers know what house to look for. To bring our metaphor back to Marvel, say you make a Spiderman reference to your friend that they don't recognize. They'll probably want to know which Spiderman film to even begin looking at. *Spiderman 2*? *The Amazing Spiderman*? F*ar From Home*? What about the comics? With at least a couple dozen spider-heroes, telling your friend whether you are discussing Toby Maguire's spidey or a scene from the animated series would be immensely helpful. Even better, what episode? Or what time in the movie? Make sure you give enough information to keep your readers from getting lost. If you are successful, your reader won't wander into the wrong Spiderverse.

Marvel Comics via RojakDaily

Hopefully you now have a little more insight into the method behind the madness that is academic citation. As you absorb all of this knowledge, keep in mind the ultimate goal of citation. As a final stab at credibility, here is that goal according to The Norton Field Guide to Writing: "As a writer, you need to acknowledge any words and ideas that come from others — to give credit where credit is due, to recognize the various authorities and many perspectives you have considered, to show readers where they can find your sources, and to situate your own arguments in the ongoing conversation" (Bullock 370). So go forth and practice citation, so we can all find the right Spiderman.

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60. Studying Without a Textbook

JERRI A. HARWELL

You are probably used to reading textbooks. When assigned chapters, you have been taught how to read and study as you go. Chapters are organized and designed to be studied. Objectives are listed and perhaps a chapter review is provided at the end of the chapter.

Reading a Canvas (or Blackboard, Moodle, or other Learning Management System) course is different from reading a textbook. Since you aren't turning sequential pages, you can easily get lost. Many of your courses will still have objectives and a review may be in the form of a short quiz.

Following are some suggestions to help you navigate a Canvas course using Open Education Resources (OER).

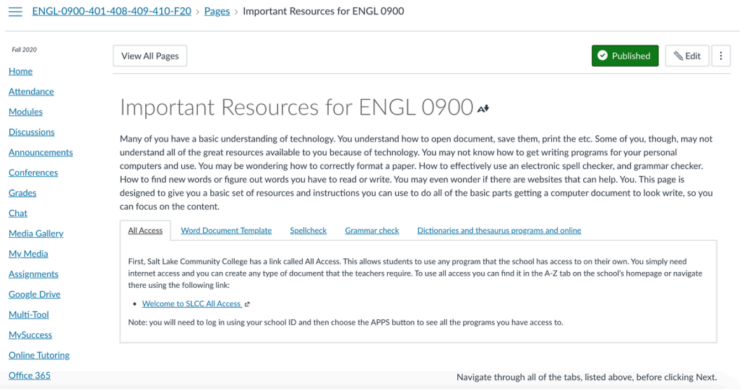
ACING O.E.R.

If your class is using OER, you don't have to buy a textbook; instead, you may pay a fee for the course which is minute compared to the cost of a textbook. Everything you need to read, watch, and study is incorporated into the Canvas course. Still, here are some guidelines to help you be successful in this course and others.

Read Every Content Page

Again, instead of purchasing or reading a textbook, your readings and assignments are in Canvas. Canvas is divided into modules, content pages, assignments, discussions, and others. Be sure to read each and every page, click on and read every tab, and open all the hyperlinks if you want to get the most out of your course.

As you can see in the illustration below, sometimes there are several tabs and links to click. One strategy is to read the tab first, open the link in a new window and read that, then open the next tab and do the same, moving left to right until you have opened every tab and link and read everything.



An example of a Canvas page with multiple tabs and links.

If you were reading an actual textbook and your teacher said to read Chapter 1, pages 1–27, would you skip pages 8 through 15? No, you would not. When you are going through an OER Canvas course, when you do not read a content page or don't click on that link to read an

article or watch a video, you are literally (and figuratively speaking) skipping pages and pages of information. When you do that and get to the assignment, you will be unsure of what to do. Information your instructor assumes you have read and understood are in those pages and links.

As you read, you may want to take notes electronically, or highlight content on the pages.

Attend Every Class

Even though the coursework is in Canvas, striving to attend every class ensures that you do not miss valuable information. Sometimes life happens. You may wake up ill or have a family emergency. Make attending class the norm, and not the exception or the occasional occurrence.

If possible, arrive early to the classroom. Find a seat that will help you to focus on the instructor and not those around you. Remember, you don't want to be distracted, especially by friends.

If you are taking an online class, take "attend every class" to mean "do something every day," as SLCC Professor Karen Kwan, Ed.D. (Psychology) tells her online students. Often with online classes it is "out of sight, out of mind," as I tell my students. Without getting into a daily routine, students simply forget to complete assignments.

If you are registered in a Hybrid class, attend in person or online, but attend each week.

If your class is Internet Broadcast, plan to attend or watch every lecture.

Read and Re-read Every Assignment

Do not attempt to complete an assignment without knowing and understanding what you are expected to do. Assignment guidelines are written in Canvas along with a rubric or evaluation criteria. A rubric should tell exactly what you need to do to ace an assignment. The assignment guidelines or instructions should tell you if you should use a particular style guide or handbook such as MLA or APA.

Ask questions in class or email your instructor if you need clarification. Take advantage of Student Writing and Reading Centers if you are not understanding an assignment. Appointments are free and are in person or online. A writing consultant can read over the assignment with you.

Don't skip around in Canvas and complete assignments out of order. Read each content page and assignment sequentially if that is how your class is organized.

Complete Every Assignment

You might think this goes without saying but skipping assignments can not only affect your grade, it can also affect your understanding of the course content. Ignoring or not completing the smaller assignments can lead to failing to understand future assignments.

Submit Every Assignment

In middle school or high school, did you ever complete an assignment, but not submit it? Do not make the same mistake in college.

Be sure to submit your assignments in Canvas. Canvas will confirm that you submitted it with the submission confirmation, so you can verify this yourself. If you do not look away from the screen after you submit an assignment, you will notice the confetti falling congratulating you on submitting the assignment.

I would discourage you from emailing and calling your instructor to ask if he or she received the assignment. Your professors do not stay up until 11:59 p.m. (or whenever your submission deadline is) and watch as students submit assignments.

Submit Every Assignment on Time

Don't miss that 11:59 p.m. deadline (or whenever your submission deadline is). Verify the time zone used for the submission deadline with your instructor especially if you are taking an online course. One semester I had online students from Alabama to Alaska; that's a four-hour time difference. I made sure everyone knew to adjust the submission time for Utah's mountain time zone. Keep this in mind if you travel between time zones for short trips or vacations during the semester.

Know the course policy for late submissions. Some instructors will allow late submissions and some will not. Some will allow you to submit an assignment late, but

with a late penalty where points or a percentage of the total points are deducted.

Schedule Your Activities

Knowing how your course is structured is critical to studying. Does your instructor suggest you follow the Modules sequentially, or use the Canvas Calendar, To-do Lists, or other?

Depending on how the course is structured, you can create a schedule of your weekly activities. Perhaps you could read new content on Monday, participate in discussions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, complete smaller assignments on Thursdays, and complete all other assignments by the weekend or whenever your deadline is.

Putting It All Together

Eventually you may learn about Descartes, Shakespeare, Bernoulli's Principle, Physics, Music Theory, Psychology, Rhetoric, Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Rhetorical Analysis, Annotated Bibliographies, etc. while in college. In order to learn about them, you have to be successful in this class, and the next, and the one after that. Now is when you begin your college success story.

"KNOW YOUR LIMITS . . . SCHOOL, WORK, LIFE—BALANCE."
– Glory Johnson-Stanton

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61. A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

This chapter is one section of a five-part series on academic literacy strategies:

1. A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies
2. General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy
3. Reading for Understanding
4. Reading to Learn and Remember
5. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

- Strategies for College Learning
- What Is Strategic Learning?
- What Are Learning Strategies?
- Effective and Efficient Learning Strategies

- Metacognition and College Learning
- Adapting Learning Strategies to Different Learning Situations

STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE LEARNING

A **strategy** is *a plan of action that an individual or group uses to achieve a goal*. Strategies provide a framework (or structure) for making decisions, taking action, self-assessing, and adapting or changing behavior. As you work toward reaching your individual educational goals, you will develop a variety of different academic literacy strategies for different areas of college learning, including reading, writing, studying for tests, taking tests, finding information, conducting original research, completing quantitative (math) tasks, and using technology as a tool for learning. This article provides an overview of concepts that can help students think about and begin to strengthen the strategies that they use for learning.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC LEARNING?

Strategic learning means making decisions and purposefully

taking action to increase academic success or achieve an educational goal. Strategic learning in college includes

- taking an active role in the learning process
- learning how to learn and study at an advanced level
- using individual approaches to learning and adapting them to different types of courses and assignments
- applying knowledge about learning for an academic purpose
- self-assessing, monitoring, and self-regulating (controlling) learning

WHAT ARE LEARNING STRATEGIES?

College learning strategies are methods that help students improve their learning and academic success. They are conscious, intentional techniques that students use to adapt how they learn based on the purpose and requirements of an academic task in a specific learning situation.

Here are some examples of general college-level learning strategies:

- spacing out study sessions over time
- previewing a chapter before reading it
- using words in bold in a textbook to help

identify important concepts

- creating flashcards to take notes from reading to use while practicing for an exam
- writing notes in the margins of a reading assignment to record ideas for an essay
- organizing ideas for a writing assignment through outlining or prewriting

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT LEARNING STRATEGIES

For most situations, learning strategies should be both effective and efficient. An ***effective* learning strategy** works for its intended purpose, and students are successful when they use it in a course. An ***efficient* learning strategy** doesn't take too much time or resources. Some strategies are effective but not efficient. They might work, but students typically don't have enough time to use them. For example, memory tricks like inventing songs to memorize facts or vocabulary might help some students remember information, but they are time consuming to create. Other strategies are quick and efficient but ineffective, including skimming through a textbook chapter without reading it, cramming for an exam, and highlighting or underlining without note taking. In contrast, annotating a textbook by taking notes directly in the margins of a book or handout is an example of a learning strategy that is both effective and efficient. Students can easily take notes

while reading and then use those notes to find information later while studying for an exam.

METACOGNITION AND COLLEGE LEARNING

Metacognition is a concept that describes thinking about thinking. In "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing," three national organizations for writing teachers define metacognition as "the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge" (CWPA, NCTE, and NWP 5). Metacognition is an important part of using effective learning strategies. As a college student, you need to build on your previous experiences to develop an awareness of your own learning processes. You also need to monitor (or pay attention to) and reflect on the learning strategies that you use for each course.

ADAPTING LEARNING STRATEGIES TO DIFFERENT LEARNING SITUATIONS

Perhaps the most important part of using effective learning strategies is figuring out what works (and does not work) for a particular field of study, course, assignment, and learning task. Educational researchers Melinda Burchard and Peter Swerdzewski explain that "learning strategies are not tricks or shortcuts; instead, strategic learning focuses on matching

specific approaches, processes or strategies to the individual's learning needs." By noticing and evaluating (self-assessing) how you learn in specific situations, you will strengthen your ability to adapt your learning strategies based on the requirements and purposes of different academic tasks.

Learning Strategies: Questions for Reflection and Writing

1. Based on your own experience, what strategies have been most effective in helping you learn? Why did those strategies work for you?
2. What strategies have been the most efficient in helping you reduce the time that it takes to study? Why did those strategies work for you?
3. Which learning strategies have worked for you in more than one type of course and with different types of academic tasks? Which learning strategies are unique to a specific type of course or assignment?
4. How might you apply your previous experiences with learning strategies to the courses that you are currently taking?

Activity: Exploring Metacognition

Do informal research to look up definitions and examples of metacognition in the learning processes. You might also look up information about cognition and cognitive processes. *What did you learn about strategies for monitoring (paying attention to) your own learning? What did you learn about metacognition that you might apply to your work as a college reader and writer?*

[Continue to the next section: "General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy."]

Resources for Further Study

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62. General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy

This article explains the difference between general academic literacy skills and strategies (which can be used for reading and writing in many different types of courses) and more specialized literacy strategies that are unique to particular fields of study.

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

This chapter is one section of a five-part series on academic literacy strategies:

1. A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies
2. General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy
3. Reading for Understanding
4. Reading to Learn and Remember
5. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

- What Is General Academic Literacy?
- Academic Literacy Strategies
- What Is Disciplinary Literacy?
- Disciplinary Literacy Skills
- Developing Disciplinary Literacy Knowledge and Skills as a College Student

WHAT IS GENERAL ACADEMIC LITERACY?

Academic literacy is the ability to apply general reading, writing, and critical-thinking skills and strategies to a wide range of different types of courses. Academic literacy can also include other types of literacy required for advanced learning, including quantitative (math) skills, listening, speaking, cross-cultural communication, information literacy, and using technology as a tool for learning. In college, students strengthen their academic literacy by building on their prior experiences and developing more advanced skills and strategies for reading, writing, and learning.

ACADEMIC LITERACY STRATEGIES

A **literacy strategy** is an action that a student purposefully takes to increase academic success and develop learning skills. Often, the term literacy strategy refers specifically to methods for increasing success in reading or writing.

Here are some examples of general academic literacy strategies for college learning:

- previewing a textbook chapter to understand how it is organized
- annotating reading assignments (writing notes in the margins of a text)
- asking self-quizzing questions while reading
- using an informal outline to organize evidence from sources for a research project
- using a library database to find credible, trustworthy sources
- revising a writing assignment in response to feedback

These methods for learning are **general academic literacy strategies** because they aren't limited to a particular type of course or field of study. A student could use and adapt these strategies for reading or writing in many different college courses and for a variety of assignments.

General Academic Literacy Strategies: Questions for Reflection and Writing

1. What are some general academic literacy strategies that you use for successfully completing your college reading and writing assignments?
2. What methods for learning have you already developed that work well for reading or writing many different types of courses?
3. What challenges have you had in adapting general academic literacy strategies to the requirements of specific courses?

WHAT IS DISCIPLINARY LITERACY?

A **discipline** is an academic or professional field of study. **Disciplinary literacy** is a term for describing the **specialized** knowledge and skills that advanced learners and experts develop within a field of study (Shanahan and Shanahan). Each academic or professional field is a community with unique ways of reading, writing, and learning. Experts in a field of study have rules and expectations for how they use written texts to create knowledge and communicate with each other. They also have a shared vocabulary with specialized terms that

reflect the types of knowledge that experts produce and write about within the field.

Timothy Shanahan, a nationally recognized expert on literacy, explains why disciplinary literacy is important for reading, writing, and learning:

> Disciplinary literacy is based upon the idea that literacy and text are specialized, and even unique, across the disciplines. Historians engage in very different approaches to reading than mathematicians do, for instance. Similarly, even those who know little about math or literature can easily distinguish a science text from a literary one.
>
> Fundamentally, because each field of study has its own purposes, its own kinds of evidence, and its own style of critique, each will produce different texts, and reading those different kinds of texts are going to require some different reading strategies.

Understanding the difference between general academic literacy and disciplinary literacy can help college students learn how to identify, develop, and eventually become proficient (or skilled) in the specialized strategies used for reading and writing within an academic or professional field of study.

DISCIPLINARY LITERACY SKILLS

Disciplinary literacy has two components: a) **specialized knowledge** and b) **advanced literacy skills**.

Here are some examples of the disciplinary literacy skills that individuals develop as they eventually become experts or professionals within the fields that they select to study:

- using unique ways of reading, writing, and critical thinking
- conducting research with specialized methods
- using learning from reading to develop expertise
- adapting writing strategies to meet the expectations of expert readers
- applying previous learning to new learning in a field of study
- using advanced knowledge to solve problems
- contributing to the creation of new knowledge in a field
- developing new skills and strategies based on emerging knowledge in a field

DEVELOPING DISCIPLINARY LITERACY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AS A COLLEGE STUDENT

In the first college year, students who plan to transfer to a four-year campus (or who start at a university) take general

education courses in many different fields of study. Academic success in general education classes requires students to adapt how they read, write, and study to multiple different types of courses as they work toward fulfilling degree requirements. As students progress into higher level courses, they focus more on specialized coursework in their professional programs or major and minor fields of study. Students who are working toward applied technical degrees may start to take more focused coursework in the first year or two of college. As students begin to take multiple courses within the same discipline, they draw from their previous learning in other courses to develop specialized literacy skills and strategies that they apply to new reading, writing, and learning tasks in the same field. This process of developing knowledge and becoming increasingly more skilled in the advanced work of a discipline is how students move from being beginners (or novices) to eventually becoming an expert. The work of developing disciplinary expertise and strengthening specialized literacy skills continues as college graduates move into the workplace or enroll in graduate education programs. Developing disciplinary knowledge and expertise is part of a lifelong learning process.

Disciplinary Literacy: Questions for Reflection and Writing

1. As a college student, what are some differences that you have noticed in the requirements for writing assignments in different fields of study? What do those differences suggest about the knowledge and skills that professors expect you

to develop as a writer in each field of study?

2. What are some differences that you notice in the types of reading assignments that you complete for different college courses? What do those differences suggest about how experts develop and communicate knowledge within each field of study?
3. In the courses that you are currently taking, how have you adapted (or changed) your reading, writing, or research strategies based on the requirements and expectations for each field of study?

[Continue to the next section: “Reading for Understanding.”]

Resources for Further Study

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63. Reading for Understanding

This short article describes concepts that help college students understand reading as a social process, evaluate (self-assess) reading comprehension, and begin to adapt reading strategies to different types of college reading tasks.

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

This chapter is one section of a five-part series on academic literacy strategies:

1. A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies
2. General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy
3. Reading for Understanding
4. Reading to Learn and Remember
5. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

- Reading Comprehension
- Reading Is a Social Process
- Monitoring and Self-Assessing Reading Comprehension
- Strategic Reading
- What Is Active Reading?

READING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension refers to the ability to read, understand, and remember ideas and information in a written text. Reading comprehension lays a foundation for independent learning and all types of academic literacy. It's also essential for literacy in the workplace, in the community, and at home. Understanding how to read complex, challenging texts is the starting point for most academic activities in college, including following instructions, reading critically, studying for exams, and taking texts.

READING IS A SOCIAL PROCESS

It's important for college students to understand that reading is an active, social process (NCTE; Holschuh and Paulson). Readers create meaning from what they read based on their

previous experiences with literacy and with the subject that they are studying. Readers also draw from their cultural, social, and personal backgrounds to make sense of what they read.

David Bloome (an expert on literacy and reading) describes three different social aspects of reading:

> First, all reading events involve a social context. Social interaction surrounds and influences interaction with a written text. Second, reading is a cultural activity. That is, reading has social uses which are an extension of people's day-to-day cultural doings. And third, reading is a socio-cognitive process. Through learning to read and through reading itself, children learn culturally appropriate information, activities, values, and ways of thinking and problem solving. (134)

Each reading activity that you complete for a college course takes place within a specific social and cultural situation. Your own background, knowledge, and previous learning experiences shape your understanding of a written text and how you read it. Your purpose for reading, what you learn from a text, and how you use learning from reading in a course depend partly on the social interactions that take place in a classroom or online with an instructor and other students. Further, as you read texts written for a particular course within a field of study, you will learn about and begin to develop ways for thinking, knowing, and doing work in that academic discipline, trade, or profession. Instructors also have expectations for what students need to do with reading assignments that are based on their own academic backgrounds and their personal teaching preferences. As a college reader, you need to adapt your reading strategies and habits based on many different social reading situations.

MONITORING AND SELF-ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension monitoring is the process that active college readers use to pay attention to their own understanding of a written text, including

- monitoring (paying attention to) whether the reader understands the text
- developing self-awareness of the reader's own reading processes
- identifying which parts of a text are difficult to understand
- figuring out how to adapt reading strategies to increase comprehension
- taking steps to correct problems with reading comprehension

Here are some examples of basic self-assessment questions for monitoring reading comprehension:

- Do I understand what I am reading enough to achieve my reading purpose? If not, why not? What strategies can I use for increasing my understanding?
- Are the reading strategies or methods that I am using working for me? Why or why not?
- If a method or strategy isn't working, what might work better for the purpose of this particular reading task?

STRATEGIC READING

Reading strategies are purposeful steps or actions that readers take to increase their reading comprehension and successfully use a written text for a specific purpose. **Strategic reading** means adapting to different reading situations and adjusting reading strategies based on the purpose of a reading task.

Skilled college readers need to select reading strategies that fit each unique reading assignment and course. Many different factors shape a reading situation and influence the choices that experienced readers make, including

- the academic discipline or field of study for a course
- type of text (genre)
- the difficulty level (complexity) of the text
- requirements of related coursework (what students are expected to do with the text)
- whether students need to memorize concepts from a text for a quiz or test
- how texts will be used for course learning activities in a classroom or online
- prior knowledge about (or lack of experience with) the topic and content
- the cultural, social, or historical background knowledge required for understanding the text
- instructor expectations
- prior experiences with other texts written for similar audiences and purposes
- reading clues and study resources available in a textbook or online

Other personal factors can affect the choices that a college reader makes at a particular moment in time, including alertness, fatigue, physical and mental wellness, overall academic workload, available time, distractions, location for studying, and access to personal resources. Ideally, college readers select the most effective study strategies that will work for a particular assignment and course. However, college students also need to balance the need to understand and remember what they read for a course with other demands on their time by developing strategies that work effectively but aren't time consuming. College reading strategies must be flexible enough that readers can adapt them based on personal needs and the requirements of a course.

WHAT IS ACTIVE READING?

Active reading means engaging fully in the reading process, including

- applying reading strategies to increase comprehension
- adapting reading strategies based on the purpose of a reading situation
- selecting reading strategies that work for a particular field of study or course
- interacting with a text (instead of just taking in information)
- monitoring (self-assessing) reading comprehension
- reading critically (questioning, evaluating, analyzing ideas in a text)

Here are a few examples of active reading strategies that college students use to increase their reading comprehension and academic success:

- varying their reading rate (speed) according to the purpose and difficulty level of an assignment
- asking questions and making predictions as they read (sometimes subconsciously)
- studying selectively (choosing which parts of a text memorize, skim, or even skip)
- understanding and learning new words by using reading clues within the text
- examining the structure of a text for clues about how to read it
- making connections between the text and previous learning experiences

One of the most important parts of active reading is developing an awareness of reading as a process. Most reading comprehension strategies are part of a three-stage reading process:

Before Reading (Prereading)

Prereading strategies are techniques that students use to prepare for reading a challenging text or studying new information. Examples of prereading strategies include previewing the structure and content of a text, identifying resources in a textbook chapter, reading an

abstract (summary) of a research article, and skimming through an introduction to identify the main point. Identifying what the reader already knows about a topic is another example of a prereading strategy. If a college reading assignment is especially challenging, some students do background reading on the topic before reading the assigned text.

While Reading

Expert readers use a variety of different strategies while they read and adjust those strategies as they monitor their reading comprehension. Note taking is one of the most commonly used reading strategies because the process of taking organized notes can both increase comprehension and serve as a resource for exam preparation. Examples of other reading strategies include asking questions, making predictions, connecting the reading assignment to material from class lectures and activities, using words in bold or italics to identify important vocabulary, and using headings as a tool for understanding the content of a section.

After Reading

Post-reading strategies are techniques that help students review what they have learned, continue to monitor their understanding of course concepts, and prepare for tests. Often the best time to use a post-reading strategy is immediately after reading instead of waiting until it's time to study for an exam or write a paper. Examples of post-reading strategies to prepare

for exams include creating test review materials, independently creating a quiz, or working in a study group to review learning from reading assignments. Examples of post-reading activities to prepare for writing assignments include reviewing notes to identify ideas to include in an essay, reviewing the main point and key supporting evidence in a text, making connections between more than one text assigned in a course, and participating in reading discussions with classmates. Many college courses now include online resources that help students review for exams.

If you are enrolled in an integrated reading and writing course, you will probably learn about how to develop and apply active reading strategies as part of your class activities.

Reading Comprehension Strategies: Questions for Reflection and Writing

1. Which reading comprehension strategies (if any) have you used most frequently as a student? How have those strategies helped you understand and remember what you read?
2. In the courses that you are currently taking, which reading assignments are most challenging for you? How might you increase your understanding of difficult college assignments by using reading comprehension strategies?

[Continue to the next section: “Reading to Learn and Remember.”]

Resources for Further Study

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64. Reading to Learn and Remember

One key purpose of many college reading tasks is to prepare students for quizzes, exams, or other types of learning activities that require both comprehension and memorization. This article provides a brief overview of research about academic literacy strategies that help students learn and remember the content of reading assignments. Using study strategies that are based on research can help students study more effectively and sometimes also reduce the time required for learning.

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

This chapter is one section of a five-part series on academic literacy strategies:

1. A Quick Introduction to College Learning Strategies

2. General Academic Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy
3. Reading for Understanding
4. Reading to Learn and Remember
5. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

- Research on Effective Study Strategies
- Commonly Used but Less Effective Study Strategies
- Studying for Exams and Quizzes
- Learning About How to Study for a Specific Course

RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE STUDY STRATEGIES

Research on how people learn demonstrates that some study methods are more effective than others. For example, one educational study analyzed over 700 research articles on commonly used learning strategies (Dunlosky et al.). The

researchers identified two study strategies that work consistently with different age groups, levels of learning and types of courses:

Self-testing: Students practice taking tests and quizzes on their own to improve learning and remember information from reading assignments and other course activities.

Distributed practice: Students study in multiple short sessions spread out over time with space between each session (instead of cramming or studying for a long period of time in one sitting).

The same research study also identified three additional strategies that seem to be effective for some types of learning:

Elaborative interrogation: looking for explanations and asking "why" questions;

Self-explanation: explaining new learning and connecting it to prior learning;

Interleaved practice: alternating between different types of information or problems in the same study session.

Other research shows that frequent practice with test taking and retrieving information from memory can improve test taking (Roediger and Karpicke). Another study suggests that

pretesting—taking a test before studying—can enhance learning (Little and Bork). These study methods are examples of effective learning strategies that are based on research. College students can apply and adapt them to many different courses.

COMMONLY USED BUT LESS EFFECTIVE STUDY STRATEGIES

Students sometimes use study methods that aren't based on research about effective learning, or they might use strategies that don't work well for a particular course or academic task. Students may start using less effective study strategies after seeing others use them, receiving suggestions from friends or family members, or even learning about them in a class.

Here are some examples of how misconceptions or an incomplete understanding of learning strategies can result in students selecting and using ineffective methods for studying:

Using study methods that aren't based on research about effective learning.

Some less effective study methods include a) underlining and highlighting while reading without taking notes, b) simply rereading previously studied material, and c) creating

mental images as a way to enhance memory (Dunlosky et al.). Less effective study techniques take time to do, but they aren't as consistently useful in helping students learn and remember the content of what they read in comparison to strategies that are based on research about how people learn.

Selecting methods that are difficult to do effectively or that take too much time.

Summarizing is an example of a strategy that can work in some situations but not in others. When used effectively, summarizing might improve reading comprehension and help students with academic tasks that require them to write about research or reading. However, summarizing is a time-consuming study strategy for students to do on their own while studying for exams. Most students also need intensive instruction to learn how to summarize before they can do it effectively as a study strategy (Dunlosky; Mulcahy-Ernt and Caverly).

Basing learning strategies on myths or unproven theories about learning.

One common belief about learning that isn't supported by evidence is the idea that students have specific learning styles—in other words, "the concept that individuals differ in regard to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them" (Pashler, et al.). Students don't need to use strategies based on whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners.

They also don't need to base their study methods on whether they are left-brained or right-brained learners.

By understanding the difference between strategies that are based on evidence (that they work) versus unproven techniques (that might not work or that don't work for some situations), you can learn how to identify study methods that will help you increase your academic success while also avoiding time-consuming study activities that are less effective.

STUDYING FOR EXAMS AND QUIZZES

Some students use the word *studying* to refer to any kind of reading that they do for a course. However, *studying* often means doing deliberate and intensive reading to learn course content, memorize course material, and then recall (remember) concepts for an exam. Studying is typically a much slower type of reading than reading for pleasure or even reading to prepare for a class discussion or writing assignment. Experienced college readers know how to adjust their reading rate (or speed) based on the difficulty level and purpose of the texts that they read while preparing for exams.

Typically, it's more effective to complete reading assignments on time and spread study sessions throughout a semester instead of attempting to study for an exam in a single session (Dunlosky; Kornell et al.).

You can strengthen the processes that you use to prepare for exams while reading with a few basic strategies:

1. **Start with reading comprehension strategies.** You must first understand course material before memorizing concepts and faculty information to prepare for a test.
2. **Identify what to memorize in a reading assignment.** Experienced readers know how to distinguish between important and less important (or irrelevant) information in a written text. Instead of trying to memorize everything that you read or learn in class, select key information to focus on and memorize. Developing the ability to identify what to study and memorize is one of the most challenging parts of preparing for college tests. What is and is not important depends heavily on the academic discipline or field of study for a course, how an instructor structures a course, and the instructor's expectations.
3. **Organize information from reading in a meaningful way before memorizing it.** Organizing information makes it easier to study and remember. Examples of common methods for organizing information include creating test review sheets, labeling notes by writing key words in the margins of a notebook, and using tables or other types of visual organizers to arrange information into categories. As you work on reading assignments, ask yourself: What's the best way to organize this specific information for this course so that I can understand and remember it?
4. **Practice recalling what you have read.** Use notes and test-review sheets to give yourself practice quizzes on completed reading assignments. You can also practice self-quizzing while you read by asking questions and making predictions about what might be on an exam. Most of the research-based study strategies mentioned in this article can help students practice recalling concepts and factual information to prepare for an exam.

LEARNING ABOUT HOW TO STUDY FOR A SPECIFIC COURSE

The strategies in this article focus on techniques that can be adapted to different types of courses that require reading for memorization and test taking. Studying for exams also requires students to prepare for the types of exams that an instructor uses to evaluate whether students have achieved the learning goals of a course. You can usually find clues about the types of studying that you will need to do for a course by reading the syllabus. Early in a course, you can also talk with your professors about their expectations for test taking and their recommendations for study strategies that will help you prepare for exams in their fields of study.

Effective Study Strategies: Questions for Reflection and Writing

1. Identify a study strategy that you might use this semester in one of your courses as you study reading assignments to prepare for quizzes or exams. How might you adapt that strategy to the types of exams or other learning activities that you need to complete for that course?
2. What types of strategies have you used in the past to study for exams? Where did you learn those strategies? Which strategies were most effective in helping you understand and remember what you read when preparing for an

exam?

[Continue to the next section: “Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions.”]

Resources for Further Study

To learn more about how to develop and apply research-based study strategies, see the following readings:

- Brown, Peter C., Henry L. Roediger, and Mark A. McDaniel. *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning.* Harvard University Press, 2014
- Carey, Benedict. “Forget What You Know about Good Study Habits.” *New York Times*, 6 September 2010.
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65. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

This article provides a basic overview of how the reading and writing conventions for each field of study shape the way that readers read texts and writers create texts for academic purposes.

JOANNE BAIRD GIORDANO

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3. Reading for Understanding
4. Reading to Learn and Remember
5. Adapting to Disciplinary Literacy Conventions

- What Are Academic Conventions?
- Reading Conventions
- Learning About Disciplinary Ways of Reading
- Disciplinary Writing Conventions
- Learning About Disciplinary Ways of Writing

WHAT ARE ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS?

Academic conventions are accepted (or usual) ways of doing academic literacy tasks. Some conventions like styles for citing sources, formatting guidelines for specific types of writing, and punctuation rules are clearly stated in textbooks. Students can find readings or online resources to help them understand, learn, and follow those conventions. Other types of conventions are more challenging to figure out. They include ways of reading, writing, and learning that professors have developed as experts in a field. Students are still learning to adapt to the expectations of college learning, and it takes time to learn and adapt to the many different conventions that professors expect students to follow in their courses. Professors may or may not directly teach students about the literacy conventions for their fields of study.

READING CONVENTIONS

Each academic and professional field of study has its own ways

of reading. **Disciplinary reading conventions** are specialized ways that expert readers use written texts in a field of study. Reading conventions reflect how knowledge is developed and communicated to others within a community of experts. Disciplinary ways of reading are closely connected to conventions for writing and research that are unique to a field. Experts follow conventions for writing and research as they create written texts for an audience of readers in a field of study. Their texts are then read by members of the field who use an understanding of conventions to make sense of what they read.

As college readers become more experienced, they learn how to use and apply strategies for completing reading assignments within a field of study, especially for courses in their college major and minor degree programs. They learn how to read specific types of texts written for academic or professional purposes. Experienced college readers also figure out what their instructors' expectations are for how assigned readings will be used in a course. They also adapt how they read texts and what they do with learning from reading assignments based on different purposes within the same class (for example, studying for an exam, looking for evidence for a writing project, or reviewing confusing concepts that they haven't fully learned).

The National Council of Teachers of English describes this process of adapting reading strategies for different purposes:

> The act of reading is always embedded in an activity, some purposeful act that makes a particular set of demands on the reader. … From this perspective, readers don't learn to read once and for all as much as they learn to read particular texts, in particular ways, for particular purposes, and in particular contexts.

The process of learning how to read texts "in particular ways" that are unique to a field of study is one of the most important

parts of developing college-level academic literacy and becoming an advanced reader.

LEARNING ABOUT DISCIPLINARY WAYS OF READING

Learning how to adapt reading strategies to different fields of study requires college readers to pay close attention to how readers and writers use written texts to develop and communicate knowledge within a field.

Here are some examples of the many factors that shape how experienced readers use knowledge about texts to adapt their learning strategies to the reading conventions of a field of study:

- the genres (or types of writing) used to create knowledge and communicate information within the field
- expectations for how writers communicate ideas to readers within the field
- standards that establish the credibility (trustworthiness) of texts that are appropriate to use as sources for writing and research
- what readers do with texts for specific disciplinary purposes
- the research methods that experts use to

collect information and then report their findings to readers

- expectations for what students need to do with texts to successfully complete courses in a field of study
- expectations for what advanced students do with texts to move from novice to expert within a field of study

DISCIPLINARY WRITING CONVENTIONS

"Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing" (NCTE, CWPA, and NWP) defines writing conventions as "the formal rules and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct (or appropriate) and incorrect (or inappropriate) in a piece of writing" (NCTE, CWPA, and NWP 9). Some conventions (like spelling and punctuation) are part of general literacy. Other conventions are unique to an academic or professional field. **Disciplinary writing conventions** are the specialized standards and guidelines for writing within a field of study. Members of academic disciplines have shared expectations for how writers typically create texts for other members of the community. Professional communities and industries also have conventions for workplace writing, and some companies have their own guidelines conventions that employees should follow.

Disciplinary writing conventions are based on how expert

readers expect a text to be written. Before academic articles and books are published, they are reviewed by professors or researchers in the field to make sure that the research and writing that the authors use follows the standards and guidelines for the field. Writing conventions are also closely linked to the values of a field and the methods that experts use to create and share knowledge with each other. "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing" explains that conventions are based on shared understanding of how to communicate effectively:

> Conventions arise from a history of use and reflect the collected wisdom of the relevant readers and writers about the most effective ways of communicating in that area. Conventions facilitate reading by making material easier to comprehend and creating common expectations between writer and reader. (CWPA, NCTE, and NWP 5)

LEARNING ABOUT DISCIPLINARY WAYS OF WRITING

College students need to learn about the unique conventions for writing within a field of study and then adapt their writing to the expectations of their professors. Disciplinary writing conventions include many different features of written texts, including

- the content of a text (the types of knowledge shared within a discipline)
- the purpose of writing assignments for learning in a

discipline
- how to format specific types of writing (genres)
- how to organize ideas and structure texts
- writing style
- the level of formality and informality of specific types of texts
- the methods used for conducting and reporting on original research
- the types of sources that are acceptable to use as evidence
- conventions for documenting and citing sources
- guidelines for formatting documents
- strategies for analyzing sources
- differences between writing for experts and sharing disciplinary knowledge with non-experts.

Although adapting writing strategies to the different conventions used for college courses can be confusing for new college students, learning how to write within a field of study eventually makes writing easier. As you take courses in your selected field of study for a college degree, writing conventions will provide you with a framework for understanding how to organize your ideas, explain your thinking, and support your work with evidence.

Disciplinary Conventions: Questions for Reflection and Writing

Select one of the fields of study for a current or previous course. Then answer the following questions:

- What types of written texts are used for reading assignments? What do professors expect

students to do with those texts? How are they used in courses within the field?

- What are some expectations for student writing in the field? How do those expectations help students learn about how to become more advanced writers in the field? (Keep in mind that writing includes test taking, doing lab reports, and other uses of writing in addition to essays and research papers.)
- What research methods are used by experts who belong to that field? What do those research methods suggest about how knowledge is produced in that field?

Resources for Further Study

- The Harvard Writing Project, Brief Guides to Writing in the Disciplines
- The Harvard Writing Project, Disciplinary Writing Guides
- University of Florida Cedar Center, "Disciplinary Literacy"

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66. Revision IS Writing. That is All.

LISA BICKMORE

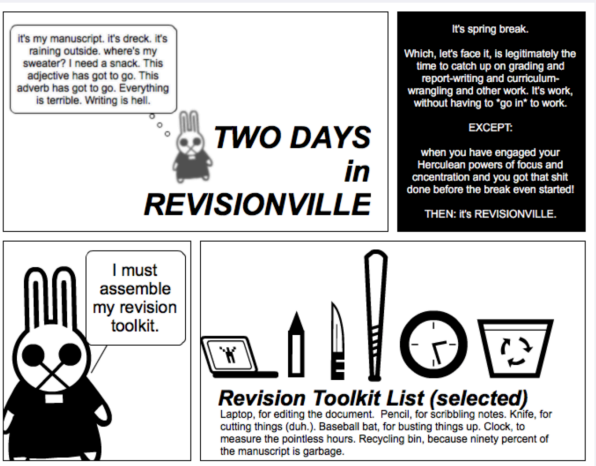

Figure 1: A personal revision story, part 1

David Stephen Calonne, in his chapter "Creative Writers and Revision" (in Horning & Becker, Revision: History, Theory, and Practice), cites the example of James Joyce, the Irish novelist, and the still-existing draft copies of Finnegans Wake:

> Anyone who doubts that revision is creative should examine the drafts of *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. Joyce's astonishing manuscript is a maze of crossed-out words, bold scrawls, huge Xs splayed across the page, squiggly lines, scratches, a labyrinth, a massive, splendid, messy, outlandish display … (144)

Calonne sees evidence, in the marks of Joyce's revision

strategies, of genius—but he probably would have seen Joyce as a genius regardless, because in the Anglo-Irish literary canon, that's how Joyce is seen. But there's something here for all of us writers, even if we aren't pretending to masterpieces or genius or even, frankly, artistry: knowing that (more) orderly writing often emerges from a mess is actually, in a way, encouraging. Because that means I, sitting in front of a messy draft, can have some hope: if I'm willing to dive in, look at the connections (or lack thereof), the order (or patent absence of it), the words (imprecise, not quite right), and hack away, I might find myself with a better draft at the end.

This is the faith that writing teachers—and writers everywhere—place in revision. One way to say it is that an act of writing takes place not all at once but in stages. Composition theorists have spent lots of time articulating a theory of this process—you have, no doubt, heard of something often called "The Writing Process": invention, drafting, revision—but we probably also can acknowledge that there's not one writing process, there are many. Pretending that there's one standard may not be particularly helpful. Even so: just about every writer learns, one way or another, that revision is how writing gets better, how sentences take shape, paragraphs take form, transitions finessed, evidence sequenced, and emphasis achieved.

So, beyond going over the draft and cleaning up typos or word omissions, what are some strategies for revision that can help all of this happen? I list the ones below, in no particular order, as strategies that will help you understand what's already in your draft, identify what might be missing, find a stronger through-line, and refine points of transition.

THE REVERSE OUTLINE

Usually, when writers think outline, they're thinking of what might be called a predictive outline. A predictive outline is a plan for writing—a structure prepared before actually drafting, meant to help the writer keep on track, proceed logically and in an orderly fashion, and accomplish all the points s/he has decided to include. Predictive outlines can be enormously helpful in plotting out an initial draft; even so, drafts often move in unpredictable ways, deviate from the map, go off road and overland, and end up someplace the writer never planned to go. When this happens, it can be useful to reverse outline.

A reverse outline describes what is actually already happening in a draft. (A reverse outline could, potentially, also be a useful strategy for reading any text—one you've written, as suggested here, but also texts by other people. For instance, you could reverse outline a piece you're responding to from a peer, or a reading assignment in class.) Going section by section, or paragraph by paragraph, the writer notes what is actually there. For instance, "In this paragraph, I'm presenting an anecdote that I want to use to illustrate a point." The reverse outline can be helpful in diagnosing where there is material that still needs to be written, or material that is currently located somewhere in the draft but needs to be moved elsewhere. It can be helpful in identifying material that might not be needed in the draft at all. A reverse outline can be useful as a first step in figuring out what the next steps to take in revision might be.

SEQUENCING

Lots of writers use the word *flow* to indicate writing that seems to move forward with few obstructions—few, if any, places the reader might stop to ask, *Hey, what's going on here? What does the writer mean by that?* One thing that flow might refer to is the order and sequence of the writing.

Paying attention to sequencing is paying attention to the logic of the piece—the way that a particular point might need to be made, or a piece of evidence established, before another point can be made; the way that background and context often needs to come first, or early, in the discussion of a complex situation; the way that, often, readers expect to find strongest evidence in a climactic position—i.e., last. Reverse outlining can help you to discover where your sequencing might be off, but once you've discovered that you need to realign the sequence of ideas in the piece overall (or even on a smaller scale), sequencing requires you to both move the material around, then adjust the connecting points so they make sense.

FIND OUT WHAT'S MISSING

Sometimes, you know that there's a chunk missing in your draft. You may have even written something like "[need to explain this more]" or "[add source here]." Or maybe you just know, because there's a skinny paragraph just waiting to be fleshed out, or an ending that is nowhere in evidence. Spend some time with your draft and make notes where you know there's missing material—ideas that need more exploration or analysis or explanation; source material that needs to be added or edited; a stronger, more engaging introduction. If you can't

quite figure out what's missing, you could also ask someone—a peer who is responding to your draft, a Writing Center coach, your instructor. Once you've identified the places where there's something missing, and you have a pretty good idea what the missing part is, let the missing pieces you identify form the basis of your revision agenda.

WRITE TO THE SIDE

Sometimes, you discover that something just isn't working the way you hoped it would, or it's not quite what you want. Writers can feel like starting over, or ripping what's already in the draft to shreds, is the mark of a fearless reviser. But what happens if you take a different, less hasty stance? What if, instead of destroying what's there, you just started another document, and wrote the revision or the additional material in that document, just to see what happens?

Let's say, for example, that you have a paragraph where you've started developing a sub-point. Perhaps, though, your supporting examples feel disconnected from the overall sub-point, and you're not sure how to connect them. Start another document. Talk to yourself—"What I'm trying to do with these examples is show …"—or maybe try a different order to your examples. If this writing on the side gives you some insights into what's going wrong in the "main" document, then you're ready to go back to that document, freshly aware of how to proceed. Or maybe you write a whole different paragraph—and you think, I could probably just substitute this for the previous version. Either way, you have both the original version (which you had your doubts about but weren't ready to discard just yet) and any new material you've developed—so you have more to work with and more to choose from.

Side-writing is a great strategy for trying on ideas, paths of development, arrangements that you're not sure will work, but might get you somewhere. It's a great strategy for giving yourself the freedom, risk-free, to try something different. If it looks promising, you can put your old and new material side by side, and try to weave them together—you won't have gone too far down a road with the old material to salvage what might still be useful, and you can fit the new material in. If the new material truly surpasses, even replaces, the old, then you can delete with greater confidence.

INTROS & OUTROS TO SOURCE MATERIAL

Academic writing asks you to work with source material, so it's worth learning how to use that material in a graceful and ethical way. This alone can be a specific focus of your revisions. In the article "Annoying Ways People Use Sources," Kyle Stedman discusses some ways to massage quoted material into a text—that is, to make sure that you as the writer ease the path by which the reader will encounter source material. He talks about guiding the reader into quoted material by providing context for the source and the writer's reasoning for using that source material, then leading the reader out, by doing a little interpretive work. He says, "Readers get a sense of pleasure from the safe flow of hearing how to read an upcoming quotation, reading it, and then being told one way to interpret it. Prepare, quote, analyze." Lots of writing teachers ask their students to read Stedman's essay, largely because figuring out how to weave source material into a text requires thought and practice, and Stedman's guidelines are very helpful. So as you revise, pay careful attention to your use of

source material—can you be a more effective guide for your reader? Can you better "prepare, quote, analyze"?

RETURN TO READING MATERIAL

Sometimes if you find yourself with a revision problem—*How do I make a better beginning or a more resounding conclusion? How do I move from specifics to larger points?*—you can find the answer, or some answers, by looking at how other texts have resolved the same questions. We often think of reading as something we do at the very beginning of a writing process, but in reality, we often read to solve specific revision or drafting problems, and throughout the course of producing a piece of writing. Don't we, for instance, return to a source to choose exactly the most appropriate quotations? The same can happen when we're revising a piece—we can look at how another writer begins her piece, or concludes it.

Find a piece that moves from specific details to larger points. What, exactly, does the writer do in each case? Can you see a way to use that same strategy? Or, if what the writer did doesn't seem effective to you, can you think of a better strategy, and do that? Returning to things you've already read—or finding other readings to consult—can be a valuable revision strategy.

STEP AWAY, GET FEEDBACK

The process of producing a draft can feel like an act of investment: your intellectual energy, your curiosity, your time,

your words, all going into the construction of a piece of writing. It's no wonder, at the end of such a process, that many writers feel both exhausted by, and protective of, the piece. This is why it's useful to do two things: first, take a break from the active writing of the piece, and even from looking at it; and second, seek feedback on the draft.

The break you take from your draft could last for a day or two if you got the time, a few hours if you're more pressured for time. The idea here is to loosen your attachment to specific choices you made, so that you can see them afresh, so that you can make—ideally—better judgments about how well those choices actually work, or even whether you have fully executed your own intentions.

The feedback you seek can serve something like the same purpose as the break: to see the draft afresh, and to make better judgments about it. When you seek feedback, the key word should be listen. Getting feedback isn't—at least not ideally—a debate about the merits of your draft, in which the reader says negative things about the draft, and the writer defends the draft. No matter what a reader says about your draft, it's still yours to make decisions about and to finish as you see fit. But if you, as the writer, act defensively, as if your draft were a vulnerable, fragile creature whose very survival is in jeopardy in light of the onslaught of critique, you won't get the invaluable gift of a reader's feedback: the response of a reader to your writing. So listen. And take notes. Remember: the most valuable gift a reader gives you might not be the specific suggestions—it might actually be the insight that what you intended isn't coming across. Take note!

FINESSE WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Look at transitions, sentence patterns/style, word choice—the grit and detail of your writing. The feedback you've received should help you with this, but any writer generally has a short list of areas to which s/he knows s/he wants to pay attention. For some, it might be a tendency to overlong, chatty introductions. For another, it might be the integration of source material. What are the areas in your writing that you know you typically need to look at again when you revise? It's useful to be self-aware, and to realize that revision, for you, will usually involve looking again (and again!) at these matters. A capable, powerful writer develops this kind of self-awareness—the good news being that any writer can become more self aware, and thus more capable and more powerful.

CONCLUSION

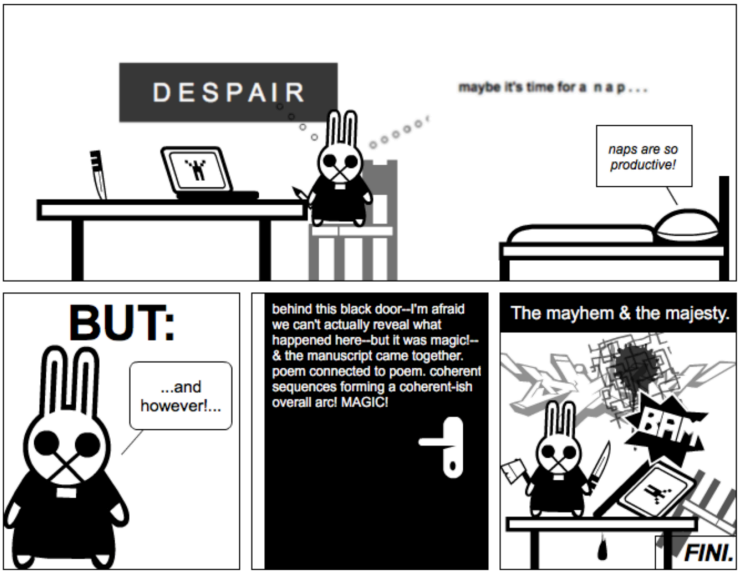

Figure 2: A personal revision story, part 2

Revision isn't a mystery or a black door. It IS exacting and creative work—it requires just as much thinking as the original draft, if not more. But a great discovery for any writer is learning that you can get better at writing through becoming a more deliberate and self-aware reviser. You might find that one or more of the above strategies will help you do just that.

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67. ‘Tis Better to Give and Receive: How to Have More Effective Peer Response Groups

CLINT GARDNER

- Threshold Concepts
- Key Principles of Peer Group Work
- Receiving Feedback
- Giving Feedback
- Conclusion
- Appendix

INTRODUCTION

Participating in peer response groups is one of the most troublesome and difficult activities writing students engage in. We here in the SLCC Student Writing Center often hear students complain that they are uncertain when giving feedback to other students and that the feedback they get from their fellow students isn’t useful in their revision process.

Researchers in the teaching of writing echo the concerns of these students[1]. In light of the research and of troubles that students face with peer groups, we are going to proceed with two stipulations:

1. Peer feedback is a useful activity for both the receiver and the giver.
2. Peers need to be trained in order to *give and receive* feedback effectively.

While I'm not going to argue either of these points, if you refer to the research, you will see that other scholars have established both points in evidence-based research.

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

Based upon the above points, I believe that giving peer feedback and learning how to make use of that feedback addresses three threshold concepts here at SLCC:

Writing is a process of DELIBERATION. It involves identifying and enacting choices, strategies, and moves.

Meaningful writing is achieved through sustained ENGAGEMENT in literate practices (e.g., thinking, researching, reading, interpreting, conversing) and

through revision.

The meanings and the effects of writing are CONTINGENT on the situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses.

When we discuss our writing (or any writing for that matter) with others, we are engaged in **deliberation** about the choices, strategies, and moves that writers make. When you get feedback, you make the choice of what to do with that feedback. When you get a response from a reader, you strategize as to how your audience will receive your piece. When you give feedback, you are projecting all the same moves into ways that a writer might decide to implement in their work. In all, the act of working on writing with other people is an act of sustained **engagement** with your text through staged revision. This revision leads to seeing your writing in new ways through a conversation. You also see your own writing in new ways by reading how other writers have responded to a similar situation (Bruffee, *Short Course*, 1–8). Finally, giving and receiving feedback helps you and your correspondents understand the **contingency** of writing, in that you can hear and understand how writers with different perspectives have addressed similar rhetorical contexts.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF PEER GROUP WORK

Most people would assume that receiving feedback is easier than giving feedback, but I would argue that we have to keep several factors in mind when we are getting feedback from our peers and that it is oftentimes the person receiving feedback who creates problems in a session. So, what do you need to do to both give and receive feedback on your writing? Let's establish some key principles first:

When you are getting feedback, remember that you are the writer: it is your paper and you are in charge.

You make the decisions as to what works and what doesn't work in your writing. Just because one person or three people suggest that you do something doesn't mean you have to accept their advice. Now, of course, it is a foolish move not to listen to others, but it might be that they don't have the best context for responding to your writing, or perhaps they have specific biases that spur their responses.

Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff point out a paradox with the writer being *always right*, however: "The reader is always right; the writer is always right" (*Sharing and Responding*, 62). They explain that the reader's reaction is valid in and of itself, and it doesn't make sense to "quarrel with the reader about what's happening to her" (62). As the writer, you get to decide if you need to do anything about that reaction: "You don't have to follow her advice. Just listen openly—swallow it all. You can

do that better if you realize that you get to take your time and make up your own mind" (62). In other words, you should listen openly to what your readers say but actively engage in thinking about whether what they say or advise will ultimately work for what goals you have for your writing project.

As Candace Spigelman has found in her study of peer groups, "Ultimately, for writing groups to function—and hence for writers to write—they must be committed to both public and private notions of ownership" (132). In other words, you are sharing your writing with others, and they are giving you advice and feedback, but you are the one who gets to make the calls, and you are the one responsible for the end product.

Getting feedback on a draft is an excellent way to see what you need to revise.

When you have others read your writing, they may express confusion or understanding or even elation at what you have written. Those responses help you as a writer determine what is working and what is not working. You can also ask those same people what they might do in order to improve what you have written. You don't have to accept that advice, as per above, but at least you can hear about options that other people might come up with.

Feedback from others allows you to test your writing on a real audience.

Say that you own a bakery, and have invented what you think is an especially tasty cookie recipe. While you could assume that your tastes are the same as everyone else's and that they will find your new cookie extremely appealing, most experienced bakers would suggest that you see how the cookie crumbles for potential customers and ask them to try samples and give you feedback. The same goes for writing. You can test whether any potential audience will understand what you are trying to do with your writing by showing it to them and then **revising** according to their **responses**.

Giving feedback improves your own writing because discussion of writing is a key principle of revision.

As when others give you feedback, when you give other people feedback you are actively engaging in thinking about how writing works and the choices that writers make. You may come up with novel ideas or solutions that you may use either immediately (kind of like "Hey! I can use that in my own paper!") or upon a future assignment. You might also learn how to do something new by talking about it with others in a feedback situation (in which case you're both giving and receiving.) Even if you are working with writers who have very different pieces of writing from your own, you will still gain from the experience of understanding how they are addressing the particular rhetorical context. By discussing writing and its contexts, we expand our

writing repertoire and develop skills that other writers have already implemented. We writing teachers call such actions "transfer of learning," meaning that you learn certain skills or abilities in certain contexts and can apply them later on in new contexts.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Before the Session

Set goals for the session. Researcher Samuel Van Horne found that students who set goals for a writing center session (which is approximate to a peer group session) came away ready to engage in meaningful revision. An example of a goal would be "I want to successfully fulfill the requirements of the assignment" or "I want to convince my reader to take a specific action" or "I want my reader to better understand my subject." Your goals will depend on your *rhetorical context*.

Write down specific questions you have about your draft. If your instructor has already given you questions, decide which ones are most important to you. Otherwise, take a few moments to write down questions to ask your readers that you have about your writing. These could range from big questions like "Do you understand my point?" or "Is my evidence convincing?" down to more narrow questions like "Do you notice any glaring errors?" or "Do my ideas follow from each other?" You can, of course, ask very pointed questions, but sometimes you will get better feedback asking open-

ended questions that let your readers respond more fully.

Consider what kind of feedback you want to get from your group. What do you want them to focus on? Remember: it is your session, but your readers also need the freedom to respond how they see fit. Elbow and Belanoff note this as the second paradox in giving and receiving feedback: "The writer must be in charge; the writer must sit back quietly too" (*Sharing and Responding*, 62). (I'll write more on listening later.)

During the Session

Use guidelines from your instructor. Your instructor will most likely provide you with some guidelines or even questions to use for your session. Sometimes you have to fill out a sheet and turn it in with your portfolio, drafts, or final draft. These sheets are meant to help you in the session since your instructors know that most students don't have a lot of experience giving and receiving feedback.

Discuss the goals you have for this session openly. Your group isn't full of mind readers. Let them know what you want to focus on and why.

Take notes. It is super-easy to get so caught up in a response session and forget to take notes about what your readers are saying. I encourage you to write notes right onto your draft. If you are working with an electronic copy, you can use your word processor's commenting feature.

Listen. When we hear people discussing our work, we naturally want to join in and talk about it too. Maybe we want to explain why we did or didn't do something. Maybe we want to clarify a particular section. Maybe we

just don't want to hear what others have to say about our writing. That last option, of course, is why we need to be quiet when others are talking about our work. We need to listen to our readers' reactions and not talk over them because we are defensive about it.

Try not to be defensive. Getting feedback on your writing can be an intimidating experience. Many writers tell us that they are uncomfortable sharing their writing with others and that they feel that they are being judged. Being defensive in a writing group is understandable because of these fears, but keep in mind that your readers have good intentions. They aren't out to embarrass you. They want to help you improve as a writer. Now, of course, if you feel someone in your group is being belligerent or purposefully mean to you or other group members, you should report that to your professor. If, as well, you are feeling a bit overwhelmed by your readers' feedback, you can tell them that, and that you want to stop.

As Elbow and Belanoff put it, "Don't be afraid to stop them if they start giving you what you don't want … you may need to ask readers to hold back *all criticism* for a piece that you feel tender about" (63). For example, if you feel overwhelmed, you should say that. You might say something like "I appreciate what you are saying about my lack of evidence to support my view, but I'm getting overwhelmed with all the comments. Let me do some more research and then get back with you." That kind of statement doesn't attack or insult your reviewer but does let them know that you need some space.

Ask questions. If you don't understand what your readers are saying, ask clarifying questions. You want to have a delicate balance of listening to your readers and not being defensive, but definitely ask questions when

you really are confused or want some advice on what to do next.

Don't argue. You can ask questions, but it is pointless to engage in an argument about what you've done with your readers. They aren't the ones who have to make revisions. You are. Time spent arguing with them that they are "reading it wrong" is better spent trying to understand why they are reading it the way that they do. So, for example, instead of trying to justify something that you've chosen to do, or to argue its benefits, you can acknowledge what your readers have said and move on. Trying to tell a person that they are reading something "incorrectly" isn't as important as trying to understand why they read it the way that they did. That will help you revise, while spending a lot of time convincing someone that they are wrong just creates an atmosphere of hostility. Repeating or summarizing what the person said and then asking them if it's correct will also help to make sure that you heard them correctly. You may also find that you disagree with their advice for any given reason. That's your choice.

Don't start with grammar. Why not? People assume that grammar is their only problem (see Reger; Severino; Matusuda & Cox). Too often writers think that grammar that is the only thing that they need to work on. While clear communication and grammatical sense is important, writers often spend far too much time obsessing over grammar and not enough time developing their writing. Also, remember that your peer response group isn't just about "fixing" your paper. You are there to discuss it with other writers—to make it better and to address your purpose and your audience. You are there to expand on ideas or come up with completely new ones. You are there to improve your writing overall, not just to fix small things. An added

benefit of taking a revision-based approach to your writing is that you notice grammatical errors and correct them during that process.

After the Session

Summarize the comments. Look over your notes and write them out in a coherent and concise form. The act of summarizing the notes can help you to revisit what you just experienced and help you to make decisions as to what you want to change in your writing. In that sense, summarizing leads nicely to creating a revision plan.

Make a revision plan. While making a revision plan sounds like a weighty process, it actually can be quite simple. All you need to do is make a list of things that you are going to work on. For example, if your readers found your organization confusing or disconnected, your revision plan could be as simple as "mess around with how it is organized" or even "reorganize it."

Visit the Student Writing Center for more feedback! Ok, you don't have to visit the Student Writing Center. But we do suggest that, once you have revised, you show your writing to someone else, get more feedback, and test if the changes you made work. Ideally, you would be able to show it to your group again. We in the Student Writing Center realize, however, that your group isn't always going to be able to meet with you for follow-up feedback. We are available, however, for that feedback. It is a good idea to bring your feedback summary, revision plan, and more questions to your session so that a Writing Consultant can give you more effective feedback.

GIVING FEEDBACK

Divide your time equally. You need to make sure that everyone's writing is treated fairly in your session. Dividing up the time equally is essential to that fair treatment. You'll also need to make sure that someone watches the clock during each individual's portion of the time, and that it not be the person whose paper is being responded to. The timekeeper should be someone else because the writer has enough to do already, and adding clock-watching can be distracting. The entire group, however, needs to agree to stick to the time limits.

Read papers aloud. In general, it is best to read the papers aloud, but sometimes due to the length of a piece you may not have time to read the whole piece aloud. The reasoning behind reading aloud is simple: it means that everyone is concentrating on the same piece of writing. It also has the added benefit of changing the modality of the piece so that the writer can read it herself in a different way. Your instructor may wish for you to bring copies of your piece to your group session. Your instructor may also wish for you to work in different configurations, such as pairs. While I would always advocate for reading aloud for the reasons listed above, there may be situations where you either have to read silently, or your instructor wishes you to do so.

Be positive. As mentioned before, showing writing to others is a hard business. It is easy for writers to get discouraged and down on themselves. While you can't always be positive in your comments, you should maintain a positive attitude about the feedback you are giving. It is too easy to think of criticism as only a negative or destructive thing. Criticism in the sense we

are using it in peer groups is a *positive* or *formative* event. It helps the writer to improve.

Ask questions. If you don't understand something, ask a question about it. If you don't know why someone wrote what they wrote, ask questions. Asking a question is sometimes better than making a contextless judgment. A writer, however, may not know the answer to your question, may not feel the need to answer, or may ask you another question instead. That's her choice.

Use guidelines from your instructor or text book. It can be easy to ignore the guidelines or handouts your instructor gives you and just do your own thing. You should also pay attention to what the writer wants you to respond to.

Be specific. Rather than giving generic comments like "That's good," or "I think you could do more research," point specifically to sections of the writer's piece. A comment like "I think you need more evidence for this point in this paragraph" is more effective than "You need more evidence." It helps the writer have a strong context for the feedback you are giving.

Point out things that work—not just things that don't. Similarly, it is easy to only focus on stuff in writing that doesn't work. A writer also needs to know what *is* working in their text. Sometimes you might find that your group members all have written excellent responses to the assignment and you don't have anything to criticize. Pointing out what works for you is a good way to address not having anything to say and is useful for the writer.

Don't jump on grammar. As I've said before, a lot of writers falsely believe that the only issue that needs to be discussed in their writing is the grammar. These beliefs often are founded in how people have responded to their writing in the past, in particular how, I am sad

to say, some *teachers* have responded to their writing (Gillespie and Lerner, 54; Reger 40-41). Some teachers seem to believe that if they do not "mark up" a paper, they are not doing their jobs. They feel compelled to point out every mistake, no matter if it impacts the meaning of the writer's text. Such behavior tends to exaggerate the importance of grammar. They also often don't explain why a particular error is a problem, nor how to correct it.

Perhaps worst of all, some inexperienced readers and teachers point out grammatical problems that are not actual problems at all. All this leads students to have a hyper-corrective attitude toward their writing, and often to have a defeatist attitude, feeling that they can't even put simple sentences together (Shaughnessy, 117-128). This attitude is exacerbated even more for non-native speakers of English, who, while attempting to write with more nuance and complexity, are often forced into assimilating their language use (Matsuda and Cox 45-47) by well-intended readers/teacher who appropriate their text (Severino, 51-52). You can see, therefore, that jumping on the grammar bandwagon will just keep reinforcing the belief that the only thing to talk about in regards to writing is grammar.

Sure, some writers do have grammar problems. Some of those problems interfere with your understanding of a text. Those are the grammar problems that matter most. If you, as a reader, can't understand something, you need to say that. "I don't follow you here," you might say in pointing to a particular sentence. "I don't understand what you mean" is even fine. Pointing out simple errors or typos early on in the process isn't as important, and, as you can see, it might just get in the way of the writer working on *formative* development of

their writing. There will always be time for proofreading later.

CONCLUSION

The late Ron Maxwell, a scholar who advocated for peer feedback, was once asked to provide advice for people who were new to giving feedback to writers: "Respect the writer," he said in his avuncular way. "Respect what the writer brings to you. Respect the writer's courage for bringing it. … Make suggestions for change with all the tact and modesty that you can muster out of respect for the writer's tenderness. Because it is hard to be criticized, but out of criticism comes improvement and development and change. We want to foster an appetite for more criticism." If you respect your fellow group members and trust them to give you honest, caring feedback and they trust you to give them honest, caring feedback, you will be making great strides toward having successful peer group sessions. Caring may seem like an overly emotional word to use, but it represents an approach to working with others that leads to positive outcomes. If you care about your group members and their success, you have an investment in the session yourself. That will lead to the kind of courageous criticism Maxwell is talking about: modest, tactful, and sensitive criticism that allows you and your group members to learn and to grow as writers.

APPENDIX: RELEVANT RESEARCH

Carol Berkenkotter found that students "might not necessarily reap the advantages [teachers] like to imagine" (318), given that participants in her study were often unable to give constructive suggestions or gained no "help" from peers. Researchers such as Diana George, Karen Spear, and Jane Brown have all taken issue with peer response groups and offered a variety of solutions. You will note that a significant number of the scholarly articles cited here on peer group work are from the 1980s. It was during this time that peer feedback came to the fore in writing classes, and teachers of writing started to implement it in their writing classes. Before that time, it was rare to spend time in class giving other students feedback. The influx of scholarship on peer groups ebbed in the '90s, and aside from the work of Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, it is not a subject often taken up these days. The above scholars as well as Elizabeth Flynn, Thomas Newkirk, and, most importantly, Elbow and Belanoff, have found that there are significant benefits to peer feedback as long as students have sufficient training in how to give (and I would argue) how to receive feedback. It is important to note that most of the research in peer groups these days is within the field of TESOL or teaching of English to non-native speakers. The most current research has empirically demonstrated positive benefits of peer groups on students (see the two What Works Clearinghouse pamphlets). Even research that is critical of the foundations and ill-informed practice of peer feedback (Bruffee *Collaborative Learning*, Hall), still argues that it is beneficial, as they offer suggestions on how peer groups can still be effectively used in the classroom: "We assign peer response, but we don't *teach* it. … We must teach peer response by engaging with our students in the practices of reading, writing, and talking, rather than using peer response as a neutral tool.

Instead of replicating school practices that invite students to guess and to give teachers what we want" (Hall).

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[1] See the appendix at the end of this guide for a review of the relevant research.

PART VI

CONTINGENCY: HOW WE SITUATE WRITING TO CREATE MEANING

The meanings and the effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses.

68. Why We Might Tell You “It Depends”: Insights on the Uncertainties of Writing

JUSTIN JORY AND JESSIE SZALAY

- Somewhere, a Student Declines to Enroll in a Class
- Contingency + Writing
- Responding to Writing’s Contingencies
- Considering Contingency in Student Writing at SLCC

SOMEWHERE, A STUDENT DECLINES TO ENROLL IN A CLASS

Rate My Professors (RMP) may seem an unlikely place to go for a critical discussion of contingency in writing, but we think these comments—which are valuable texts in helping students

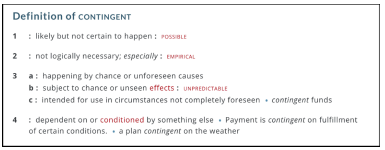
select teachers—are interesting because of what they choose to make known and leave unknown, what they say and how they say it, and what they leave unstated or simply cannot capture. Consider two recent comments on Justin's RMP page.

One way to read these comments is to notice that they both address Justin's refusal to answer students' questions, and they seem to suggest that he simply doesn't care to help students or, maybe even, that he aims to confuse students with long answers to their questions when possible. If you read the comments in this way, then you might also read Justin as a terrible person. At the very least, you may imagine him as an unsupportive teacher at the moment you are selecting classes and decide against taking his course.

Another way of reading the comments is to situate them in the college-level writing classroom and to consider them in that context. We want students to understand and internalize the idea that writing is an act of deliberation. And what we deliberate about often comes down to the contingencies within a writing situation. So, when a student asks Justin for step-by-step instructions on how to write a persuasive argument and he tells them "it depends," he's asking them to think about what their writing is contingent upon. Who is the audience? How will they receive the piece of writing?

What do they know about the subject already? What are their biases? What are their values? What is the author's goal? What research do they have to support their argument? What personal experience do they have? These questions, and many more, are contingencies upon which we make our writing choices.

CONTINGENCY + WRITING



Definition of CONTINGENT

1 : likely but not certain to happen : POSSIBLE

2 : not logically necessary; *especially* : EMPIRICAL

3 **a** : happening by chance or unforeseen causes
b : subject to chance or unseen effects : UNPREDICTABLE
c : intended for use in circumstances not completely foreseen • *contingent* funds

4 : dependent on or conditioned by something else • Payment is *contingent* on fulfillment of certain conditions. • a plan *contingent* on the weather

You've probably heard the term contingency plan. That's a plan for when the unexpected happens, usually a bad thing. The situations that contingency plans address are as varied as the information the plans present. The situation cannot be avoided with any certainty. Contingency plans are about predicting the unknown so that, should the moment arrive, the plan might offer the best information at the right time to people who need it.

Contingency in writing isn't necessarily about planning for a worse-case scenario, but it is based around considering and responding to unknowns and providing readers with writing and information you think will be the most useful to them. In this way, contingency in writing is the most like the last example of the fourth definition: a plan is contingent on the weather, which no one can entirely predict but about which we can make good guesses; the success of a piece of writing is

contingent on the audience and the way the text is used, which no one can entirely know but about which we can make good guesses.

Learning how to identify, interpret, and respond to the known and unknown factors in any writing situation is one of the most important aspects of developing as a writer. This is because writing must account for and respond to these factors, and doing so effectively is what makes writing meaningful. The devil, as they say, is in the details, and attention to the details of writing is what threshold concepts like the following aim to highlight:

> The meanings and effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses.

To say that writing is contingent on something is to suggest that writing is only meaningful in context (among people acting in particular situations and locations). To consider writing's contingencies is to think about those things that make writing more or less meaningful to the people in those contexts. Writing is to a large extent the process of moving from uncertainty to the best educated guess, from identifying what is possible in writing to making writing that responds to your situation and context meaningfully and effectively.

To put it another way, when we begin to write, we are in a place of not knowing. Even if we know what we're going to write about, we often don't know how we're going to say it or to whom. But as we start deliberating, as we start thinking more carefully about the details of what we're doing and why, we realize that some of those uncertainties may become more certain, cuing us in to what we should or shouldn't do, while others remain unknown and unknowable.

All writing is based in uncertainty to some degree, and the

most experienced writers learn to systematically identify, interpret, and respond to the most salient factors that give writing meaning in any given situation.

RESPONDING TO WRITING'S CONTINGENCIES

Making educated guesses about the things that influence your writing most in any given situation takes practice. Writers have to develop a keen attention to the details that make writing meaningful and useful within and across contexts.

For example, paragraph length is a relatively small detail that Jessie has learned is quite important depending on the context. When she writes, her paragraph lengths are contingent upon the situation. If she's writing a newspaper article, they will be shorter because that is a standard convention of most newspaper writing. If she's writing a literary analysis, they will be longer because detailed academic writing allows them to be.

Some unknowns are easy to deal with because you can easily find information to guide you. When Jessie started writing for newspapers, she had only to read some other articles to learn that paragraphs tended to be short. She figured keeping her paragraphs between 1 and 3 sentences long was a safe bet.

Here's an example of a short paragraph from an article about restaurant business. (It even has a fragment, another convention of news writing. Whether a fragment is considered a grammatical device or an error depends—is contingent upon—the type of writing being done.)

> Today, Pincho Factory is popular, profitable, and set to open its 10th and 11th stores. But its initial growing pains

aren't uncommon. Whether limited or full service, many restaurants have struggled when going from one to two stores.

Of course, there are some things you cannot know for sure as a writer, but you can still learn to make educated guesses about them. This requires asking the right questions. The specifics of the questions will change depending on the particulars of your situation, but we can identify some places to start.

Survey the Rhetorical Situation to Learn What Is Known and Unknown

Depending on the situations you find yourself writing in, there are different strategies for learning about the knowns and unknowns. These include everything from gathering information through more field-based methods like interviewing your audience or observing them in a relevant context to doing some reflection about who they are, where they're coming from, and what it all means to your job as a writer engaging with the audience in any given situation. For this kind of work at SLCC, we often refer students to the rhetorical situation.

Broadly, surveying the rhetorical situations involves asking three questions:

1. Who is the author?
2. What is the author's purpose?
3. Who is the audience?

These questions can yield a lot of information, but we can take them all deeper to learn more and get better answers to the fundamental question: What kind of choices can you make that will enable your writing to be successful?

Let's look at the first two questions to further explore your own position as a writer. About these, we can ask deeper questions like

- Who are you? What is your background, your perspective, your privileges and disadvantages?
- What is your relationship to this topic? Is it something you have studied academically for years or are just learning about? Is it something you have personal experience with, or do you know someone who does? Why do you feel about it the way that you do?
- What are your goals, specifically? Do you want to inspire action? Change minds? Ask questions? Share a story? Entertain?
- How do you like to write? What is your writing voice (if you know)? How do you want the experience of reading your writing to be—peaceful, beautiful, dry, cheerful, funny?

Now let's consider the audience. These questions assume you've already thought carefully about your audience and narrowed it down to a precise level ("My audience is everyone," isn't very useful).

- What is your audience's relationship to this topic? How much do they know about it? Why do or don't they know about it? Do they have values associated with it? Where do those values come from?
- How and when will they encounter this text?
- What type of writing are they most likely to engage with? What type of language or English do they use and feel comfortable with?
- How are they likely to respond to this text?

Drawing on our prior knowledge, engaging in research about genres, and surveying the rhetorical situation in a meaningful

way might provide us with enough information to address the contingencies in our writing sufficiently and allow us to make good, educated writing choices. Let's say I'm a paralegal writing a brief. The question of "what form should I use?" will quickly be answered because there is an institutionally agreed-upon form for legal briefs. I may have some degree of certainty about how my manager will receive the legal brief, which likely comes from contextual knowledge of sharing many legal briefs with her over many years. Similarly, if I am a coffee shop manager writing an instruction sheet for workers on how to make a cappuccino, the question "to whom I am writing and what jargon should I use?" can be answered with some ease.

But the most effective genre in which to reach these workers? That's where careful consideration of my audience and what they value is helpful. I might decide that a printed, bulleted Word document is not the best way to reach them. Instead, I might decide to make a colorful, step-by-step infographic and post it near the cappuccino machine. And if I really want to tailor the infographic to my workers and our workplace, I may include inside references in an effort to take instructive information and make it fun for this particular community of baristas. It's up to me.

Surveying the rhetorical situation is an ongoing activity, an iterative process, where writers continually notice and make sense of new knowledge to determine, more generally, what they know and don't and how it will influence their writing.

Undertake an Act of Imagination and Think About the Broader Contexts

If I'm a paralegal or a coffee shop manager writing a brief or cappuccino instructions, I'm dealing primarily with contingencies I can address with knowledge and educated

guesses. But what about writing for more abstract audiences and purposes? After all, writing is more than a simple one-on-one exchange of meaning. At its most powerful, writing can facilitate conversations and relationships between individuals by making writing choices that are meaningful to the people involved. Most college instructors want to see their students do this type of writing, rather than simply prove they know about a topic.

Often, college students have a hard time answering their questions about what writing choices to make (what form, tone, tense, style to use; how to structure their ideas; etc.) because the contingencies—the audience and their reaction, the way a text will be encountered, the values being conveyed and responded to—feel impossible to nail down and identify. They may be, or at least appear to be, further away from students. They are surrounded in mystique and it seems that only authors with more authority or power, like politicians, scientists, journalists, and other experts, have the ability to make educated guesses about these contingencies.

But that's not true; most everyone, including college students, has the right to speak to most every audience IF they engage them in an appropriate, educated way. It means using a mix of imagination and thorough research to think about what their experience of reading the text will be like. You can look to the questions in the previous sections for guidance; in these situations it is especially important to understand what your audiences likely know about the topic already and what their values might be. But you should also think more broadly and use your imagination to try to make good guesses about lives, and, consequently, reading experiences, that are different from yours.

For example, Jessie loves dogs, grew up with them, and feels comfortable around them. Let's say she wants to invite her friends over to meet her new 100-pound mastiff. She knows that some of her friends are a little nervous around big dogs.

When deliberating over the e-vite wording, she can ask questions like, “What does my audience value?” One answer is that they value friendship and parties, so Jessie will write something about how excited she is to see everyone. She’ll pick an e-vite that conveys fun. She’ll mention all the good food she’ll have.

Another answer might be that her audience values small dogs but not big ones, but more thorough imagining shows that’s not really correct. We can imagine what it’s like to be in Jessie’s friends’ shoes even if we don’t know the specifics. Why would someone be nervous around big dogs? Perhaps they had a negative experience. Perhaps they’ve never spent time around one. Jessie can imagine what it would be like to see a huge, unfamiliar dog running at you. It might be scary!

By using her imagination, Jessie can understand that her friends value safety and security. Perhaps they value personal

space and are worried that a big dog could knock them over. So, Jessie will make some educated guesses in her writing to reassure her friends that they can feel safe around her dog. She might include a cuddly picture rather than one that demonstrates the dog's size. She might reassure them that he's a big teddy bear and very well behaved. She might mention that he's been going to obedience school. She might mention that he has a very comfortable bed in the laundry room and he can always be put in there if his presence gets to be too much.

The success of her writing—and her party—is contingent upon her ability to accurately imagine what her audience's feelings around this topic are.

CONSIDERING CONTINGENCY IN STUDENT WRITING AT S.L.C.C.

What a Little Investigation Can Reveal About Audience and Content

Recently, one of Jessie's students wanted to write a letter to Governor Herbert about the air quality in Utah. The students' audience, medium, and message were certain, as demonstrated in the weeks of detailed process work he had completed, but there were still a number of things he had to make educated guesses about. How would the letter be received? He didn't know, so he did research and made an educated guess (answer: an intern will receive it and decide whether or not to pass it along to the Governor's staff, who would decide if they should pass it to the Governor himself.) He then folded that knowledge into his creative process and made rhetorical decisions that he thought would get the attention of an intern and increase his chances of getting the letter passed onto the governor.

A good portion of his creative energy was spent considering his writing in context of two readers: Governor Herbert and his intern. Since Gov. Herbert was his primary audience, he needed to make sure the information he selected for his letter was valuable to him. What did Governor Herbert know about air quality in Utah, and how much of the letter should be devoted to describing the problem? While the student had to educate himself on the reasons for our pollution problems, he made the educated guess that the governor had likely heard all of this information before and knew the statistics about health risks, tourism risks, etc. Therefore, he decided to minimize his project's references to research-based texts that Governor Herbert would likely be familiar with. Instead, he described

his family's personal experiences with worsening asthma in Utah. He hoped this would impact Governor Herbert. He also considered that the intern needed to find the information—in its form and content—moving enough to take the next step and pass the text to Governor Herbert.

At every step of the way, Jessie's student was negotiating the details of his letter by surveying the rhetorical situation he found himself writing in and using the knowledge he gained about his audience(s) to shape the content of his letter. Jessie's student, in other words, was working through writing's contingencies head-on.

What This All Means For You

We know our students are busy, perhaps overwhelmed, and likely concerned about their grades. It makes sense that they want clear, precise instructions from their teachers. But keep in mind that, if you ask a writing teacher a question and get a long, complicated answer, that answer might actually be providing you with the information you need. It might not actually be a complicated answer but a series of specific questions that you need to engage in the project.

That writing is based in uncertainty means that there are often no clear answers or definitive responses to questions like, "How should I…" or "Can you tell me exactly what I need to do in this assignment?" or "Should I do this or that?" And, even when there are better answers or responses, we want student writers to demonstrate the thinking that has led them to realize those answers. In short, the deliberative process of writing—what instructors at SLCC see as the process of problem-solving writing's uncertainties, or its contingencies—requires that students know when to pose the right questions to help them think through writing.

So, think about this:

Perhaps Justin did refuse to answer the student's question. Perhaps the assignment sheet wasn't as detailed as what the student was used to. And maybe Justin did delay providing definitive answers and suggestions so the student would engage in the thinking work necessary to answer it themselves. Maybe Justin told both of them, "It depends"—because it does.

69. Effects Experienced Writers Use

BENJAMIN SOLOMON

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

1. "Effects Experienced Writers Use" by Benjamin Solomon
2. "The Narrative Effect: Story as Forward Frame" by Lisa Bickmore
3. "The Information Effect: The Facts, The Figures, The So What?" by Lisa Bickmore
4. "The Persuasion Effect: What Does It Mean to Write Persuasively?" by Benjamin Solomon
5. "The Evaluation Effect: Making Judgments" by Kati Lewis
6. "Reflection: We're Always Doing It" by Kati Lewis

- The Narration Effect
- The Information Effect
- The Persuasion Effect

One way to think about rhetoric is as the art of effective communication. We make specific choices as writers and we do our best to imagine what effects those choices will have in our writing, and by extension, how those effects might influence or move our audience.

Choices and effects. Choices and effects. Let this be the mantra you say in your head before you do any writing—for this class, for work, on social media—wherever. Then ask yourself, "What choices will I make in this piece of writing and what effects will I create in order to influence or move my audience?"

Below, we'll introduce three major effects that experienced writers use all the time to connect with their audiences. These aren't the only effects out there, by any means, but we think they're the big ones, the workhorses, the ones that skilled practitioners of writing, composing, and rhetoric go to over and over again.

It's important to note that even though we are exploring each of these three effects separately, most writing that circulates publicly uses a combination of these effects, sometimes foregrounding one effect while backgrounding a couple others. Generally speaking, the shorter something is, the more likely it is to focus on only one or two effects, while longer pieces often foreground a series of effects at different stages throughout the piece.

Why study these effects? Because they tend to work, and because they tend to be durable—they've been around for a while—and because writers have repeatedly adapted them to suit various purposes, across a wide range of writing situations: academic, professional, civic, or otherwise. No writing class can give you a blueprint for all the writing you'll do in your life. But by practicing these effects in a writing class—studying them, talking about them, trying them out—we can become more flexible and adaptable writers.

THE NARRATION EFFECT

When writers foreground storytelling—big stories or small ones—they're using the narration effect. To use this effect in our writing, we need to explore the possibilities of structuring a significant story; grapple with ideas like plot, character, imagery, and cause and effect; and acknowledge the conventions of storytelling in various cultures and the strategies storytellers use to craft stories that move their audience. [See the chapter "The Narration Effect: Story as the Forward Frame."]

THE INFORMATION EFFECT

When writers foreground information, data, statistics, facts, and other results of research for a specific audience, they're using the information effect. Using the information effect means sharing, exploring, and explaining the information we've found with an eye for how to best organize that information so it can be most useful for those it's intended to reach. More than just throwing out a bunch of facts or data, the information effect is about how we deploy those facts in the service of a specific purpose. [See the chapter "The Information Effect: The Facts, the Figures, the So What?"]

THE PERSUASION EFFECT

When writers foreground both subtle and overt attempts to

convince an audience that particular points of view and/or actions are worth considering, they're using the persuasion effect. Using the persuasion effect means exploring how we can give others a vivid picture of our point of view, and in the process, work to sway, influence, or otherwise move our audiences. We don't necessarily need to try to make them change their minds completely about an issue, but to invite them to fully consider the merits of another way of seeing things, a new course of action, or the possibility of meaningful change. [See the chapter "The Persuasion Effect: What Does It Mean to Write Persuasively?"]

You could argue that most writing uses combinations of the effects above. You could argue that effective, complex, and rich writing uses all the effects together. But often writers choose to let certain effects take center stage while others play supporting roles. Skilled writers work to blend these effects in ways that best suit their purpose and the needs of the audience they want to reach. In other words, they make deliberate choices about what to foreground and background in their writing in order to achieve specific overall effects.

You can do this too, and in the process, you'll become a more flexible and adaptable writer.

[Two more articles about effects were written and added to the series after the publication of this chapter: "The Evaluation Effect: Making Judgments" and "Reflection: We're Always Doing It."]

70. The Narrative Effect: Story as the Forward Frame

LISA BICKMORE

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

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2. "The Narrative Effect: Story as Forward Frame" by Lisa Bickmore
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6. "Reflection: We're Always Doing It" by Kati Lewis

Some people say that story is the basic way we understand everything. For instance, in a piece about reading the Harry Potter novels with his son Jamie (who lives with an intellectual disability), Michael Berube boldly states that "narratives are good to think with." In other words, Berube argues that

narrative is a cognitive structure—something we use to think, or even a kind of thinking in and of itself—that affords specific uses and opportunities for the reader and writer alike. Maybe, for instance, we use stories to explore ideas, or to play out the consequences of ideas. But we can also think of narrative as a type of text, or genre, and like all types of texts, narrative is a resource for communication.

If we think of story as underlying all understanding, we might consider the possibility that we should think of all writing as storytelling. Plenty of people who write about narrative and cognition have followed that line of inquiry, including some of the writers in our own OER project [see chapters such as "Story as Rhetorical," "'You Will Never Believe What Happened!'" or "What Is Story?"]. What we're going to consider here, though, is how to think about a narrative as a type of text, or genre, one that, therefore, exhibits some reliable features, makes some typical moves, and fulfills some readerly expectations, as well as the reasons we might want to use narrative. A narrative text puts story first; it frames the reader's experience of the text by forwarding, or emphasizing, story-telling strategies.

David Herman, in his book *Basic Elements of Narrative*, says that "narrative can be viewed under several profiles—as a cognitive structure or way of making sense of experience, as a type of text, and as a resource for communicative interaction" (ix–x). We might start, then, by thinking about what stories typically do. When we, as readers, sit down to read a story, we expect certain things. One is a timeline that we can follow. Some stories use complex timelines, flashing ahead or flashing back. Some stories keep the timeline simple, starting with the earliest event, and moving ahead deliberately to the end, or final event. But no matter how the writer manages the timeline, in a story, a reader expects to be anchored explicitly in time, and to be able to orient him or herself in time: when s/he comes upon an event or anecdote within the narrative, the reader wants to be able to say, "Okay, this happened before

story-event X, but after story-event Z." An explicit and decipherable timeline is key to the narrative effect—that is, key to understanding a text as a story.

Stories also help readers understand why and under what conditions the story matters. This, by the way, is true of most kinds of writing that matter to readers—either the situation is clearly understood by all those who receive the piece of writing, or the writer makes that situation clear. We see this in Berube's piece about Harry Potter—Berube tells several anecdotes about reading Harry Potter with his son, including conversations they had about how Harry found himself and about how, from time to time, they empathized with Tom Riddle (aka Lord Voldemort), especially during his lonely childhood. Berube situates his telling of these stories within his argument and within our Harry Potter–fan-filled society. He wants to make an argument about how we use stories: how they help us reason morally and develop a sense of the world. That argument situation gives meaning to his anecdotes—and it shapes how the reader receives the anecdotes.

As readers, we also hope for an opportunity to see into a vivid story-world that has a sense of lived-in-ness, of detail and texture. This is what Herman refers to as the "qualia"—the "what it is like"–ness of a story. Writers create the worlds of their stories by using sensory detail, but also by evoking the narrator's or other character's states of mind. Generally, the characters are represented as having minds and motives of their own, and qualities of character and mind that help us understand them. A long story structure, such as a novel, has the room for highly elaborated characters; shorter story structures, such as essay-length memoirs or profiles, may have less room for expansive exploration, but even there, writers develop scenes, characters, and situations by using economical strokes that help the reader to see into a world, to imagine what that world is like, and even to be able to place themselves

in that world, if only for a brief moment, and to move along with the writer as s/he unfolds the narrative.

When we read pieces of writing as stories, we look for these qualities: an explicit timeline or course of events, a sense of situation and occasion, and the animation of a story-world. Writers seeking to create the narrative effect work to realize these qualities for the reader. Similarly, writers choose to highlight narrative and narrative strategies—to create the narrative effect for a reader—when they want the reader to see into that story-world, to empathize or to feel with the characters, and to feel motivated by the circumstances or occasions of the story's telling. The narrative effect can be used within other types of texts, such as within a text that is more informative or more persuasively oriented. That narrative effect, contained within a larger piece, can be a tool for a more complex rhetorical appeal.

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71. The Information Effect: The Facts, the Figures, the So What?

LISA BICKMORE

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

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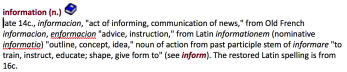
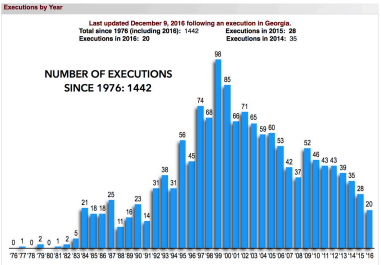
What do we mean when we say "information"? The word has been around, in more or less its current form, since the 14th century. In the late 14th century, information meant something like "the act of communicating news," or advice or instruction. It was another century before it meant something like

"knowledge concerning a particular topic"—a meaning we can recognize as more or less what we mean by the word today (*The Online Etymology Dictionary*, "Information").


information (n.)
late 14c., *informacion*, "act of informing, communication of news," from Old French *informacion*, *enformacion* "advice, instruction," from Latin *informationem* (nominative *informatio*) "outline, concept, idea," noun of action from past participle stem of *informare* "to train, instruct, educate; shape, give form to" (see *inform*). The restored Latin spelling is from 16c.

Sometimes we compare information—implicitly—to an opinion or point of view. When we invoke this comparison—as when we say, "But that's only your opinion—it's not even based on research or real information!"—we indicate that we see information as something more than personal. I can say, for instance, that I believe that capital punishment is wrong, that, in fact, it is legalized murder. This is a statement of my opinion, my belief, and my point of view. It is not, however, information, except insofar as it is information about me. Information on the topic of capital punishment might be something like this:



This graph comes from the Death Penalty Information Center's website. The DPIC is a national non-profit that deals with information about the death penalty. If I had doubts about this graph—about the veracity of the figures therein—I would be able to cross-check it with other sources, such as, perhaps, the Department of Justice's figures, or scholarly research into

the death penalty. The above graph does not deal with opinions, at least not straightforwardly. Instead, it compiles figures and organizes them in such a way that a reader can understand what the figures are and mean.

To deal in information, then, is to deal with modern ideas about verifiability, substantiation, and even proof. Charles Bazerman, in his 1988 study of the emergence of the scientific report of experimental data (*Shaping Written Knowledge*), talks about the development of this genre (one that is a good example of information effect writing). The reports Bazerman studied were written between about 1650 and 1800; his analysis shows the development of communal norms around the features of the genre, which included a complete and accurate account of experimental results. In other words, the usefulness of a scientific report of experimental data was determined in part by the quality and veracity of the information it provided.

So, by analogy, when a writer wants to deal in information, s/he must first lay hands upon information of good quality, which readers will find credible and useful. A writer who wants to achieve the information effect—that is, writing that primarily focuses on information as opposed to opinion or point of view—will do research to obtain that information and will organize the information in such a way that a reader can understand it.

This means that there's a rhetoric—a "best available means of persuasion"—to informative writing, even though it doesn't particularly concern itself with point of view. Perhaps this seems a little contradictory: why would a writer who's just laying out information—facts—need to persuade a reader?

There are at least a couple of ways of thinking about this. One is that the organization of researched information has a persuasive dimension. If the information in a text is well organized and laid out visually, a reader will likely find that text to be more credible than if the information is ill-sequenced,

poorly explained, or badly displayed. This may be partly a matter of ethos—a well-organized and designed piece of writing certainly does speak to a writer's credibility—but it also speaks to the logic that underlies organization and sequencing. If you as a writer need the reader to understand a certain background set of facts before s/he can understand a more specific instance, then sequencing the pieces of information by putting the background facts first and the specific instance facts next is more persuasive than sequencing them the other way around. Appropriately organizing explanations of the facts and transitions between pieces of information also helps the reader to logically understand the information and thus be persuaded of its credibility.

Another way of thinking about the rhetoric of informative writing is to consider the flow of information in an organized piece as a kind of story—a meta-story, if you will. As you guide the reader through careful sequencing of information, you're shaping a journey that the reader embarks upon. As you explain the statistics or data that you're using, you control the pace at which the reader takes the journey, pointing out what's important and what's crucial as you go. And as you end the piece, arriving at the end of the journey with the reader in tow, the reader will, if you've done a good job telling the meta-story, feel that s/he has seen and heard something significant, which helps her/him understand something valuable about the territory you've covered together. The information must, in other words, add up in some way: it must lead to and arrive at a point. It must, in other words, tell a story, and the story must make sense out of the information, or risk being understood as irrelevant.

You may have heard some people say, when talking about rhetoric, that all writing is persuasive. The persuasiveness of the kinds of texts we're talking about here—those that seek to forward information and that downplay overt

argumentation—is achieved with some subtlety, and depends heavily on your ability to organize and clearly explain sets of data. It's also important to understand that when you seek to write informatively, your credibility depends upon your earnest and pointed effort to write accurately and fairly. This means, among other things, trying to characterize differing points of view about the data sets without name calling or trash talking; it also means that you approach the reader with the intention of helping him or her understand what the data says. Of course, selecting data to report on is itself a persuasive act; the ethical writer, seeking to represent information, tries to do so fairly, and to give an accurate sense of the big picture. It's a balancing act, but it's worth striving for that balance, since helping a reader gain a greater understanding of the complex world we all share is in itself an entirely worthy goal.

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72. The Persuasion Effect: What Does It Mean to Write Persuasively?

BENJAMIN SOLOMON

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

1. "Effects Experienced Writers Use" by Benjamin Solomon
2. "The Narrative Effect: Story as Forward Frame" by Lisa Bickmore
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You could argue that all good writing is persuasive.

To tell a good story, you have to persuade your audience to pay attention using strong details, vivid characters, and an

engaging plot. To write an effective report, you need to persuade people that you're a credible source for facts and that you can interpret them accurately. To write a successful class reflection for your ePortfolio, you need to persuade your teacher that you can think critically about the skills and ideas of the course.

In other words, if you're going to write effectively—that is, you're writing to achieve specific, intentional effects with your audience—you'll need to be persuasive.

Kenneth Burke, a scholar who thought a lot about how writing works, argued that persuasion is really all about "identification." To persuade me with language, you need to first get me to "identify" with you and your experience of the situation. The more I can see things from your point of view, the more I'm able to connect my own experiences to yours. Persuasion, in this sense, involves a meeting in the middle, a search for common ground, and a deliberate attempt to create a space where your identity and my identity can connect. And while it's up to you, the writer, to establish that common ground, it's also up to me, your audience, to meet you there. Approached in this way, persuasion becomes far more of a sharing, give-and-take process than it may appear to be on the surface. We tend to think of persuasion as one-directional, a process in which person A uses their powers to influence the thoughts, behaviors, or actions of person B, but it turns out the process is less about manipulation and more about cooperation and collaboration.

All good writing is persuasive, but certain types of writing overtly foreground an author's goal of swaying and influencing an audience.

When writers use language to deliberately craft a sense of identification with others—to share how they see the world in compelling ways so that others can see and experience it that way too—they're using the persuasion effect.

This kind of writing involves an attempt to subtly or overtly

convince an audience that specific points of view and/or actions are worth considering. By giving others a vivid picture of our point of view, we work to sway, influence, or otherwise move our audiences—not necessarily to convert them, or make them change their minds completely about an issue, but to invite them to fully consider the merits of another way of seeing things, a new course of action, or the possibility of meaningful change.

Examples of writing that dials up or amplifies the persuasion effect are all over the place. Scholarly writing, both in the humanities and the sciences, tends to favor argument—a form of persuasion in which authors make specific, well-defined claims and then support those claims with reasoning and research. Advertising—on television, the internet, in print—is a fundamental form of persuasion most of us encounter daily. It's no coincidence that advertising is intensely concerned with identity. The more an advertiser can get you to associate their product with your identity, the more likely you are to buy it. In journalism, the persuasion effect is supposed to be muted entirely in straight news pieces and then, by contrast, turned way up in opinion editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor, and political cartoons. And in professional settings, writers use the persuasion effect in proposals and white papers, and at key moments in reports, evaluations, and memos, not to mention more casual e-mails or text messages.

Like every effect we create in our writing, persuasion often works best when used in concert with other effects. Writers might foreground persuasion but rely on the information, evaluation, and reflection effects to help make their case. Storytelling, or the narration effect, can be deeply effective in helping others identify with a situation and grow sympathetic to a writer's point of view. In fact, researchers recently found data suggesting that reading literary fiction increases our capacity for empathy, or the ability to understand what others think and feel. Persuasive writers often use the narration effect

to generate empathy and help readers identify with them early in a piece of writing, then pivot to a specifically connected argument or claim later on.

If you decide to foreground persuasive strategies in your writing, ask yourself how might you complement that approach with narrative, informative, evaluative, or reflective approaches.

What effects are most likely to connect with your audience at the beginning, middle, and end of your piece? What effects should be left out entirely? How can you blend the different effects to make your writing as persuasive as possible for the audience you want to reach?

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73. The Evaluation Effect: Making Judgments

KATI LEWIS

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

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A few weeks ago my teenage son asked me to watch *Hacksaw Ridge* with him. He'd been reading about the feats of WWII Army Medic Desmond T. Doss and wanted to see those heroics play out on the big screen. Normally, I wouldn't hesitate at the opportunity to have time with my son while watching a

war film based on a true story; however, this time was different. The film's director is Mel Gibson—an actor, producer, and director with an enviable filmography. He's also a public figure who was arrested for drunk driving, and someone who has made demeaning statements about Jews, women, African-Americans, and the LGBTQ community. Additionally, he took a plea deal in a domestic violence case in which he was accused of hitting his former girlfriend while she held their child. (Gibson implicated himself in some audio recordings of conversations that he had with his ex-girlfriend about the incident.) My brother-in-law was almost killed by a drunk driver several years ago. I know many women who are domestic-violence survivors. For these reasons and more, I don't care for Mel Gibson or his work.

But my son wanted to share with me the story-world of the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor. I decided to read reviews of the film for some insights into how effectively it represents Doss's story and what it might possibly say about Gibson.

When I want a critical analysis (interpretation) and evaluation (judgment based on criteria) of the art and ethics employed in a film I'm thinking about spending precious time with, there are a few online publications I typically go to for film reviews because I trust them to offer different and insightful insights in their reviews: *Roger Ebert*, *The New Yorker*, *Fresh Air, The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Rolling Stone*. I read each of their *Hacksaw Ridge* reviews to help me deal with my son–Gibson dilemma. Here are some review-writing characteristics I expected to find—and did find—in those reviews:

Characteristic #1 – A summary of the film's plot.

Effective reviews and evaluations always contain a summary of the artifact under review/evaluation. This helps audiences understand the artifact under review.

Characteristic #2 – A sound analysis of the film's cinematic elements (plot, acting, cinematography, character development, setting, etc.).

Effective reviews and evaluations analyze the individual elements of an artifact in order to determine how these elements work and to interpret the messages the artifact conveys.

Characteristic #3 – Several vivid descriptions of how cinematic elements are employed to help the filmmakers achieve their purpose(s).

Effective reviews and evaluations incorporate descriptions and/or quotes/soundbites of the artifact under review. These help the reviewer support judgments they make about the artifact's effectiveness.

Characteristic #4 – An evaluation of how well and to what effect the film's

cinematic elements work together to help the filmmakers achieve their purpose(s).

> Effective reviews and evaluations explain the judgments the reviewer makes about the artifact. Judgments are based on criteria the reviewer establishes before they begin the review or evaluation process. Criteria is based on the purpose and type of artifact under review.

Characteristic #5 – Careful and effective use of outside sources to help flesh out and connect what's going on in the film with relevant facts both inside and outside of it.

> Effective reviews and evaluations make use of secondary sources to show how the artifact fits into larger conversations, to explore the artifact creator's craft, and to describe the genre and medium moves that the creators make. The types of secondary sources that reviewers use depend on the writer's rhetorical situation, the purpose of the review, and their audience.

It was these last two review-writing characteristics that created the most striking differences between the reviews that I read:

- *Roger Ebert* Editor-in-Chief, Matt Zoller Seitz, argues that *Hacksaw Ridge* is a religious film by paying attention mostly to plot and character development. Seitz examines how the plot—Doss's experiences during basic training and the assault on Hacksaw Ridge are guided by the soldier's Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Additionally, Seitz

compares the events in the plot and Gibson's own religious and personal experiences.

- *The New York Times* contributor, A.O. Scott, focuses primarily on Gibson's depictions of battle. He references part of the director's cinematic résumé to reinforce points about the violence and gore in the battle scenes.
- *Fresh Air*'s reviewer, David Edelstein, evaluates Gibson's cinematic themes to argue that *Hacksaw Ridge* is a continuation of those themes. Edelstein does this by comparing the challenges heroes face to achieve redemption in other Gibson films.
- *Rolling Stone*'s Peter Travers extends this argument by questioning whether or not the film acts as a symbol of Gibson's own redemption. Both Edelstein and Travers agree that Gibson has got a knack for telling war stories.

After reading the reviews, I realized that the dilemma for me wasn't really about whether or not to watch this film—I knew I would watch it with my son because he was so enthralled with Doss's story. The dilemma was about whether or not the messages in the film and the way those messages are conveyed would be powerful enough for me to sit with abandoning my decade-long Mel Gibson boycott. My hope was that in reading the reviews, they would help me find a way to justify my decision to watch the film. They did.

We watched the film.

Gibson does attempt to tackle the moral conflicts going to war creates, and he clearly seeks to show war as a mental and physical space of unimaginable violence and loss. Doss's experiences growing up with an alcoholic father and serving as a medic during the assault on Hacksaw Ridge do seem to parallel Gibson's experiences with personal and public demons.

For me, the film doesn't redeem Gibson. But it did prompt a discussion with my son about Doss and the ethics of telling

someone else's war story. I owe the reviewers and Gibson a "thank you" for that conversation with my son.

74. Reflection: We're Always Doing It

KATI LEWIS

This chapter is one section of a six-part series on effects in writing:

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Reflection is a major element of creative nonfiction (memoirs, profiles, etc.), critical thinking, the scientific method, research, and really any kind of writing/creating process. This—reflection—is the element in your thinking and writing that encourages you (and your readers) to really, really make connections and meaning among the past and present, as well as to speculate on where and how you might use your learning experiences in the future.

Given all of those spaces where reflection takes place, it's important for us to take seriously the reflective component of a project/assignment. A reflection should offer as much meaning- and connection-making as an instructor would expect in any of your pieces for the class. In fact, you've been prompted to participate in intentional reflection throughout the class on your semester issues, research, and writing notebook activities, lab sessions, revisions, and in your Goals & Choices statements.

As you begin rethinking and connecting your experiences in this class, it is crucial for you to consider what reflective writing entails.

What Reflection IS NOT:

- Making a series of points about what you learned or what you did without backing those points up with explorations on how specific experiences with readings, writer's notebook activities, genres, revision, discussion, etc. help you arrive at that learning/understanding about yourself as thinker, writer, doer.
- Talking about a course (this course) in a way that explains nothing about with what YOU are learning and doing in the course.
    - For example, talking about revision without explaining what you learned, how you revised some pieces/parts, why you revised those pieces/parts, etc.

- Simply talking about how you feel. Reflection is about investigating your learning and making connections among your learning experiences. Talking about how you feel is only meaningful to your audience if you connect those feelings to specific learning experiences.
- Telling your audience what you are learning without showing them. Remember the "show more than you tell" mantra for creative writing? It applies to reflection, too.

What Reflection IS:

- The expression of ongoing, developing, emerging wisdom you're gaining from your experiences:
    - Why did you select the piece for revision? For adapting into another medium?
    - What are you learning about yourself as a researcher and writer?
    - What have you learned? What are you learning? Why? How?
- Looking, really looking …
    - BACK on the past: What works well in your writing? Why? What needs work? Why?

    - at NOW—in the moment of a learning experience: What revision & expansion choices are you making? Why?
    - FORWARD toward future experiences: How might your experiences with revision and adaptation help you take up other writing opportunities?

- Connection-making:

    - Explain your writing processes, the effect of workshops on your writing, and how the study of the craft and technique affect your writing.
    - How did your view on any genre and/or medium change? Why?
    - How does this view make you think about/rethink your approach to writing? Why?

- Investigating yourself as a learner and writer by examining your learning and writing processes:

    - How far have you come? What readings, research, discussions, revisions, etc. got you to this point? Why? How?
    - Where do you hope to take all this learning in the future? How? Why?

Finally, it's helpful to think about reflective writing for this class as a mash-up of genres:

- Reflection can be a memoir about your research, writing, and rewriting experiences in this class. Put another way, you're offering your audiences the story of your learning

experiences.

- Reflection can be an argument you're making about your research, writing, and rewriting experiences in this class. Put another way, you're offering a judgment based on evidence and criteria of how far you've come as a researcher and writer, as well as how far you might go in the future because of these experiences.

Often meaningful reflection, like meaningful nonfiction, offers an argument contained within the story.

75. How Stasis Theory Helps You Write a Better Paper: Clearance Racks, Static Cling, and Waterproof Towels

Stasis theory can do three things for you in organizing your writing: 1) It can help you organize the flow of your paper by giving background information and context in a way the audience will better understand; 2) It can re-define what the argument should be about; and 3) It can help you narrow your topic so you (and your audience) don't get overwhelmed by all the information out there.

STACIE DRAPER WEATBROOK

- Shopping the Clearance Rack: Identifying and Classifying Claims
- Static Cling and Waterproof Bath Towels: Start Where the Audience Is
- What Can Stasis Theory Do for You?

You've been given a writing assignment. You research. You read. You prepare to write. But how do you get the gazillion pieces of information organized in a way that makes sense to you and, ultimately, your audience? The answer involves understanding and being able to classify the types of arguments being made.

Let's stop here and define **argument**. In rhetoric, an argument is *a claim with reasons*, not a fight or disagreement as we tend to use the word in everyday language.

A lot of information goes into the topics and discussions you will research. A lot of claims are being made all at once. If you were researching bees, for example, you might find the following claims in multiple sources as you did research:

Examples of bee claims

Pesticides should be banned
Everyone should plant flowers to attract bees
Mold and viruses threaten bees
The bee population is declining due to colony collapse

disorder
Almonds and apples are almost entirely pollinated by bees
'Murder Hornets' attack honey beesLocal honey helps seasonal allergies
Honey bees are displacing native bees
Bees are a keystone species
Planting native wildflowers helps native bees
Decreased bee populations hurt the economy
People can't survive without bees
Monoculture is bad for the environment
Pesticides and toxins threaten bees
Bees are essential to one third of the food consumed in the United States

SHOPPING THE CLEARANCE RACK: IDENTIFYING AND CLASSIFYING CLAIMS

Notice these claims are all over the place? Sorting through the information is just as difficult as shopping the clearance rack at Kohls or Macy's: it's not an activity for the faint of heart. You're looking for a great bargain—and it's there to be found—but the women's shirts are mixed in with teen graphic tees, career jackets, and pajamas. The different sizes are supposed to be organized on racks by size, but are usually more random than not.

When you write, it's your job to organize and control the

flow of information. Your audience will not have the patience to sort through a confusing collection of ideas. That's your job as a writer. So, just like shopping a clearance rack and sorting through the sizes, colors, and types of clothes for that great deal, you will need to sort through the types of claims you find and settle on a clear claim (does the term **thesis statement** sound familiar?) and supporting reasons. Types of claims can be classified into 5 different levels or **stases**. Below, the five levels of argument are listed with example of possible research questions for each of the stases:

FACT — This level establishes what happens (happened) and verifies details in question.

"Is the overall bee population declining?"

DEFINITION — This level seeks to classify and name an occurrence.

"Are honey bees actually an invasive species?"

CAUSE & EFFECT — This level shows the precursors and/or results of an issue.

"Can local honey prevent allergies?"

VALUE — This level argues how important, common, serious, or widespread an issue is.

"How extensive is colony collapse disorder?"
"How dangerous are murder hornets to bees?"

POLICY — This level proposes an action or solution to an issue.

"How can gardeners be encouraged to plant native flowers to attract native bees?"

The ability to classify claims being made in an argument gives clarity to the situation and can lead to discussion and understanding of the issue.

Ancient Greeks and Romans used the stases to thoroughly discuss matters, especially legal matters. They wouldn't move on to the next level if a previous level wasn't resolved. How do these stases play out in everyday life and writing?

Consider the following examples:

Only after a doctor is fairly certain of the symptoms (FACT/DEFINITION), causes (CAUSE & EFFECT), and severity (VALUE) of those symptoms will s/he suggest a

course of treatment or write a prescription (POLICY).

Classical rhetoricians used stases as a way to logically classify and understand the accusations and counter-arguments in legal cases. A judge will not sentence a defendant accused of homicide until the evidence of the case has been established (FACTS). Once the homicide has been classified as felony murder rather than a first degree murder (DEFINITION), the judge can apply the law (CAUSE & EFFECT/VALUE), and hand down a sentence (POLICY).

You would like to go to a new restaurant for lunch but your friends have heard it's expensive and they don't want to spend a lot of money. To convince your friends to go, you present them with information they were not aware of—that the lunch menu is actually a good deal—especially if you order the daily special (FACT/DEFINITION). You tell them the atmosphere is fun and modern and it's worth at least trying (CAUSE & EFFECT/VALUE). Then, you propose going to the restaurant (POLICY).

A student writing a paper proposing bee-friendly gardening tips (a **policy**-level argument) might first use the stases to help the audience understand the big picture of the issue:

Most people don't realize it, but bees are vital to food production because they pollinate plants. In the last

ten years, beekeepers have reported losing over 30% of their bees. Native bumble bee species are also declining. Most people also are shocked to learn that most bees do not live in hives; nearly 70% of native bee species are ground dwelling. While pesticides are commonly blamed for decreased bee populations, colored mulches and barks also pose a significant risk to bees because the synthetic dyes contain toxins.

This paragraph flows from the facts (bee populations are decreasing and are vital to food supply) to **definition**(most bees are ground dwellers) to **cause** and **value** (pesticides and colored mulches are a significant risk). The audience could then reasonably accept a thesis proposing suggestions or **policy** for keeping their gardens bee-friendly:

For this reason, it's essential to use bee-friendly products in your garden.

The rest of the document could focus on the policy of adopting bee-safe gardening practices.

Using stasis theory in the introduction can help move the audience through an orderly set of information in order to introduce the thesis. It can also serve as an outline to discuss each level of the issue.

STATIC CLING AND WATERPROOF BATH TOWELS: START WHERE THE

AUDIENCE IS

The idea of stasis theory is audience-centered, meaning that in traditional argument or exploration, the writer (also called the rhetor) shouldn't move past the point where the audience is.

The word *stasis* shares the same root as the word *static* (as in *static electricity* and *static cling*). So, when you don't start where your audience is, it's just as bad as getting halfway through a job interview and discovering a random sock clinging to the outside of your dress slacks.

Disagreement often happens when parties aren't talking at the same level or stasis. When this disagreement happens, it can be a time for contentious name calling or it can be a time for open-minded discussion and discovery. Stasis theory gives a system for identifying when parties are giving claims at cross purposes:

> Your spouse or housemate: "Let's get grey countertops."
>
> You: "Do our countertops need to be replaced? Are they really that old?"

Here, one party is discussing **policy** (which color should we choose for the new countertops?) while the other isn't sure of the **facts/definition** (do we even need new countertops?)

Stasis Theory helps identify the point where discussion needs to occur (Do our countertops really need to be replaced?). Rhetorician Keith Grant Davie explains, "The word 'stasis' (plural 'stases') literally means a 'slowing down' or a stopping point. In rhetoric, a stasis is an issue that may be contested or a question

that needs to be resolved before the argument can proceed." As in our example of the bees or the countertops, an audience will be much more receptive to changes they can make if they understand why it's important.

Even if you present information in a logical order according to the stases, your audience will not always "buy into" the flow of information you present. Not all information moves smoothly through the stases from **fact** to **policy**. Sometimes audiences get "stuck" on a stasis (think static cling again) and will take issue or outright reject a stasis level you take for granted. Notice how this mock Kickstarter campaign derails in its attempt to logically go through the stases levels to encourage the audience to adopt the **policy** to buy a Fabulous Waterproof Towel:

> As you know, there are over 327 million people in the United States, many of whom bathe or shower regularly. Our market research has shown that wet bath towels can be a problem because they are thick and difficult to dry, allowing mold to colonize, especially in more humid parts of the country. Because of this problem, our department has developed the Fabulous Waterproof Towel as a solution. Please contribute to this project today!

The remainder of the Kickstarter campaign would, we can only assume since it's contrived, focus on why people should adopt the **policy** to buy into the Waterproof Towel technology.

But alas, this is one idea that's probably not going to get much traction. Here's an analysis of how an audience would likely react to the stases of this dubious Waterproof Towel proposal:

As you know, there are over 327 million people in the United States, many of whom bathe or shower regularly.

Here, the audience isn't likely to disagree. They can quickly look up the population of the United States and because of the qualifier "many" will not disagree that a large number bathe or shower. There seems to be no fact or definition issue here.

Our market research has shown that wet bath towels can be a problem because they are thick and difficult to dry ...

The audience might still be on board. Bath towels *are* thick and do take a long time to dry. That a bath towel will get wet is an **effect** the audience will likely accept. No issue here, move along.

... allowing mold to colonize, especially in more humid parts of the country.

The audience might take issue at this point, the **value** stasis. Here is the stopping point: the audience probably doubts the claim that wet bath towels are the huge problem they are made out to be. After all, how many cases of death by bath towel mold have been reported? Yes, bath towels get wet, but they usually dry within a few hours to a day, even in humid climates. Of course,

the audience probably knows a simple thing to do is to put the bath towel in the wash after use or simply hang it to dry. Not a big deal. The audience will likely not find the problem of wet bath towels a pressing issue. Here, at the **value** stasis is the "stopping point," where the issue needs to be resolved. But how can it be resolved? It's a waterproof towel, an undeniably useless invention.

> Because of this problem, our department has developed the Fabulous Waterproof Towel as a solution. Please contribute to this Kickstarter campaign today!

Because the audience wasn't convinced at the **value** stasis that wet bath towels are a widespread and difficult issue, the **policy** argument, "contribute to this Kickstarter campaign" isn't likely to be successful. At least we should hope not.

Obviously, the waterproof bath towel example is fabricated, but think of situations in your own life and in the public sphere where people disagree. When this discord happens, it can be a time for shouting, contention, oversimplification, and caricatures or it can be a time for thoughtful listening, open-minded discussion, and respect for differing viewpoints.

WHAT CAN STASIS THEORY DO FOR YOU?

Stasis Theory Helps Organize the Flow of

Information.

You can organize your paper along the natural order of the stases to help your audience follow the information you present. Using stasis theory helps you organize information to help the audience understand the state of the issue.

When you understand the natural levels of argument—**fact**, **definition**, **cause & effect**, **value**, and **policy**—it makes it easier to think about your purpose (what you want to have happen as a result of your document) and how your audience will interact with the information presented.

Stasis Theory Helps Writers Find the Interesting Angles.

Understanding how claims are classified helps writers identify how individual claims fit into the overall debate. It's this ability to sort through information for the audiences that helps us deliver a clear message.

But stasis theory can do more than just help us organize; it can help us identify interesting and surprising angles in a debate. Careful research can help you move beyond the obvious arguments to find new facets in the debate.

Trust me. Your instructor will appreciate a new take on your subject.

Stasis theory not only helps you organize your thoughts, it also helps you redefine the issue and show other ways to look at a problem. To find new ways to look at issues, look for clarification or re-interpretation of facts, new definitions, little-known causes, surprising

effects, events and statistics showing overwhelming importance, and the innovative solutions of an issue.

Being able to carefully analyze an issue and classify the associated claims will help you find new ways to look at old subjects.

Stasis Theory Helps Narrow Your Topic.

When we encounter mountains of information about our topic, we often feel compelled to dump everything we know into one paper. (True story: my first draft of this paper was over 7000 words.) Understanding stasis theory helps pare down the issue to a manageable level and concentrate the bulk of the paper on the necessary stasis. That means you don't have to cover every stasis or even most of them in detail. Hopefully, that helps you breathe easier. That's not to say that after focusing your paper about the **definition** or **causes** of your issue, your instructor won't ask you to add some background in the introduction or a conclusion briefly suggesting a solution, but it should be an immense relief to know it's okay to focus on just a small part of the issue.

CONCLUSION

Ideally, issues of policy should be decided in public discourse only when all parties can agree on the earlier stases. After all, the intent of this ancient rhetorical strategy was to help audiences arrive at consensus at each level. As you know, however, in the case in our society, polite, respectful discourse aimed at consensus is nowhere near a reality. All sides seem

too quick to try to pass laws and enact policy without coming to a proper understanding on the complexities of issues. Rhetoricians Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor explain the value of understanding the stasis of arguments and assert that policy arguments are often premature (5). Still, they insist that stasis theory is an essential tool for discussion and understanding, saying, "We argue about many issues that cannot be resolved well enough for action to follow, but that can be clarified to the extent that we come to know what we do not know" (5). Coming to "know what we do not know" is a powerful literacy skill to help us examine issues and understand their complexity and relevance in personal and public discourse.

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76. Using Stasis Theory to Narrow Your Topic: A Lesson in Writing a Viewpoint Synthesis/ Issue Exploration Paper and in Organizing Your Room

STACIE DRAPER WEATBROOK

Many Salt Lake Community College English 1010 students are asked to write a paper that looks at multiple views in a debate in order to better understand the issue. Students are instructed to start with a research question with a potential for at least three answers/viewpoints. The aim of the paper is to venture beyond identifying simple pro/con viewpoints to exploring issues in their complexity. Understanding how to classify arguments made in a debate not only helps students narrow their topic but also allows for easier organization in researching and drafting.

- 5 Types of Claims: Ways You Can Narrow Your Topic
- Fact
- Definition
- Cause & Effect
- Value
- Policy

Remember back when you were six and you were asked to clean up the toys? But that wasn't the worst part. You weren't allowed to simply stash the random Polly Pockets, Hot Wheels, Bionicles, Barbies, and Legos on just any shelf. You were tasked with the Herculean act of putting the toys *where they belonged*. It was enough to make you want to lie on the floor in despair, with Legos digging into your back to add to the dramatic effect.

Hopefully, some compassionate adult was there to show you the shelf for the dolls and Bionicles, the box for the Legos, and the bag to keep the Polly Pocket clothes out of the way of the vacuum. Today, as a college student, you can organize your dishes, spices, and socks as expertly as Martha Stewart. And you would too, if you weren't working two jobs and going to school.

When you are given a research assignment, it can be just as overwhelming as cleaning your room was when you were six. You might feel the same loss of hope when you look at your digital mountains of database searches and Google results. Fortunately, research and research writing don't have to be daunting, especially if you know how to mentally sort the information you find. As luck would have it, the ancient Greeks

and Romans gave us shelves and bins to sort out debates and make complex information more manageable.

5 TYPES OF CLAIMS: WAYS YOU CAN NARROW YOUR TOPIC

Classical rhetoric identifies arguments by levels or *stases* (plural for *stasis*). The idea of Stasis Theory, as it is called, comes from traditional argument and issue exploration and helps writers start where their audience is to move through a logical flow of information.

When you research your topic, picture these five stases, or types of arguments, as shelves or bins to sort the issues about your topic:

FACT — This level establishes what happens (happened) and verifies details in question.

DEFINITION — This stasis seeks to classify and name an occurrence.

CAUSE & EFFECT — This stasis shows the precursors and/or results of an issue.

VALUE — This level argues how important, common, serious, or widespread an issue is.

POLICY — This final level proposes an action or solution to an issue.

Choosing a stasis for your issue will help you narrow down your topic and keep your research question manageable. Many composition classes at Salt Lake Community College ask students to do a Viewpoint Synthesis or Issue Exploration essay that shows multiple views of an issue. Because the Viewpoint Synthesis or Issue Exploration is simply a summary of viewpoints and not an argumentative essay, you might choose any stasis as the focus of inquiry. It is not the assignment's burden to resolve each stasis, but rather to report how others, and, at the end of the unit, you, see the issue.

Keeping your topic narrow will help to avoid frustration as you sift through the digital piles of information for the Viewpoint Synthesis paper or any other research you're assigned. In other words, you're only asked to sort through the Legos, and then, only the Star Wars Legos.

Consider the following questions at each stasis and how they can lead to focused questions with multiple answers.

FACT

Arguments of **fact** must be questions where the "facts" are not easily agreed. A question like "What color is the Markosian Library?" or "How many people voted in the mid-term elections?" could easily be answered based on a quick look at the library's exterior or research into the election data. These questions have answers that can be easily verifiable and are not considered viewpoints.

Many **fact** stasis questions deal with scientific or historical topics that lend themselves to varying interpretations and require verification, often showing a fundamental disagreement about what the reality is.

An example of a **fact** stasis question surrounds the human microbiome—the colonies of yeast, bacteria, and viral cells hosted in the human body. Consider the following **fact** stasis question and possible viewpoints:

Question: How many microbes are in the human microbiome?

Viewpoint 1) There are 10 microbial cells for every 1 human cell.

Viewpoint 2) There are actually 3 microbial cells for every 1 human cell.

Viewpoint 3) The ratio is actually 1.3 microbial cells for every 1 human cell.

When writing your Issue Exploration paper, you will include a summary of the issue where you state the different views. Later in the paper, you'll expand and explain each of the views. Notice how the various views in this **fact** stasis debate can be summarized:

How many microbes are in the human body? For years, popular media and scientific journals reported that there are 10 times as many microbial cells in the human body as there are human cells. That number was the standard until 2014 when the American Academy of Microbiology stressed the number of both microbial and human cells were only estimates and the ratio of microbial-to-human cells were actually closer to 3:1 (Crew). In 2016, Ron Sender and a team of biologists used a population of standard 70-kg males to give a new estimate of 1.3 microbial cells to every 1 human cell.

The Viewpoint Synthesis/Issue Exploration paper would then go on to discuss the merits and limitations of each of the three viewpoints.

DEFINITION

Definition arguments seek to classify an occurrence or condition.The **definition** stasis is used when there is some disagreement about what to call something. (Think Pluto being demoted from *planet* to *dwarf planet*.) Definition arguments are also used in criminal court cases. (X killed Y; was it View 1: Self-defense; View 2: Felony Murder; or View 3: Manslaughter?)

If you are researching bullying. You could use the **definition** stasis to seek to classify which behaviors should be considered bullying:

Question: What is bullying?

Viewpoint 1) Bullying is 'a harmless rite of passage in childhood' and can be ignored.

Viewpoint 2) Bullying is any mean or rude behavior.

Viewpoint 3) Bullying is any behavior that employs an imbalance of power to control or harm others where the actions are repeated.

A summary of the issue and these viewpoints for the introduction to your Viewpoint Synthesis paper might look like this:

There's been a lot of attention to bullying in the past years. Some people view bullying as simply a part of childhood. Psychiastrist William Copeland refers to a study by Arseneault, Bowes, and Shakoor who report childhood bullying is still "commonly viewed as just a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up." On the other side of the spectrum, acute awareness to bullying has given way to defining any rude, mean, or even contrary behavior toward another person as bullying. Other organizations like StopBullying.gov and child therapists like Signe Whitson define bullying specifically as any behavior

that employs an imbalance of power to control or harm others where the actions are repeated.

The Issue Exploration paper would then go into detail about each of these definitions.

Hint: Recognize the status quo as a viewpoint.

Sometimes, a third viewpoint is difficult to find. The reason might be that it's sitting right in front of us as the accepted status quo and we don't stop to recognize it's such a common practice or belief that it isn't given a second thought. Think back to the issue of how many cells make up a human microbiome. It took nearly 40 years for scientists to start questioning where the original estimate came from. As in the question on how to define bullying, one of the viewpoints is what most people traditionally thought about the issue generations ago, and, sadly, how that idea carries forward today. Questioning the status quo or commonly accepted ideas helps identify prevalent viewpoints and allows for other viewpoints to be considered and proposed.

CAUSE & EFFECT

Asking **cause & effect** questions helps narrow down a topic to the reasons behind and results surrounding an issue. Sometimes, asking **cause & effect** questions can be tricky, because they often produce a "laundry list" of causes or reasons for an issue rather than answers that are diametrically opposed. If we ask a cause-and-effect question like *what are the benefits of recycling?* we get a list of reasons: *to conserve resources, to offset our carbon footprint, to feel good about ourselves, to have a zero-waste community, to save money*. These reasons are not actual viewpoints, especially since all three reasons aren't mutually exclusive; each of these reasons can exist happily with the other reasons, so the question isn't likely to identify a real issue or debate.

When asking a **cause & effect** question—or any question for our Viewpoint Synthesis assignment—there must be at least two answers that are mutually exclusive, meaning they can't exist together. Here's an example:

> Many people believe an effect of recycling is saving resources; however, John Tierney in his *New York Times* piece, "The Reign of Recycling," says recycling plastics in many cases does not save resources because the power and water needed to recycle do not produce a net savings of resources. A third view of the effects of recycling is more about the effect of creating an awareness of consumption practices.

The above example takes a very small part of the recycling issue, whether recycling plastics saves resources, and identifies opposite viewpoints of the **effects** of the issue. This argument could also be very easily classified as a **fact** stasis question,

since basic facts are in question. Either stasis you choose to call it, it's important to see how a narrow question will yield a more specific discussion of the issue.

VALUE

Questions on the **value** stasis deal with how widespread, severe, pervasive, beneficial, or important an issue is. An example is a piece by Nellie Bowles called "A Dark Consensus About Screens and Kids Begins to Emerge in Silicon Valley." This article that appeared in *The New York Times* can be classified as a **value** stasis argument because it addresses how serious the issue of children's screen use is to the parents creating the technology. Bowles reports that an increasing number of tech executives and programmers—the ones responsible for the apps and the devices to run them—are limiting and even forbidding screentime for their children. Here are the viewpoints presented:

Question: How safe is screentime to children's brains?

Viewpoint 1) Any amount of screentime is absolutely harmful to children

Viewpoint 2) Screentime isn't a concern. Today's screentime is similar to excessive television watching of previous decades and there are plenty of adults today

who grew up watching a lot of television and turned out just fine.

Viewpoint 3) Screentime has advantages and drawbacks and should be used with careful purpose and be strictly monitored.

Bowles' article is an excellent example of a real-life Viewpoint Synthesis assignment. Here's how the views can be summed up:

How safe is screentime for children? Bowles quotes experts such as Chris Anderson, the former editor of *Wired* and now the chief executive of a robotics and drone company, who says of screens and children's brains, "On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, it's closer to crack cocaine." Another view, however, shows screens aren't a concern. Bowles quotes Jason Toff, who ran the Vine and now works for Google, and lets his 3-year-old play on an iPad, which he believes is no better or worse than a book. Bowles also shows the middle ground of other Silicon Valley parents who say there are ways to allow some limited educational screen time.

A paper showing just how dangerous (or not) screentime is for children would go on to explain each of the views in detail, using sources in addition to the Bowles article.

POLICY

Issues of **policy** answer the question *what should be done?* Suppose your workplace has a problem with workers not showing for their shifts. You decide to research that question and find the following solutions:

Question: How can workplaces decrease absenteeism?

Viewpoint 1) Punish absenteeism. Decrease salaried workers' pay for absences not cleared 48 hours in advance. Allow only X number of sick days. Write up non-salaried workers for missing shifts and give only 1 warning before terminating employment.

Viewpoint 2) Consider the causes of absenteeism and solve the problem by offering childcare and sick rooms for children of workers. Also, offer free bus passes or Uber credits.

Viewpoint 3) Focus on productivity not attendance. Abolish the attendance policy. Allow workers to take off any time they need as long as their work is done. For workers who must be present for customer-service work, offer bonuses instead of flexible schedules.

For our Viewpoint Synthesis/Issue Exploration assignment, you need three distinct views. The perspectives should offer views

that cannot all co-exist. Notice how in the absenteeism example, Viewpoint 1 focuses on solving the problem punitively while Viewpoint 3 makes absenteeism a non-issue by focusing on productivity. These viewpoints are mutually exclusive and cannot both be implemented. Your task is to find at least two views for your own issue that are mutually exclusive. The third view could be the middle ground.

Note: Sometimes after identifying several potential policies, your topic may seem too broad. At this point it may be helpful to focus your research question on only one of the solutions at the **cause & effect** stases. For example:

Question: Should X program be implemented?

Viewpoint 1) Yes, because _____.

Viewpoint 2) Yes, because of an entirely different reason.

Viewpoint 3) No, because _____.

CONCLUSION

Cleaning up your toys when you were six may not have been pleasant, but you can't deny the exhilarating feeling of

accomplishment once it was done. When you finally see how you're going to organize your Issue Exploration, you'll feel a similar sense of achievement. Being able to classify the type of arguments *is* pretty satisfying. Almost as satisfying as having all your Polly Pockets together on the same shelf.

A note to instructors and other interested parties: A quick Google search of *stasis theory* or a perusal of *Purdue Owl* will usually show four stases of arguments: Fact, Definition, Quality, and Policy. Another classification includes three stases: Fact, Value, and Policy. Because stasis theory is useful in narrowing and classifying topics, I prefer the divisions given by rhetoricians like Grant-Davie, Secor, and Fahnestock of dividing arguments into five stases.

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See also:

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77. Write for the Conditions: Help Your Audience “HOLD ON”

Just like you drive for the conditions, you also write for the conditions. Here are some ways to keep your audience along for the ride.

STACIE DRAPER WEATBROOK

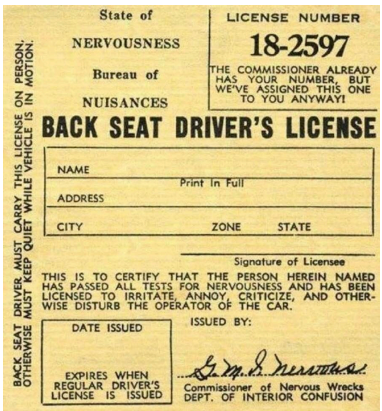
- Drive for the Road Conditions; Write for the Reader Conditions
- Start Slowly with an Introduction and Then Build Speed
- Avoid Lengthy Detours: Weave More Information into Your Sentences
- Drive Smoothly: Use Transitions to Lead Readers Through the Paper

DRIVE FOR THE ROAD CONDITIONS; WRITE FOR THE READER

CONDITIONS

You can't drive the same way all the time. You start and stop when you're in traffic, and you can go 80 mph or more on the open Interstates. When you're driving in the mountains, you don't take curves at 50 mph. Instead, you slow down to avoid careening off the cliffs. In the rain, you reduce your speed to avoid hydroplaning. When driving in the snow, you reduce your speed, you keep a big distance between your car and the other cars, and you don't break quickly so your car doesn't slide out of control.

I know a couple who had great conflicts in their marriage in one particular area: the husband's driving. He drove fast. He followed the car in front of him much too closely. He didn't plan ahead and merged at the last minute. The wife, anxious and nervous about driving anyway, found his aggressive driving style more than she could handle.



Finally one day, the wife told him, **"You need to drive for the conditions, and right now the condition is me."** Instead of fuming, holding a grudge, or giving him the silent treatment, she was able to explain what she needed. Because he loves her and wants her comfort, he changed his way of driving.

This couple is my parents, and they will soon celebrate their 50-year anniversary.

Much like considering road conditions, writers consider the rhetorical situation: the writer, the purpose, and the reader. (Justin Jory and Jessie Szalay write more on that here.) In

writing, as in driving, writers need to adjust for the conditions, the audience.

Think about what an English 1010 student says about how writing needs to consider the audience and their experience:

"If I'm being honest, I didn't expect this to happen, but during this unit I was responding to a fellow student in one of the discussions and happened to make a connection with a threshold concept. The student was explaining that they struggled during the semester because they tended to pick topics that centered around science, and students that reviewed the work found it difficult to follow. As I was reading, it occurred to me that people in a similar field to what was being written about would not need the same clarification that we did. This brought to mind the threshold concept CONTEXT: The meanings and the effects of writing are contingent on situation, on readers, and on a text's purposes/uses."

This student makes a great point about the writing threshold concept of Context/Contingency: awareness of your audience should determine how you write. Even when writing to an audience that's knowledgeable about the topic, always err on the side of clarity. In other words, slow down so you make sure your audience is with you.

Here are some tips to write for the conditions.

START SLOWLY WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND THEN BUILD SPEED

When you drive, you start at 0 mph and build up speed. It's the same with writing. Your writing is not about showing off how much you know by being cryptic and esoteric and leaving your audience to guess what you mean. Considering your rhetorical situation means recognizing your purpose and communicating it in a way your audience can follow. A simple introduction can do wonders to help the audience see the information and why it's important. You've got to ease the reader into your essay. Your audience could have been watching reruns of *The Office*, buying dog food online, attending yoga class, or any number or random tasks before reading your paper. The point is, your reader, even if they are intensely familiar with your topic, or deeply interested in your progress as a writer, needs a starting place, so take a page out of *The Sound of Music*, and start at the very beginning.

Most of our public and private discourse comes as a reaction to an event or statement. In other words, writing takes place in the context of what others are saying about events, statements, and research. Graff and Birkenstein explain in their book *They Say I Say* that having a clear thesis is not enough; it is the

writer's responsibility to show the larger conversation (20). They explain:

> When it comes to constructing an argument, we offer you the following advice: remember you are entering a conversation and therefore need to start with "what others are saying . . ." and then introduce your own ideas as a response. Specifically, we suggest that you summarize what "they say" as soon as you can in your text, and remind readers of it at strategic points as your text unfolds. (20–21)

As you write, think about the bigger picture and what "they" may be saying about your issue:

Was a law passed recently that made your topic more interesting to the public? Explain what the law is and why the public is concerned.

Were you asked to analyze an article for class? Tell the audience what the article is named, who wrote it, and what it's about.

Did a current event happen recently to spark a debate? Explain that event.Could a story ease your audience into the subject? Capture their interest and tell a story.

> Did someone recently say or post something publicly about the topic? Tell the audience what they said.

Give your audience enough background so they know what the issue is and why it's important. At the same time, it's essential to note that setting the context doesn't mean overwhelming audiences with pages of explanations that leave the reader unsure of the paper's purpose. When driving you don't go 5 mph for the first ten minutes on the freeway just to warm up. Instead, you quickly build up speed so you can merge onto the freeway and get to your destination.

Here's an example introduction from a paper about the causes of Celiac disease. Notice how it quickly gives context then asks a focusing question to set up the organization for the paper:

> Twenty-five years ago most people had no idea what gluten was. Fast forward to today and you're sure to have heard of it. Someone you know may be gluten intolerant or have been diagnosed with Celiac disease. Your local restaurant menus offer gluten-free options. Entire shelves in grocery stores are dedicated to products without wheat, barely, or rye, and the group of proteins, called gluten, that these grains contain. It seems over the past several years Celiac disease and gluten intolerance has been on the rise. What's responsible for what seems to be an explosion in the increase of diagnosed cases of Celiac disease?

This introduction started with the idea that twenty-five years ago most people had no idea what gluten was, moved on to

the idea that today you're sure to have heard of it, and suggested maybe the audience knows someone with Celiac disease or has seen restaurant menus or offerings in the grocery store. Starting from the very basics (most people had no idea) and moving to the question *What's responsible for the increase in Celiac disease?* ensures the audience can follow along.

AVOID LENGTHY DETOURS: WEAVE MORE INFORMATION INTO YOUR SENTENCES

Once you've used an introduction to orient your reader to the background and importance of your topic, you want to keep them safely with you as you travel together through your paper. You need to make sure the audience has the information they need to follow you. At the same time, keep your purpose clear and narrow. Otherwise, you'll feel overwhelmed because you know that your audience needs more information, and you'll feel tempted to give lengthy explanations which risk going off course of your main point.

Our example paper's purpose is to identify possible causes for the increase in Celiac disease. It can be tempting to give a detailed explanation of the condition, several paragraphs about the symptoms, and even a commentary of how it's hard to find gluten-free menu options. By this point, the paper might be four pages long and the reader still wouldn't be sure what the writer's purpose is.

Because our example paper focuses on only the theorized causes and not the background, definition, or symptoms of the disease, these necessary bits of information can be woven

into the sentences using commas, adjectives, and prepositional phrases that add information while still keeping the focus on the *causes* of Celiac.

Parenthetical Commas

Parenthetical commas, commas that define the term, help writers succinctly add information the reader may need to better understand the subject. See what I did there in the last sentence? I used commas to insert the phrase *commas that define the term*. Giving definitions and explanations set apart by commas is a simple way to help the reader understand what you're saying without getting off track. (You can find more discussion about parenthetical commas here.)

Adjectives

Adjectives add description to nouns and are another way to gracefully give more information. Using descriptive words to explain the subject gives readers more context and helps them follow you. In the revised example below, the descriptor *herbicide* is added to *glyphosate* to help the reader understand a concept that is probably not common knowledge but can be quickly explained in the sentence.

Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases are used in sentences to modify or give more information about a noun. These phrases

start with prepositions (words like *of*, *to*, *with*, *around*, *for*, and *besides*). As you write, consider places in your essay where the reader can use more information to make your writing more clear. (Notice how the underlined phrases in the last sentence could be omitted, but add more clarity to the idea.)

Compare the First Draft and Revised Draft below*, and notice how commas can be used to rename a subject and give more information to the reader and how adding more descriptive words through adjectives and prepositional phrases enhances the meaning.

*Speaking of CONTEXT/CONTINGENCY: This example comes from a Viewpoint Synthesis Paper. In many English 1010 classes here at Salt Lake Community College, students are asked to write a Viewpoint Synthesis paper, an assignment instructing students to research a question and discover multiple viewpoints on the issue. The paper is an exploratory paper—that is, it isn't making an argument, but rather sharing possible answers to the question. Because of the type of paper, there isn't an actual thesis statement (thesis statements take a clear position to be argued), but many instructors ask students to compose a "synTHESIS statement," to appear in the beginning of the essay which summarizes possible answers to the questions posed. The following two draft examples are synTHESIS statements.

First Draft

Why are cases of Celiac disease on the rise? Some argue there is actually no increase in Celiac disease;

instead, better diagnostic practices are finding cases that would have been missed years ago. Another theory posed by von Broeck et al. is that gluten intolerance is due to wheat breeding. The wheat breeding theory is highly contested by researchers who speculate the increase is actually caused by industrial baking practices. Another view is the use of glyphosate is causing gluten intolerance and Celiac disease.

Not bad, the above paragraph articulately sums up four views on the increase in Celiac disease. But remember, writers consider the context and experience of their audience, who may not have been researching wheat-growing practices for the last four weeks. Simple additions to the sentences can add clarification for the audience while still succinctly identifying causes. Notice the underlined phrases that have been added to the original paragraph:

Revised Draft

Why are cases of Celiac disease on the rise? Some argue there is actually no increase in Celiac disease; instead, better diagnostic practices are finding cases that would have been missed years ago. Another theory is that gluten intolerance is due to wheat breeding, the agricultural practice of crossing different strains of wheat. The wheat-breeding

theory is highly contested by researchers who speculate the increase is actually caused by industrial bakery practices of adding vital wheat gluten and fast-acting yeast to recipes. However, other researchers propose it is the use of the herbicide glyphosate, the primary ingredient in Roundup weedkiller, that is causing gluten intolerance and Celiac disease.

In the second example, an adjective phrase giving the definition of wheat breeding, *the agricultural practice of crossing different strains of wheat*, is added. More information is also given through the prepositional phrase *of adding vital wheat gluten and fast acting yeast to recipes*, which gives more information about baking processes that could contribute to cause Celiac disease. The addition of the word *herbicide*, which acts as an adjective, and the explanation *the primary ingredient in Roundup weedkiller,* set apart by commas, makes a huge difference in how the reader will understand the writing. All of these revisions to the original text allow the reader to more clearly follow the writer's organization and ideas.

Placing Nouns After the Word *This*

Placing nouns after the word *this* is another helpful way to add more clarity for the reader. Many times writers use *this*, because the thought makes perfect sense in their own mind. We're all guilty of this oversight (see what I did there?). Because audiences can't read our

minds, err on the side of clarity. Adding a noun after *this* gives a chance to repeat and redefine concepts.

Do a CTRL+F (or CMD+F on a Mac) search for the word *this* in your paper. Anytime *this* appears without a noun, it's an opportunity to offer more clarification.

Compare:

Celiac disease is on the rise. Medical researchers think this is due to a few possible causes.

vs

Celiac disease is on the rise. Medical researchers think this condition is due to a few possible causes.

vs

Celiac disease is on the rise. Medical researchers think this condition, which leads to small intestine damage when gluten in wheat and other grains is ingested, is due to a few possible causes.

Adding a noun to *this* gives a chance to explain more to the reader. Further revision by adding an explanation of Celiac disease in parenthetical commas gives the

chance to add even more information the reader may or may not know without having to devote sentences and sentences of explanation. Integrating such information into a sentence makes the explanation sound natural, and helps the reader fit the information together without the writer sounding condescending.

DRIVE SMOOTHLY: USE TRANSITIONS TO LEAD READERS THROUGH THE PAPER

Part of understanding the writing threshold concept of CONTEXT or CONTINGENCY means thinking about how a potential audience will read your writing. Let's continue our driving metaphor: through an inexplicable chain of events, you are responsible for driving a group of people riding in the back of a flatbed truck, possibly rented from Home Depot. Let me stress that we do not know how you got to this point where this truck was the only available means of transportation, but to further complicate this bewildering metaphorical situation, you are driving on a windy, bumpy dirt road. Luckily, there is a handle attached to the truck that the riders can grab, and avoid plummeting off the truck bed.

image source: https://blackmtnranch.com/keep-on-truckin/flatbed/

The explanations in your sentences are as essential to helping your audience follow your thoughts as providing a handle for the riders to hold on to. But, in the case of the flatbed truck, you're also going to need to take the bumps and turns cautiously if you want to keep your reader with you. In short, you need to use guiding words and transitions to make sure your reader doesn't fall off the truck.

Your job as a writer is to lead your reader through your paper. Your paper should have larger organizational markers to keep your reader with you: the introduction, the thesis, and the point sentences that start new sections in the paper and first sentences of other paragraphs in each section of the paper. In addition to the larger organizational markers, you can employ transitional phrases, clear use of old and new information, repetition, and starting paragraphs with the information and not the source as techniques to ensure the "ride" through your paper will be a smooth one.

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases act as directions to the reader like, “Hold on! Here comes a bump!” or “Watch out for this next turn!” With adequate warning, the reader can hold on and anticipate a change in the road.

In writing, we need to give our readers a chance to “hold on” when a turn or a bump is coming. Use transitional words and phrases to help the reader understand when a new or opposing point will be introduced:

- First, _____. Second, _____. Third, _____.
- One view of the issue is _____. Others reject the first view saying _____. Still others say it’s not _____ or _____, but _____.
- Some say it is _____. By contrast, X group says it is _____. A middle ground between the two views is _____.
- At first people saw the issue as _____. As time progressed, the predominant view changed to _____. Now, people see _____.
- Another reason for _____ is _____.

Using transitional words points to movement through the paper and should follow the order set in the thesis statement or synTHESIS statement.

Remember your audience is intelligent but can’t read your mind and needs to be told how it all fits. Your thesis

statement will give your audience the "big picture." Likewise, in a Viewpoint Synthesis paper, your thesis sentence (or really your synTHESIS statement) informs readers about what they can expect to read in your paper. Here's a variation on the synTHESIS statement we used earlier:

> One theory for the increase in Celiac disease is wheat breeding. However, some researchers don't believe wheat breeding to be responsible and suggest instead that changes in modern bread-baking processes are responsible for the apparent increase. Another theory for the rise in Celiac cases points to the use of the herbicide glyphosate.

The reader can reasonably expect to **first** read in the paper about wheat breeding as a cause of Celiac disease and **then** a discussion of how changes in the bread-baking process are causing more cases of Celiac. **Finally**, the audience expects to hear about glyphosate.

"Old" and "New" Information

"Old" and "new" information is a concept that says writers should show readers where they've been and where they're going. People are accustomed to building on things they know to help them understand things they aren't familiar with. In writing, take care to give context to the main idea and orient your reader as to where they are in the paper. When finishing one point and moving on to the next, tell your audience you're

moving from one point in the thesis (or synTHESIS) statement to the next point. You can say things like this:

> While some believe wheat breeding has caused the increase in Celiac disease, other researchers claim wheat breeding hasn't made a significant change in the gluten or protein content of wheat.

The words *while some* and the repetition of the term *wheat breeding* would remind the reader of the point that had just been made. The words *other researchers* and the introduction of the claim that there hasn't been a change in the wheat is a signal to readers that the paper is moving on to the next point forecasted earlier in the paper.

Keeping the reader informed of the movement from old information to new information helps the reader follow exactly where they need to be in your paper. While the concept of "old" and "new" information works in signaling to the reader that one section of the paper is done being discussed and you are ready to move on to the next point, it also works as you move your reader from sentence to sentence.

An example of purposefully using "old" and "new" information is found in the following two paragraphs.

Old Information = Wheat Breeding → New Information = Vital Wheat Gluten

> While some believe wheat breeding has caused

the increase in Celiac disease, other researchers claim wheat breeding hasn't made a significant change in the gluten or protein content of wheat. Donald Kasarda, reporting in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, writes that in his research he has not found an increase in the gluten content of wheat in the past fifty years. Instead, Kasarda notes that the increased consumption of bread in the last half of the twentieth century and the bakery practices such as adding vital wheat gluten to baked goods may account for the increase in Celiac cases. Kasarda's research suggests other causes of Celiac disease should be studied.

Notice how the concept of *researchers* is "new" information introduced in the first sentence. In the second sentence, the ideas of *researchers* is "old" information as the audience learns "new" information: a specific researcher, *Kasarda*, finds *no increase in gluten content* but posits that *vital wheat gluten* might be to blame.

Old Information = Vital Wheat Gluten → New Information = Fast-Acting Yeast

The addition of vital wheat gluten may not be the only modern baking practice to blame for more cases of Celiac disease. Shorter bread rising times due to fast-acting yeasts may also be to blame.

Stephen Jones, a wheat breeder at the University of Washington believes fast-acting yeasts and shorter rising times are affecting the population's ability to digest the gluten in wheat (Philpott)**. Jones has shown that sourdough bread made with no yeast that rises for 12 hours contains less potent gluten and may be more digestible.

**Stephen Jones was quoted as a source in Philpott's article. Jones is referenced in the sentences as the authority, but his information came from Philpott's article, which needs to be cited so the reader can refer to the source (see Works Cited below).

The second paragraph's first sentence refers to the "old" information the audience knows from the previous paragraph: *vital wheat gluten* might be a cause. Then, the sentence introduces "new" information that the vital wheat gluten *may not be the only modern baking practice to blame*. The next sentence builds on the idea that there are other causes and introduces *fast-acting yeasts*. From here, the "old" information, *fast-acting yeasts*, is supported by "new" information, *Stephen Jones*, a source. *Jones* becomes the "old" information as "new" information becomes *Jones has shown sourdough bread … that rises for 12 hours may be more digestible*.

These two paragraphs above show how "new" information becomes "old" information to make way for additional "new" information. Each sentence builds upon the next like a highway seamlessly trails behind your car as it moves forward to its destination.

[For more information on sentence fluency or the "known–new contract," see Nikki Mantyla's article here.]

Repetition

Repetition shows the audience how the ideas fit not only the big picture (thesis) but also the sections and individual paragraphs in the paper. The idea of how "old" information becomes "new" information wouldn't work if it weren't for repeated words. Repetition of key terms such as *research*, *gluten content*, and *wheat* create a continuity of ideas for the audience.

In transition sentences it is especially important to repeat the words or use synonyms for the words found in your thesis. Doing so creates a sense of order about your paper and reminds the reader of their destination.

Starting Paragraphs with the Information, Not the Source

Starting paragraphs with the information, not the source, helps the reader see how each paragraph fits into the overall organization. Often it's tempting to start a paragraph with the source. After all, you've put a lot of time into researching, and you're familiar with your sources. But talking about the source first without giving the reader context can be confusing for the reader. Remember, while you've spent hours and weeks researching your issue and sources, your reader has not. Each sentence and especially the first sentence of each paragraph should lead the reader through the paper.

Compare:

... other causes of Celiac disease should be studied.

Tom Philpott wrote an article called "The Real Problem with Bread (It's Probably Not Gluten)," which appeared in *Mother Jones* magazine and quotes Stephen Jones, a wheat breeder at the University of Washington, who believes fast acting yeasts and shorten rising times are affecting the population's ability to digest the gluten in wheat. Jones has shown that sourdough bread made with no yeast that rises for 12 hours has less potent gluten (Philpott).

vs

... other causes of Celiac disease should be studied.

The addition of vital wheat gluten may not be the only modern baking practice to blame for more cases of Celiac disease. Shorter bread rising times due to fast acting yeasts may also be to blame, explains Stephen Jones, a wheat breeder at the University of Washington (Philpott). Jones has shown that sourdough bread made with no yeast that rises for 12 hours has less potent gluten and may be more digestible (Philpott). Jones contends "gluten intolerance" may actually be a product of the yeast rather than the wheat flour.

In both examples, the reader had just read about how *other causes* should be studied. Because readers are accustomed to having new information added to the previous information, the readers naturally wonder what those *other causes* are. In the first example, the *other causes* aren't directly addressed. Instead, the reader is introduced to Tom Philpott, a writer for *Mother Jones;* a lengthy article title; and Stephen Jones, the wheat breeder. While it's important to identify sources, doing so at the first of the paragraph throws the audience off its groove. Your Works Cited page will help readers easily identify your source's article title and publication information; an in-text or parenthetical reference to your source's last name is sufficient.

The second excerpt, however, continues the thought of *other causes* of Celiac disease and then introduces sources to better explain those other causes.

CONCLUSION

You might be driving a nervous passenger. Maybe you're driving a flatbed truck on a bumpy dirt road. Whatever the conditions, make sure your reader stays with you through your paper's journey. Start slow, gracefully weave more information into your sentences, and use transitions to give your reader the context they need to arrive safely at the destination.

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78. What Is Story?

CLINT JOHNSON

- A Mechanism for Making Meaning
- A Genre and a Mode
- Identity
- A Rhetorical Act

You know what a story is, right? That's easy. We see stories in movies, television, video games, novels, plays, even unstructured children's games. The hero defeats the villain; the girl gets her boy; people rise to great heights and experience tragic falls. Stories are entertainment.

They are. And … ?

Where humans are is where stories are. Everywhere in the world at every time in human history in every known culture, humans have told stories. Influential literary theorist Roland Barthes puts it this way: "Like life itself, [story] is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural" (237). Some archaeologists even believe a "cultural revolution" took place 40,000 years ago, catalyzed by the development of language that was then used to tell stories.

Storytelling may have created us.

[Examples of ancient stories from the Aborigines of Australia, one of the oldest cultures on Earth]

Story, or narrative as it is called in academics, is so interwoven with the experience of being human that we hardly recognize

all the powerful ways it shapes us. Let's consider some of the most significant.

Story is:

A MECHANISM FOR MAKING MEANING

> It was rock bottom for me. No job. Just lost my scholarship. Even my dad was starting to agree with my wife about moving into her folks' place, despite my protests I'd rather be shot in the face with a crossbow. Then it was like a miracle happened. I mean, it wasn't a miracle, but it was like a miracle—I got appendicitis.

How do we know what something means and why it matters? By integrating it into a story. This typically isn't an intentional, reasoned choice. It's automatic and, likely, unavoidable.

Jonathon Adler, a professor of psychology at Olin College of Engineering, says, "The default mode of human cognition is a narrative mode" (qtd. in Beck). Stories are the predominant way in which humans think. They allow us to create meaning out of sensory perceptions, memories, information, conversations, symbols, and emotions that continually bombard us.

Imagine that your friend just told you they were in a car accident. What questions would you ask?

- What happened? (Plot)
- Where did it happen? (Setting)
- Whose fault was it? (Point of view and conflict)
- Who was in the car? (Character)
- Were you hurt? (Resolution)
- Is your car going to be okay? (Stakes)

You ask questions that help you structure the event as a story so you know how to make sense of it. Without doing so, you simply don't know what it means. Is your friend feeling foolish and guilty and looking for forgiveness, or are they furious and asking for validation that they've been wronged? I'd want to know the answer to this question before I responded since a friendship would be on the line.

A GENRE AND A MODE

The body was a body. So what? Splayed out … stiff, like many before, a pale imprint on asphalt. I was hungry and turned to leave. I immediately turned back, drawn by the body. Not the whole body, just the open eyes, blue as showroom tile.

We traffic in story genres constantly. Nothing could be easier than telling the difference between a romantic comedy

and a tragic drama at the movie theater. Yet as different as story genres are, in important ways they are all the same. Those similarities make story a mode of thinking and communicating.

Mode means a particular method or way of doing something. Similar to how a computer has different modes, such as administrator and safe, the brain has different modes of thinking. Likewise, language can be used in different modes to achieve different outcomes.

Because story is about meaning, not all sequences of events make a story. Take my six-year-old nephew, for example, who can spend an hour reciting everything he did last week on Minecraft.

> " ... and then I cut down another tree but then a creeper was there! This creeper starts chasing me, and I'm like, 'Oh no!' So I get away from the creeper and I'm walking all around and I find this lava flow. So, I'm like, 'Cool!' So then I go back home but on the way I see this cow so I start mining, and I go as deep as I can go, and then I find a diamond but when I get out the cow is gone. Then I see this big tree, so ... "

When he finally stops talking, I dizzily realize I have no idea if any of that meant anything.

Young children often create "stories" that are really sequences without any greater meaning, such as kittens playing with a ball of string in cute and repetitious ways. This is a product of their developmental stage. Such sequences become functional

stories as the child's brain develops the capacity to connect events in more complex and meaningful ways.

Cognitive storytelling requires that, whether consciously or instinctively, we pose questions about events, such as these:

- When does an incident begin? What is its generation amidst other unconnected events that preceded it?
- What is its resolution?
- How do events in the interim relate to each other in relevant ways? Or, pointedly, how do they not relate?
- What is at stake or, said another way, why does any of it matter?

Storytelling requires that we constantly analyze, synthesize, and evaluate our world, all while constructing ever-evolving patterns of meaning.

So what is the formula that makes a story? That's a tricky question, one that theorists from a host of fields have debated for millennia and continue to do to this day.

It's a question complicated by how fluid and dynamic story structure is. For example, the structure adapts to the medium used to communicate it. A medium is something used to transmit to the human senses; it is often technological in nature, such as radio, television, the internet, or even letters carved in stone (a technique that was the iPhone of its day).

Influential media theorist Marshal MacLuhan coined the phrase "the medium is the message" to convey how media

affect the structure, and thus the meaning, of communication. An example is how texting encourages the use of emojis to balance the way short messages can feel curt or even angry.

> Dun yet ?
>
> Yes ?
>
> No hurry

Story structure changes from episodic television to two-hour films to dozens or even hundreds of still images in a comic book. Consider how different the television script for *The Walking Dead* is from the graphic novel version of the story.

There are many structural differences between mediums, such as how words function with or in the absence of images, how time and place is established, and the overwhelming differences between a television scene or a comic cell or page. But despite these many structural differences, all story genres in all mediums use the storytelling mode, which we all recognize so well and understand so little. It's what saves us from hours upon hours of Minecraft description.

IDENTITY

> Before Kristen was born, I wasn't me. I mean, I was

me, but I wasn't this better version of me. My baby girl made me a good person.

Modern psychology considers that at least some, and perhaps all, of human identity is a story. I am the story I tell myself about what happens to me, so to speak. "The very idea of human identity—perhaps we can even say, the very possibility of human identity—is tied to the very notion of narrative and narrativity" (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 15).

Why is it that people who face the same traumas, such as combat, often respond in completely different ways? Science suggests that one reason, likely among many others, is because people respond differently to the same kind of event in their story of the self. A person who positions the event as a challenge to overcome in the story of a victorious life is far more likely to move beyond the trauma, or even use it as motivation for positive change. A spectrum of narrative therapies for trauma are now in common use for this reason.

[Learn about Narrative Exposure Therapy]

The stories we hear, whether in video games or history books or gossip over the neighbor's fence, thus become a kind of menu from which we can select story frames to make meaning out of our experiences, giving us a sense of self.

[Read many people's accounts of "How Harry Potter Changed My Life"]

As we now understand it, "People take the stories that surround them—fictional tales, news articles, apocryphal

family anecdotes—then identify with them and borrow from them while fashioning their own self-conceptions. It's a Mobius strip: Stories are life, life is stories" (Beck).

A RHETORICAL ACT

Khuma is seven and he weighs thirty-seven pounds, roughly the weight of the average four-year-old. He looks bigger, but only in the middle, where his bloated belly is nearly round; his arms and legs are so spindly I find myself looking away whenever he walks the three-and-a-half miles to the mission school. Every day, I doubt he can physically make the journey and every day he returns, weak from hunger but whole. Yet as he walks away the next day, I find I cannot watch, believing this is the day he will not return.

In one way or another, 3.1 million children like Khuma do not return home each year.

Stories don't only shape how we see ourselves; they give us, every human, the power to shape each other, both individually and collectively. Therefore, communicating a story to someone is a powerful act with the potential to produce change.

But not every story is powerful. Take my nephew's Minecraft epic, for example. To have a legitimate chance of creating change, a story must be built with a specific audience in mind. The story must be rhetorical, meaning deliberately crafted by

the storyteller in order to achieve a desired effect within a particular audience.

There is a misguided but popular notion that stories, since they are expressive or emotionally rather than logically predicated, can never be either "wrong" or "right." That to suggest a story may be ineffective is to tell the storyteller their feelings are invalid. In truth, shared stories are effective or not depending on an audience's response to them, just as is true of an argument, or an evaluation, or a text sent to remind your significant other not to get that one brand of mayonnaise, which was disgusting.

Good storytelling requires apt rhetorical choices. A storyteller "connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meaning the [storyteller] wants [the audience] to take away from the story. Events perceived by the [storyteller] are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Reissman 3). Well-crafted, rhetorically aware stories provide unique ways to evoke feelings, sway thoughts, and motivate action.

Yes, stories are entertainment. But, as the story of Khuma shows, they are also so much more. Stories are much more important than a source of fun. Learning about stories—how to recognize them, different ways to read them, and how to write them—not only changes how you see the world, but who sees the world.

It changes others, and it changes you.

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79. College Writing and Storytelling

BERNICE OLIVAS

- Don't Believe Me?
- The Literacy Narrative

Let me tell you a tell a little secret. It is something the teachers, professors, and writers who write assignments, textbooks, and advice for college students know but rarely articulate. We know it in our bones but struggle to put it to words.

All writing is storytelling.

That's it. That is the big thing writers learn in college. You are going to spend the next few years learning to tell stories in a whole bunch of different ways, using new techniques, and following the rules of different audiences. All the big new terms, ideas, and definitions like genre and literacy you will learn in college just describe how different groups of folks tell their stories. So, here is what you really need to know, right now:

1. All writing tells a story.
2. In academia every specialized group of people (disciplines) have different rules about who may tell stories, how they tell stories, why they tell stories, and what makes their specific type stories good.

3. College writing is mostly learning storytelling for all the different classes you take and, in time, specializing as storyteller in a specific type of story—the story of your major.

DON'T BELIEVE ME?

Consider these examples:

- A biology lab is just the story of how a scientist solved a problem. The parts of the story are hypothesis, experiment, findings—it's the scientist's story of what they think will solve the problem, what they observe when they try the solution, and what they think it all means. Scientists speak "lab report" so college students and beginning scientists must learn to speak and write "lab report."
- Math writing tells the story of making the equation work, not just once, but every time, and why it matters. Math folks just tell it in a language that is so special and secret that it takes a writer years to master it.
- A history research paper is telling the story of how things came to be this way and what it means now. Historians expect a writer to always be able write about two things without muddling them together: first, history writers need to be able to write about what people know, with proof, about the history; second, history writers need to articulate what they think it means to other historians, to the general reader, to everyone.
- Technical writers are telling the story of how a thing works, what might break it, and how to figure out what we need

to do to fix it.
- Literature writers are telling the story they found between the lines of the novel, poem, or drama they read.

Truthfully, college writing is about 75% learning what kind of story a professor wants when they use words like analyze, interpret, explore, or argue. Take the "argument" paper. Writing an argument is like telling that one family story, the one that no one is sure of when and where it happened, or if it even happened at all, but everyone has different memory about it or a different opinion. An argument is just writing out our side of it as persuasively as possible. Writing that story means telling our side, as we know it.

In argument writing you must make sure your version is supported by facts—don't say a hurricane happened on July 4th when the newspapers show there wasn't one on that date. Use the newspaper to show that the hurricane happened July 3rd and other people just think it happened on July 4th. Back up your claim about what happened that day with other people's knowledge, especially people who were there. Be honest with other people's words.

All writing is storytelling.

Over time, you'll will learn all the terms, the rules, the languages, and you'll forget that what you are really doing is telling a story. But right now, as you are just beginning to think like a writer, you should always ask yourself, "What story am I trying to tell? Who is listening and what do they expect the story to look like, sound like, and include?"

THE LITERACY NARRATIVE

Take the literacy narrative, which asks you to write about how

your literacy developed or to tell a story about your own literacy. And that may seem confusing or intimidating, but the literacy narrative is just a telling a story of an experience with reading or writing that has made you feel stronger and more empowered or an experience with reading or writing that added to your fears and insecurities about writing.

How to write the literacy narrative:

Step 1. Use a literacy profile to write a narrative

A literacy profile is just a series of super short stories about experiences you have had with reading or writing. Try writing about three times literacy experiences empowered you, made you feel stronger and more positive about yourself and three times they made you feel bad about yourself.

Example: Professor Olivas's Literacy Profile

Early experiences

I don't remember a time when I couldn't read, nor do I remember who taught me or how I learned to read, nor do I remember a time when books were not an escape from a complex and often difficult

childhood. My parents joke that I was the easiest kid, that I never cried, never talked much—didn't say her first real word until she was six—and always had a book in hand. Looking back as the mother of two autistic sons, I wonder if I was a nonverbal autistic child in my earliest years and if I learned to interact with other people, to talk, to communicate through books. Now, my husband laughs at me when I tell him that I often think in text. Blocks of words run down my mind's eye, like the opening of *Star Wars*, like an old-fashioned silent movie. It is only recently that I have learned to "hear" my own thoughts instead of "reading" them.

Early reader

My parents rarely read more than the family Bible or a menu. Yet their work demanded that they be highly literate in the language of business. My daddy was a foreman for a big potato man in Oakley, Idaho; my momma ran the food-stand truck that fed the workers for cash or on credit. In these roles they wrote receipts, orders, notes, checks, reports, inventories, and checks with the confidence of college graduates. They were good at what they did, and they knew it—that same confidence vanished when we asked for a bedtime story out of a book. My daddy would toss it aside and settle in on the couch to tell a story—his way around struggling

with words. And so, we learned about tricksters, and wailing, murderous women who haunted the waterways, and Coyote who couldn't be trusted. Here, we learned about our great grandfather, our ancestors, here their stories mixed with stories of gods and ghosts, warriors and lovers until they became intermixed, like the homemade taco seasoning that my mother scattered onto everything she cooked.

My grandmother

My grandmother wasn't an easy or kind woman. Her life was neither easy or kind and that life could be heard in the snap of her voice, it could be seen in the cold in her eyes. I don't know if she loved us and I don't know if I loved her. I loved—until she died—the idea that someday, I would return to her home, the one we never really felt welcome in because of the thick, angry, unspoken everything between my mother and her mother-in-law; I would return and ask to write her story, and we would, finally, begin to learn about the other. That idea died when she did, and I am left with only one real memory. I remember her sneaking away from family gatherings, from the dinner table, from the babies, to read a book. My grandmother showed me what a woman who demanded the right to literacy looked like. That memory is invaluable to me.

The literacy of hard work and community service

My family was well versed in the literacy of hard work, if not in the literacy of success. We got up early, we took care of the living things we loved—the dogs, the horses, the chickens, even the stupid smelly sheep—we took care of the things that sustained life—the garden, the kitchen chores—and then we went out and worked for money. My father taught us to negotiate, to say no when we were undervalued, to take pride in doing a job right, and my mother taught us to give freely—time, knowledge, empathy. My father was the voice of migrant workers that the farm boss hired every year. The boss spoke to him in the languages of money, and my father spoke back in the languages of labor and integrity. My father refused to let his crew's labor be undervalued even when it cost him a job. My mother, who attained a GED in her early 20s, helped the community with the paperwork that can make life so hard. Sponsorship papers (back when those were a thing) applications, resumes, letters home. My parents never made much money. We knew hunger, and want, and cold. We also knew our worth in the languages of labor, integrity, and service.

The literacy of mothers

The first time I held my son I was gripped by shame, a shame so deep, so raw, that I shoved the squirming bundle into the nurse's arms and puked over the side of the bed. Everyone assumed it was from labor, but it was because I looked at that child and realized that I had already failed him, already set him up to fail, already put him on a path that would lead him to a life that demanded he sacrifice his body and health for money, that he know hunger, and cold, and want, that he was already behind. I knew that because I had chosen not to return to school, not to do something more than work at a slightly shady call center, to coast just a bit, he would have less of a shot at college, at finding a way to make a living and live a life. I applied to BSU as soon as he was six months old. My sons do not remember a time when college was not part of our lives.

Step 2. Find a main point in your profile

Look for things each story has in common. Is your mom in every story? Maybe your literacy narrative really needs to be about how your mom empowered you to be a better reader and writer. Or is there a sense of frustration or stress in every story? Maybe this is about how you developed anxiety about reading and writing over time.

For example, some main points from my profile:

- My family's class (working poor/working class) has had incredible impact on my literacy.

- My family motivated me to go to college and get my PhD in both healthy and unhealthy ways.
- My motivation is tied to my relationships with people who encourage me to read and write.

Step 3. Choose a main idea

Once you have figured out the main points in your literacy profile, choose one to be the main idea of the narrative. For example, I chose my family's class (working poor/working class), which has had incredible impact on my literacy.

Step 4. Begin writing

On a clean sheet of paper, start with the story of your main idea. This is the beginning of your literacy narrative. All you need to do is tell that story.

Example of the opening paragraph of my literacy narrative

It was not until I was older, a PhD, a teacher, that I began to understand just how much growing up working class impacted my literacy: from going without medical intervention even though I didn't speak until I was six; to learning to make time for reading only because I saw my grandmother do the same even though my family's main focus was work;

> to realizing, after my son was born, that I wanted him to have more choices than the working-class men of my family were offered and deciding that college was the way to create those opportunities. My class has, quietly, subtly, shaped my literacy.

Following these steps will help you figure out what story you really want to tell in your literacy narrative.

And as you learn more about college writing you will learn how to tell lots of different stories, in lots of different ways, for lot of different people. Just remember that no matter what rules you are following, you are always telling stories.

80. GENRE in the WILD: Understanding Genre Within Rhetorical (Eco)systems

LISA BICKMORE

- What Is a Genre?
- The Genre Does Not Stand Alone: Genre Sets and Systems
- How Do People Learn About the Genres in a Particular Setting?
- So Am I Just a Robot?

Let's begin by imagining the world—the worlds, rather—in which you write. Your workplace, for instance: you might take messages, or write e-mails, or update records, or input orders, or fill out a variety of forms.

Or what about your educational world? You likely write in response to all kinds of assignments: lab reports, research papers, short summaries, observations, even, sometimes, short narratives. Sometimes you might write a short message in Canvas or via e-mail to your instructors. You may also have

financial aid forms to fill out or application materials for programs or for transfer institutions to complete.

What about your world outside of school or work? Do you, occasionally, write a Facebook post, or a tweet, or a Snapchat story? Do you repost other people's articles and memes with your own comments? How about texts or e-mails to friends and acquaintances? You might also be a writer of what we sometimes label as creative texts—you might write songs or song lyrics, or poems, or stories.

The names of the things you write—e-mails, messages, record or application forms, order forms, lab reports, field observations, applications, narratives, text messages, and so on—can be thought of as individual compositions, large or small, that happen incidentally in the course of other activity. But another way to think of these compositions is as predictable and recurring kinds of communication—in a word, *genres*.

WHAT IS A GENRE?

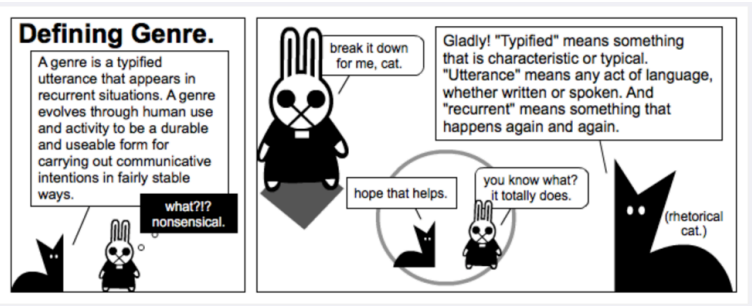
The term *genre* means "kind, sort, or style" and is often applied to kinds of art and media, for instance, sorts of novels, films, television shows, and so on. In writing studies, we find all sorts of written genres, not just ones that you might classify as artistic (or creative).

Genre is a word we use when we want to classify things, to note the similarities and differences between kinds of writing. But we don't identify genres solely by their formal markers. For instance, memoranda use a specific sort of header, and lab reports typically have commonly used section headings. But it's not the header that makes a memorandum a genre (or subgenre); it's not the section headings that make a lab report

a genre (or subgenre). In other words, the formal features or markers don't define the genre, although they are often helpful signals. Rather, it's a situation in which the memorandum or the lab report typically recurs, and it's also the fact that such situations seem to call repeatedly for a kind of writing that answers the needs of that situation. We begin to classify a kind of writing as a genre when it recurs frequently enough and seems to perform the same functions in recurring situations.

Here's a definition: "A genre is a typified utterance that appears in a recurrent situation. A genre evolves through human use and activity to be a durable and usable form for carrying out human communicative intentions in fairly stable ways." This definition might feel a little knotty, so let's break it down.

typified	characteristic, typical
utterance	any act of language — written or spoken
recurrent	happens again and again



Comic: The Rhetorical Cat Does Genre

So a genre is an act of language—for our purposes here, mostly acts of writing, in particular—that behaves in typical or

characteristic ways, which we can observe in repeated or persistent situations.

For students, classrooms are recurrent situations, if you think about it—while the events that occur in a classroom on any given day might differ in their details from another day, in their overall configuration, the activities of a classroom are remarkably similar over time. We might expect, in a recurrent situation, to observe, then, recurring types of communication. A teacher writes on the board; students might take notes. A teacher hands out an assignment; students respond to the assignment. Genres take their shape in recurrent situations because the communications that occur in recurrent situations tend to be remarkably similar.

Charles Bazerman, writing in *Naming What We Know*, says that we can see genre as

> habitual responses to recurring socially bounded situations. Regularities of textual form [like the header on a memorandum or the section heads in a lab report] most lay people [i.e. not experts] experience … [are] the structural characteristics of genres [as they] emerge from … repeated instances of action and are reinforced by institutional power structures.

In other words, if you work in an office, you probably write memos, using whatever the prescribed form is in your workplace. You, as a writer in that situation, don't precisely choose that genre, nor its formal characteristics—in a way, the situation chooses those for you, and all the people who are doing similar work to you use the same genre, in much the same way, and probably have been doing so for quite some time. This is part of what we mean when we say that genre lives in the recurrent situation—in offices, in labs, in all kinds of institutional settings. Bazerman highlights the institutional nature of genre when he says, "Genres are constructions of groups, over time, usually with the implicit or explicit sanction

of organizational or institutional power." Individual writers in institutional settings usually have somewhat limited choices when it comes to genre.

Still, writers who are really at home in a particular writing setting use genres with a great deal of fluency. As we've said, the genre is built into the writing situation—when you're at home in a writing situation, the genre is simply part of your accustomed toolset, and you know very well which tool to use. But all of us are writers in multiple settings, in some of which we may be very comfortable, and in others of which we may have to do a little more thinking and prospecting—looking about, sizing up what might be the best choices for the situation, including choices about genre. In these cases, simply knowing that there are genres—typical ways of using language that recur in the situation—can help a writer assess how to respond, and to figure out what genres are typically used in that situation.

When a writer decides or intuits that a particular genre is called for by the situation, he or she takes up the genre and uses it to frame a written response to the situation. So, for instance, when a scientist has gathered enough experimental data, she will probably write some sort of report of the findings. When the Supreme Court has heard oral arguments on a particular case, eventually they will write a ruling, and often a dissent. The scientist doesn't have to figure out whether she'll write a report or if she'd rather write a song lyric. The Supreme Court justice writing for the majority knows that she will not write a haiku. In each instance, the situation calls for a particular genre. The writer in the situation knows this. So the writer takes up the genre and uses it to respond.

Each time a writer takes up a genre, the writer reaffirms, in a way, the stable features of the genre. But the writer also—perhaps in minuscule ways—might adapt and reshape the genre, which potentially shifts the genre's stability. For instance, the proposal genre typically requires you to define a

problem, often in a fair amount of detail, as well as provide a very well-reasoned solution, with evidence that supports the solution's feasibility and desirability. Without these moves, what you write simply won't be a proposal. But as you consider how you might define the problem, it occurs to you that a brief story, followed by an analysis and some data, might illuminate the problem better than a presentation of dry statistical data alone. Not everyone who writes a proposal will choose to use narrative—the narrative strategy is a way that you might imagine your audience and that audience's response, aiming for a livelier and more engaged response.

To sum up: sometimes when you write, the genre is a choice that's already made for you. But there are also times when you'll have opportunities to decide upon the genres you'll use to write in the world, and often this will be true in the writing classes you take. This requires some critical imagination and research on your part—imagining the writing situation, and the genres that might respond well in that situation. Thus, genres are both stable and to some degree fluid and evolving, just as human communication itself is both predictable and unpredictable.

Knowing about genre can provide powerful insight into how writing works in the world. We know from a fair amount of empirical study that writers learn to use genres best within contexts where they use the genres regularly—the genres in use within a particular locale will become part of the toolset writers within those locales pick up to do their work there. But even in your writing courses, you should start to become more aware of the genres that are built into the settings in which you currently find yourself—school, work, public life—as well as genres that are at work in other settings you want to be a part of.

THE GENRE DOES NOT STAND ALONE: GENRE SETS AND SYSTEMS

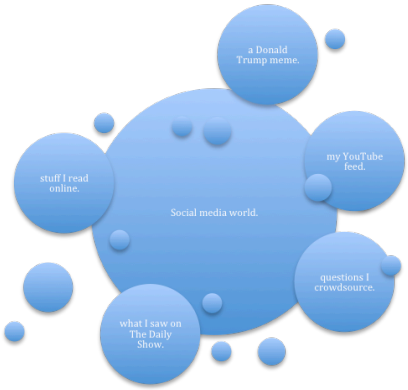
Sometimes, despite what we've described above about the ways that genres are dependent upon contexts and situations for their meaning, it can seem as if a genre is a thing all on its own, especially when we're learning about a particular genre. It can seem that what you're supposed to learn is how to approximate the genre, and you hope that by observing and then imitating the genre features, you'll produce writing that behaves like the genre. Often students cast about for a formula, thinking that a genre can be understood simply almost as a template. Let's say you're learning about the report genre. You learn that it typically has an informational purpose. You look at a few reports, and it seems like they often have headings and they often have graphs or charts. You forge ahead, trying in your draft to bring in as many of these kinds of features as you can. But do graphs and headings alone make a piece of writing a report?

One thing an approach like this—looking at the genre as a formulaic, standalone artifact—does not show very well is how the genre actually functions in an environment. Charles Bazerman, a scholar and researcher in writing studies who has spent a good deal of his academic life looking into the ways that genres work, talks about something called "genre sets," which are a "collection of types of texts someone in a particular role is likely to produce." For instance, to use Bazerman's example, "If you find out a civil engineer needs to write proposals, work orders, progress reports, quality test reports, safety evaluations, and a limited number of other similar documents, you have gone a long way toward identifying the work they do." You might think about the kinds of texts you are called upon to produce in one of your typical writing settings—for instance, a classroom. You produce, for instance,

notes on classroom presentations, drafts, feedback on other students' work, responses to readings, records of your research, e-mails to classmates and instructors, and so on. The collection of texts you list would be the genre set for you as a student.

Beyond the texts you produce, though, lies a network in which your texts are situated. So, for instance, students in a college class will produce notes, drafts, exams, assignments, e-mails to the instructor, and so on. The instructor has a different but intersecting set of texts: syllabi, assignments, e-mails to the class or responses to student e-mail queries, comments on drafts and final assignments, exam questions, and so on. Beyond the classroom, instructors also read and interpret policies, write assessment plans and reports, and so on. Each person acting within the system of college is part of a situated and intersecting set of texts, which Bazerman calls a genre system.

Let's imagine a little theoretical genre system—Social Media World:



Graphic: The Genre System in/of Social Media World

The genre system I've sketched out above depends on several

intersecting elements: the things *you* write, the things you read, the things you circulate and the things your network circulates, and also on your comments and re-posts. The particular network doesn't matter so much, although it will shape the specifics about what you write and how you respond. But in social media, your genre system is always partly what *you* do, and partly what other people who are in your network do. It's even partly what people outside your direct sphere do—like the coders who design, and redesign, the social media platforms you use and participate in, and whose design decisions affect how you participate.

Anis Bawarshi thinks of these situated and intersecting sets of genres as forming a rhetorical ecosystem. In "The Ecology of Genre," Bawarshi uses the example of a patient medical history form, the form that people fill out when they go to a doctor's office. You've probably filled one out yourself. Typically, this form asks for specific information about the patient, such as physical statistics, "prior and recurring physical conditions, past treatments, and, of course, a description of current physical symptoms."

Bawarshi notes that the medical history portion of the document is usually followed by insurance information, and a "consent-to-treat statement," as well as a legal release. All of these parts of the form, put together, mean that the patient medical history form (or PMHF) genre "is at once a patient record and a legal document." Bawarshi thinks that this genre is like a habitat—a place that sustains the creatures that live in it and really sets the living conditions for those creatures. The patient medical history form, like a habitat, shapes the way individuals "perceive and experience a particular environment"—i.e. the physician's office. He also suggests that the PMHF, like any single genre, "does not function in an ecological vacuum"; rather, it is one of a number of genres that work together to create a whole "biosphere of discourse."

It's perhaps helpful, as you learn about particular genres, to

think about how the genre at hand might fit into larger genre sets and systems—or even ecologies, and how genres shape the ways we interact, live, and work with each other. As Bazerman notes, any system of genres is also a part of the system of activity happening in any writing situation. This means that understanding the genres operating in any setting will also help you to understand better what happens in that setting—how people work together, how they solve problems, how they communicate, certainly, but also how they get work done.

HOW DO PEOPLE LEARN ABOUT THE GENRES IN A PARTICULAR SETTING?

As we discussed above, when we learn about genres as a part of a writing curriculum, it can seem like we're describing formulas for writing instead of the situations that shape and give rise to the genres. You, as a student writer, can feel a little bit like you're just learning an advanced sort of conceptual formatting. When you use genres in their natural settings—when you're using the genres that are a part of your workplace, or when you're exchanging writing with people you know well, in ways you're comfortable with—all that situation and situatedness blooms back to life, and your ability to write competently and fluently in the genres that are part of your writing environment will have greater consequence because you'll be better at it. So it's worth considering: how do you learn how to use the genres that function in your particular writing environment with greater competence and fluency?

It's like doing field work: you bring your wits and your gear and you figure it out by observing and jumping in. This is where a writing class can be very helpful, helping you to attune

yourself to a writing situation, to cues that will guide you in assessing expectations, conventions, and possible responses. In other words, your writing course can teach you about genre, but even more, it can teach you how to be sensitive to genre, the sets, systems, and ecologies in operation in a new writing situation, and how to more capably participate in the work going on in that situation. Your writing class teaches you how to learn the genres in a new setting.

SO AM I JUST A ROBOT?

In *The Terminator*—the first (and arguably the best) one—there's a great, brief scene in which the terminator-borg is holed up in his room. Someone knocks on the door. His borg-brain runs through possible responses—some are neutral, others reasonably polite, and others expletive-rude. He chooses the expletive, which for the moment is effective—the door knocker leaves.

With all this genre knowledge you're developing, are you just a little worried that you're basically going to be a borg, scrolling through your limited options in a nano-second, the choices all but made for you?

You might appreciate Charles Bazerman's thoughts on this: "the view of genre that simply makes it a collection of features obscures how these features are flexible in any instance or even how the general understanding of the genre can change over time, as people orient to evolving patterns." For instance, Bazerman goes on, "Students writing papers for courses have a wide variety of ways of fulfilling the assignment, and may even bend the assignment as long as they can get their professor … to go along with the change." In other words, genres evolve and change over time, and each user taking up a genre takes

it up just a little bit differently. Genres help writers get things done: they are durable text-types that people use repeatedly for similar communicative acts. Knowing about genres, being sensitive to the genres that are a part of a particular situation, and becoming a capable user of those genres makes you a more flexible and adaptable writer.

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81. Audience Analysis: Reasonable Expectation vs. Stereotypes

JIM BEATTY

- Word Choice and Tone
- Genre and Audience

Understanding your audience is a crucial element of effective public communication. It is impossible to reach absolutely everyone, however. Thinking about how to avoid alienating people produces a more effective picture of your audience. In argumentative writing, try to convince a slightly skeptical reader. By trying to reach someone who has a feeling you're wrong but can be convinced, you'll cast the broadest possible net to draw in your audience. This way you'll reach people who have no opinion as well as those who are inclined to agree with you. You will never reach people who are vehemently opposed to your point of view, so don't worry about them. For the rest of your audience, there are several factors to consider.

WORD CHOICE AND TONE

"You" and "We"

Avoid directly addressing your readers as "you" or including them in a "we" statement. In speaking, when people say "you" they most often mean "everyone" or "most people." Writing needs to be more formal than speaking. Using "you" and "we" also makes assumptions about your readers that may not be true. In directly addressing you in this piece, I'm assuming you are a student in a writing class at SLCC, which is a fair assumption. If someone were to write: "you need to practice better study habits" in a paper for class, however, it assumes that the only readers are other students, which is not the case for the person grading the paper. Another danger in using "we" is assuming your readers have the same likes and tastes that you do. If a student were to write, "We all enjoy going to Olive Garden," they have excluded anyone who does not enjoy that restaurant.

Tone: Formality

In college writing, you also want to avoid using overly informal phrases that are more appropriate to spoken English. For example, if you want to object to how an author dismisses an idea, don't say, "She hates on her opposition too much." Similarly, you don't want to disagree with an idea by saying, "It's a load of crap." Think of the language you would use in a formal spoken

presentation rather than the way you often discuss ideas in class.

Tone: Implicit Bias

There are important ethical considerations surrounding how you name groups of people in society, especially ones who are different than you. To avoid the sexist assumption that all readers are male, it is now acceptable to use "they" as a singular pronoun when the gender of your subject is indeterminate or unknown. For example, it's preferable to say "If a student does keep up with the work, they might fail" over "If a student does keep up with the work, he might fail" or "If a student does keep up with the work, he or she might fail." When it comes to minority groups in the US, try to use a term the group themselves would use to describe themselves. For example, the generally accepted term for people descended from slaves brought to the US against their will is "African Americans." Some people are also okay with the term "Black." You would never want to refer to this community as "blacks," however, because that is using an adjective rather than a noun to name them. This subtle grammatical shift entails a lack of respect.

What Do People Already Think About Your Topic?

Another way to consider how to avoid alienating readers comes from considering the public conversation around your topic that already exists. If you are writing on a controversial issue such as gun law reform, you know

most people already have a strong opinion one way or the other. You want to use measured, balanced language to avoid alienating either side. If you are writing about a topic that is unfamiliar to most readers, you need to spend time giving definitions and context early on to orient them. However, if you start by saying "Dictionary.com define addiction as …" you are insulting your audience by implying they might not know the meaning of this common term. If you are unsure what people already know and think about your topic, poll other members of this class to find out.

GENRE AND AUDIENCE

Different genres of writing use different strategies to reach their audiences. A "genre" is a "type" of writing. Genre is more commonly used in classifying music and movies, so they make a good metaphor for thinking about audience in terms of genre.

Music

The analogy here is considering what are the demographics for a given genre of music. Consider for example the hip-hop mogul Jay Z. When most people think of his target audience, that might say things like "urban" or even "ghetto" people. The first problem here is that these are too often code words for "African American." This is biased on two levels: assuming all his listeners are Black and assuming all Black people are poor. But even within this narrow subset of his fans, these

assumptions miss an important point: could Jay Z be a billionaire if only poor African Americans consumed his music? Does this group have that amount of disposable income? Of course not. Therefore, we need to expand our sense of his audience to anyone who values representations of lower class African American culture. People who value his narratives of his past lifestyle aren't just the people living it. These fans are outnumbered by middle class white teenagers who respond to his stories.

Or take the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Most people's first assumption is that they appeal only to members of the LDS church. However, anyone who appreciates religious music could easily be a part of their audience. Even non-religious people who enjoy choral or classical music could be drawn to the excellence for which the Choir is famous.

Movies

People also use genre to classify types of movies. This classification also greatly affects how movies are marketed. In the popular imagination of movie genres, there exist a highly gendered notion of how genres appeal to viewers. This assumption is embodied in the idea of the "chick flick." However, can a movie really be successful by appealing to just over half of the population? These movies don't succeed just because wives and girlfriends drag men to see the movies against their will. Take for example the highly successful Pitch Perfect movies. Focusing on young women in a sorority may appeal to some women, but the classic "battle" motif and nostalgia for 1980s music surely appeals to many men as well.

Or take the vastly popular superhero movies of the last fifteen years or so. Common wisdom would suggest that

action movies appeal primarily to males. However, these movies could not continue to break box office records without appealing to a wide range of people of all genders.

[See also the chapter "Movies Explain the World (of Writing)" for more on film genre and audience etc.]

CONCLUSION

Constructing a picture of the audience for your writing entails avoiding the types of assumptions that could alienate large portions of them. The best way to sample your audience's opinions, knowledge, and ideas is to ask other people in the class. Writing tutors are also great resources for figuring out how your ideas sound outside of your own head. When authors alienate readers, often they do so unintentionally. You can avoid this by being more deliberate in defining who your audience is before you start drafting a paper.

82. Whose Job Is It to Make “Good” Writing? Writer-Responsible vs. Reader-Responsible Languages

ANNE CANAVAN

- What Is “Writer-Responsible” Language and Why Does It Matter?
- So Which Model Should I Use?

WHAT IS “WRITER-RESPONSIBLE” LANGUAGE AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The title of this text asks you to consider the question of whose job it is to make “good” writing. For native English speakers, this may seem like an easy question to answer; it’s the writer’s job, of course! Take a moment to think about the last time you

had trouble understanding the content in a textbook or article. Did you think to yourself that if the author had written the text in a different/better/more interesting/clearer way that you might have understood it better? If so, you probably come from a language background (such as English) that we call "writer-responsible" (Hinds).

Since the writer is the one creating the text, English speakers/readers often assume that all of the responsibility for creating an engaging, well-argued, and properly cited text falls on the writer. English readers often think of themselves as just being along for the ride. This approach to reading means that if a reader fails to understand a text, it is generally assumed to be the fault of the writer for being unclear, neglecting to provide enough background material or transitions, or simply for being "boring." However, this isn't the only way to approach a text.

In reader-responsible writing (such as we see in many Asian languages), it is the job of the reader to determine what the argument of the paper is, to make connections between the ideas, and to acquire fundamental background knowledge before reading. In other words, if a reader does not understand the writing that is presented to them, it is assumed to be the fault of the reader. In reader-responsible writing, it is the author's job to present information, not to guide the reader to any particular understanding. Often this type of writing is less direct and may not directly state a thesis or argument.

SO WHICH MODEL SHOULD I USE?

As you might have guessed, there is no clear answer to this question. Each style of writing has its own benefits and drawbacks. What *is* important, however, is being aware of your audience's background and your own purpose in writing. Even

for native English speakers, there are different expectations for writing depending on the purpose. For example, in an e-mail or text to a close friend, most people don't explain nearly as much as they would if writing to a boss or teacher, and their reader is more likely to be able to "fill in the blanks" if something is unclear. This is partly because of the close relationship between the writer and the reader, and partly because of other factors such as the length of the text and a shared context. However, since you are reading this essay for an academic class, and the expectations of academic writing tend to be less familiar to student writers, let's focus on that for the next examples.

When you are completing writing for your English composition classes or drafting a report for your American employer, you can be confident that your audiences come from a writer-responsible language. Therefore, they expect you do a lot of the work for them in terms of developing a controlling thesis, crafting introductions and conclusions that give a general picture of the topic you have chosen, and using transitions to lead them from one idea to another.

The idea of writer-responsible languages also explains why we need to cite sources in a particular way. When using writer-responsible languages, writers clearly cite their sources both within the paper and at the end because their readers expect to be able to find these sources with minimal guesswork. When we cite sources within a paper, it tells the reader where to look at the end to find out more about the source. When we cite the source completely at the end of the paper, we are telling the reader exactly where to go to find the same information that we shared with them.

One of the most important ways that writer-responsible languages differ from reader-responsible ones is how they think about shared knowledge between the reader and writer (Qi and Liu). Writer-responsible languages tend to work from the idea that the reader and writer share very little knowledge of the topic, and therefore the writer needs to devote their

efforts to explaining the background of the subject before they get to the new idea that they are advancing. For instance, if you were writing a paper on climate change for your science class, English readers would expect you to explain exactly what climate change is and some of the history of the subject, and maybe reference a major author or two before you start making your point. However, if you were writing for a Chinese or Japanese audience, they would find it strange that you went to all that work to explain these ideas, and might even feel a bit insulted that you thought they had so little knowledge of the subject!

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83. Dash That Oxford Comma! Prestige and Stigma in Academic Writing

CHRISTIE BOGLE

- The Common Comma
- History of English Grammar
- "Grammars," Not Grammar
- Stigma and Prestige
- What Teaching Experts Know
- What You, the Student, Should Know
- Lose the 'Tude

THE COMMON COMMA

Once upon a time, way back in the third grade, Mrs. MaGee told me never to put a comma before the "and" in my lists. She said that the "and" means the same thing as a comma.

And so I never did. I wrote "balls, bats and mitts."

Years later, another teacher told me that I should *always* put

a comma before the “and” in my lists because it clarifies that the last two items in my list are not a set. He said to write “Amal, Mike, Jose, and Lin.”

Logic told me that the third-grade teacher was right because, if the last two in the list were a set, the “and” would have come sooner as “balls and bats and mitts” or “Amal, Mike, and Jose and Lin.” But that is also just odd. What if I really did mean to have two sets? Now I felt like I had to write “Balls. Also, bats and mitts.” It felt like juggling. If this is confusing, I’m pretty sure that I’ve made my point. These rigid rules felt so awkward! Things I can say effortlessly outloud are, all of a sudden, impossible on paper. Who wrote these rules?

That’s actually a valid question. Who did write them? Novices to the study of language sometimes imagine that language started back in a day when there were pure versions of all the world languages that younger and lazier speakers continue to corrupt, generation after generation. They imagine a perfect book of grammar that we should all be able to reference. Nothing about that scenario is actually true.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

So, why and how did we get all those rules? Way back around the 1700s, we finally started to get some books written about the structure of language, specifically for teaching. These, even then, were vastly different from the work being done by linguists in the field who were interested in marking language as it is, not how they thought it should be. As time went on, people introduced writing rules that originated in other languages, like Latin, and imposed them on English. These misapplications have followed us into modern times. Many of the guidebooks for writing are filled with these exceptions to

the natural ways that English once worked. They include, surprisingly, the rule against double negatives ("we don't need no stinking badges!") and other standard prohibitions against language that was quite normal long ago (and still is in non-standard varieties of English).

Some more of those gems include "never say 'I' in an essay," "don't use passive voice," and "don't start a sentence with 'and' or 'but.'" We can sprinkle in the Latin rule, "don't split infinitives" (think *Star Trek*'s "to boldly go") and unnecessary restrictions like "adverbs go after the verb, not before." These rules have interesting histories but the history doesn't necessarily support their persistence. In fact, most of them can be dismissed as simple preferences of some dead white guy from centuries ago. They don't obey any rule of logic, though some obey a system from a different language that has no application in English.

A great example is the double negative. In the 1700s the location of the royalty and their dialects determined what was "correct." The south of England used double negatives but the north of England (where royalty lived) did not use them. Something so simple as location dictated what went into the books. Then in 1762, Robert Lowth wrote *Short Introduction to English Grammar* and relegated the southern usage to "uncultivated speech" instead of what it really is, which is an emphasis on the negative point being made. The American usage that developed from before Lowth's writing is retained today in many dialects, but famously so in Southern varieties and African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

"GRAMMARS," NOT GRAMMAR

What is happening here? Am I arguing that grammar rules

are okay to break sometimes? I am taking up an argument that seems to be at an academic impasse. Linguists believe that there is more than one grammar. We say "grammars." Stephen Pinker, a cognitive psychologist, offers his take on this phenomenon in an article for *The Guardian* called "Stephen Pinker: 10 'Grammar Rules' It's Okay to Break Sometimes." He characterizes the debate between descriptive and prescriptive grammarians like this:

> Prescriptivists prescribe how language ought to be used. They uphold standards of excellence and a respect for the best of our civilisation, and are a bulwark against relativism, vulgar populism and the dumbing down of literate culture. Descriptivists describe how language actually is used. They believe that the rules of correct usage are nothing more than the secret handshake of the ruling class, designed to keep the masses in their place. Language is an organic product of human creativity, say the Descriptivists, and people should be allowed to write however they please.

His point is that some think that every rule of grammar is worth preserving lest the language devolves out of existence. Others believe that the actual use of the language (any language) and the natural changes that occur are a good thing. Sometimes, as is the case with the double negative, before the rule against it was made, people used "incorrect" phrases all the time. So, the argument about preserving rules and allowing change is kind of mixed up. Pinker describes the conflict experts have, but it's even more complicated by the history.

Still, I reference Pinker because he is a cognitive psychologist that studies both linguistics and composition. Even more importantly, he is also a best-selling author of nonfiction. Pinker has made boring and dry topics like linguistics and neuroscience feel easy, even to the average reader. That's a kind of magic that I want to bottle and sell. So, I look to him

on matters of writing. Pinker and I agree that when it comes to grammar, it should be addressed with the goal of being understood, not of being "right."

Navigating the rules of grammar is not just hard for those that speak in "dialects" (or different grammars) of English. It is hard even for those who grew up in a middle-class culture speaking a relatively standard form called Standard American English (SAE). Those born into families and communities speaking SAE struggle with the rules like these:

- *What do I do with commas and semicolons?*
- *Do I use who or whom?*
- *Which word: there, they're or their; too, two or to?*

And so forth.

Even your professors make common speech errors. Try my favorite test. See how many times members of college faculty say "there's" when they should have said "there are." No one speaks like a textbook.

One of my favorite debates, because it is so utterly pointless, is of the Oxford comma. This phenomenon is the one I opened with. Do you always or never put a comma before the "and" in the list? The Oxford comma is the one that says "yes, always." I was taught "no, never." So, who wins?

John McWhorter pleads a case that I buy. He says neither side wins. In his article "Should we give a damn about the Oxford comma?" he argues that "to treat the failure to use the Oxford comma as a mark of mental messiness is a handy way to look down on what will perhaps always be a majority of people attempting to write English." And that is a key argument for me. Much of what we do when looking down our nose at particular errors is to demonstrate disdain for our differences on the page. In fact, for the rest of this document, let's not call them "errors." Let's call them "varieties of speech/writing."

STIGMA AND PRESTIGE

As frustrating or embarrassing it is to be called to the carpet for your variety of speech, these grammar scuffles are mere annoyances when they occur between English speakers of the same general class, race, and economic status. However, when we approach minority English language speakers and English language learners, we pass into a new territory that borders on classism and racism.

To understand this, you must understand the terms *stigma* and *prestige*. These terms apply to a number of sociological situations. Prestige is, very simply, what we grant power and privilege to. Remember the history of the double negative from the 1700s? The book taught that single negation is a mark of *prestige*.

On the other hand, stigmatized varieties of English are those that people try to train you out of using. If you were raised in the Appalachian region of America, you may have some varieties of speech that other people dislike and hope you will lose. Things like "y'all" and "a-" prefixes on "a huntin' and a fishin'" are discouraged; some think it means the speaker is uneducated. By being negated, double negatives became *stigmatized*.

This distinction is "classist" because it assumes characteristics and abilities based on a person's variety of speech. It may sound strange, but speech is not a mark of intellect or ability. One famous example is of Eudora Welty, a renown Appalachian author. A story is told that during her stay in a college dormitory she was passed over by the headmistress for opportunities to have tickets to plays and cultured events. When she confronted the headmistress about the oversight, she explained that she had doubted Welty's interest in the theater because of her accent. Of course, now, Welty is an honored and prestigious author. Her variety of speech did not

affect her ability to produce effective writing that communicates to her audience.

Some varieties of English are stigmatized because they represent racial minority speech patterns, even though they are legitimately home-grown American English. How many of us can easily hear and understand what is culturally Black English, Spanglish, or Chicano English, but know that those varieties won't go into your next essay for History 1700?

Students learning English, or even just Standard *American* English, will vary in their ability to represent prestigious language patterns, even though what they write or say is generally understood. For example, people from India may have grown up speaking a different variety of English. The same is true for some people from Hong Kong when it was a British holding. British English with a Chinese accent was their standard, and they struggle to be understood in America.

So, for multilingual and/or multivariety speakers, one challenge of writing is the expectation that they will sound as narrowly experienced in language as monolingual speakers. This is what Lippi-Green called *standard language ideology*. It's the practice of prestige and stigma. It is a rather bizarre sort of prestige to value evidence of less experience, but that's exactly what unaccented language is. A middle- to upper-class white American who travels nowhere and learns nothing of consequence can still sound perfectly prestigious merely by speaking their natural English variety. We actually prefer (or privilege) the appearance of ignorance.

There are a rare few that can perfectly compartmentalize languages. Linguistic geniuses (I use that term loosely) exist—those who can sound perfectly natural in several varieties or languages. It is an ability that only the teensiest percentage of people with just the right exposure, talent, age, and experience will ever achieve. The rest of us can increase our range of speech and writing contexts, but our own

idiosyncrasies will always exist, and we will be (unnecessarily) embarrassed by them.

WHAT TEACHING EXPERTS KNOW

Teaching professionals continue to debate how to teach in a way that combats linguistic stigma and shifts toward preferring linguistic diversity. From the CCCC's Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) circa 1974, we read:

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

So, since before many of your teachers were born, an international body of composition instructors has acknowledged that students have a right to their own language. Ever since then, the struggle to maintain a standard and find ways to work with differences have played out in the profession. Today, we have experts in the field that suggest utilizing "vernacular speech" (that's your everyday speech) to

improve the quality of writing, to a point. Peter Elbow writes in his book *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* about the ways that we can utilize spoken, everyday language as a way of improving the readability of text and ease the writing process.

Steven Pinker (you know—the one whose writing skill we should bottle and sell), like Peter Elbow, believes a more conversational tone in writing can improve its quality. He says that there are ways of scientifically assessing clarity and ease for readers. For example, this type of research takes on the debate of whether or not a typist should place one or two spaces after periods. It may seem trivial, but it's a debate that has lasted since word processors were programmed to intelligently space punctuation. Researchers strapped people down in front of a computer screen and measured eye movement while reading to settle the debate. Much to my surprise, it turns out that two spaces are easier to read than one (Johnson).

WHAT YOU, THE STUDENT, SHOULD KNOW

I don't know if I would always go so far as to do scientific experimentation on readers in order to make writing decisions, but choosing rules that make things easier feels like a really good idea, doesn't it? The New SRTOL document authors argue, "it is one thing to help a student achieve proficiency in a written dialect and another thing to punish him for using variant expressions of that dialect." So, in modern times, teachers want you to recognize and utilize a standard in writing without punishing your speech. You want to learn how to do the same with yourself and others.

However useful it is to accept variations in classroom English, there are, in fact, varieties of English that are native to the United States (not spoken anywhere else) that are not so easy to understand. Some examples are Louisiana's Cajun creole and Hawai'ian Pidgin creole. Theorists that give nods of approval to teaching within varieties they understand may not be addressing a large enough group of English varieties. If we are suggesting a student use their native language ways to improve readability, sometimes the student's writing will be unintelligible to the teacher and peers. It's a whole different job to have everyone learn new languages in your composition class.

I assume that when CCCCs composed these sentences, "Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity...We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language," they were being sincere, but it might be a stretch. Your teachers are not experts on every variety of English or the many creoles. Neither are you. There is still a way to manage the goals we have.

The updated version of the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* makes a request of teachers when they say, "Since English teachers have been in large part responsible for the narrow attitudes of today's employers, changing attitudes toward dialect variations does not seem an unreasonable goal, for today's students will be tomorrow's employers." English faculty have continued to teach SAE (also called Educated American English or EAE) in one part because it's what *the rest of the country* thinks that educated writers should use for speech and writing. So, even though teachers accept that the standard is a myth, we find the standard useful and the prestige/stigma problem lingers because we continue to use it. This is where you—the students—can help. Let's revisit the value that standard language has and the work it does.

One of the undeniable benefits of a standard is that it is a *lingua franca*. This term roughly means "the language everyone shares." With so many variations of English, it is just clearer to write in one variety than to learn them all. This different idea of a standard is about ease and convenience, not prestige. Teaching within one standard is a system-wide rhetorical choice to be understood by the largest audience possible. Ignoring what that *should be* and focusing on what that *is* seems like a better way of determining what we call the standard. So, most of us aim for a sort of amalgam of language that is acceptable to most people without sticking rigidly to arbitrary rules.

LOSE THE 'TUDE

What you, the students, probably want to know is how to write. The more important point that I hope you will walk away with is this: STROL says, "The **attitudes** that [you] develop in the English class will often be the criteria [you] use for choosing [your] own employees," (emphasis mine). So, what you learn about writing in English class follows you as you make choices and impacts your options in the economy, but so do your attitudes about language and people. Spencer Kimball is often credited with this admonition, "Love people, not things; use things, not people." I would apply a similar sentiment to language.

- *Don't only use language with people you understand.*
- *Use language to understand people.*

As a student, you expect to leave school with more skills and greater flexibility. In that spirit, seeking diversity in your

language education makes sense. As you become our future employers and employees, you will inherit the opportunity to reject stigma toward linguistic diversity.

You can do so by accepting these simple facts (adapted from Rosina Lippi-Green's "Linguistic Facts of Life"):

- Language is complex and diverse.
- Language is not a moral marker.
- Language is not an intellectual marker.
- Language serves to communicate between people.
- Language changes.

By embracing these facts, you can feel less shame or **stigma** in your own language and others'. If you accept language differences as natural, you might choose to expose yourself to and understand more languages and varieties. You will write aiming to be understood by a majority of readers for convenience, not for fear of judgment.

So, fine, Oxford Comma when you wanna—but dash linguistic stigma.

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PART VII

STUDENT-AUTHORED PROJECTS

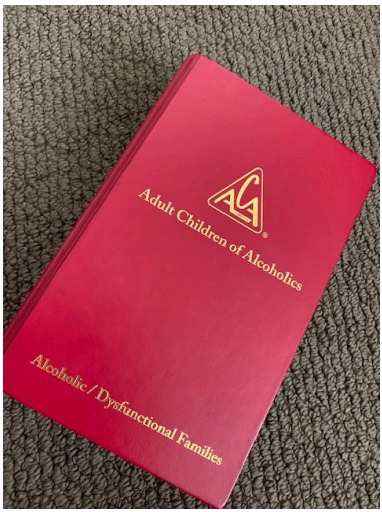
Student writing is an important part of our community, and we aim to publish student texts that advance teaching and learning in our department.

84. From Adult Child to the True Self: How the ACA Red Book Creates a New Identity for Trauma Survivors

SARA AIRD

This case study was written for English 2040: Writing Studies. The purpose of the assignment was to explore writing within the context of place to discover where it exists, how it is practiced, and how it circulates, specifically writing that occurs in the Salt Lake Valley. I chose to rhetorically analyze the writings of Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families (ACA), a twelve-step organization for individuals dealing with the effects of childhood trauma. The case study revealed that writing within the ACA community helps create new, healthy identities in its participants, supporting the threshold concept that writing is a resource that people use to do things, be things, and make things in the world and that rhetoric provides a method for studying the work that language and writing do.

- Identification with the Problem and the Solution
- Language and Skill Acquisition Through the Twelve Steps
- Sense of Community and Belonging Through Weekly Meetings



Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families, or ACA, meetings are held weekly all over the Wasatch Valley. ACA is a Twelve Step program designed to help members recover from childhood trauma. The program website explains, "The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family" (2015). If you were to visit a meeting, you would find individuals from all walks of life gathered in a circle in a rented room, each of them holding a red book in their hands. The ACA Red Book is a text

written collaboratively by the ACA community to meet the specific needs of those struggling from the effects of unresolved trauma. According to the ACA Red Book,

> We believe this book represents the most complete description of the ACA experience from our fellowship view. … With this book, we hope to begin a discussion on the greater meaning of ACA recovery. We believe this discussion will lead to new levels of clarity for adult children. (2006, p. ix)

Using rhetorical analysis, research, and participant interviews, this case study aims to answer the question: In what ways does the ACA Red Book support recovery in the trauma community? This study found the ACA Red book supports recovery through the formation of a new, healthy identity, the "True Self." The True Self is created by identification with the problem and the solution, acquisition of new skills and language by working the Twelve Steps, and a sense of belonging and community through attendance of weekly meetings.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

Many participants come to the ACA program because they feel

that something important is missing in their lives. They are struggling with relationships, work, addiction, and other issues. The participants who were interviewed described unhealthy, repetitive patterns which they felt powerless to stop. One piece of writing in the ACA Red Book helps these individuals identify what the issues and patterns are: The Laundry List. The Laundry List is a collection of 14 identifiable traits that most trauma survivors relate to—for example, becoming isolated and afraid of people and judging yourself harshly. The ACA Red Book states, "Adult children of all types identify with one another at the level of abandonment, shame, and abuse like no other group of people in the world." The Red book adds, "The proof of identification and ACA unity can be found in ACA meetings and the immediate identification created by the reading of the Laundry List, a list of identifiable traits." The identification with "the Laundry List is the glue that holds together our fellowship and its membership" (2006, p. xiv). The Laundry List helps participants name and understand their issues and shows these issues to be the effects of living in a dysfunctional home.

In the ACA program, the identity that is created by living the 14 dysfunctional traits is called the "adult child." During meetings, participants are encouraged to claim the identity of the "adult child" by introducing themselves in the following format: "Hi, my name is (first name), and I am an adult child." Once that identity is claimed, the ACA Red Book encourages the participant to work the Twelve Steps to arrive at their true identity, the True Self. The identity of the True Self is outlined in the ACA Red Book through the ACA Promises and includes learning to set healthy boundaries, cultivating self-acceptance, and choosing to love responsible people. According to the ACA Red Book,

> This book will present the structure of the program beginning with The Laundry List, the 14 characteristics

> that define the traits from which we need to heal. … Ultimately, this text delineates the foundation of how the Twelve Steps offer an incredible path that will give the adult child choices, versus living a generational script. (2006, p. xix)

LANGUAGE AND SKILLS ACQUISITION THROUGH THE TWELVE STEPS

A large portion of the ACA Red Book is dedicated to a detailed outline of the ACA Twelve Steps. The Twelve Steps is a program of recovery adopted from Alcoholics Anonymous. Steps in the program encourage participants to admit their lives are unmanageable, believe in a Power greater than themselves, inventory their lives, and make amends, as well as other actions. When the ACA Red Book was written, the ACA community tailored the Twelve Steps to meet their specific needs. The ACA Red Book states, "While ACA is similar to other Twelve Step programs, our emphasis on the family system and the Inner Child or True Self sets ACA apart from all other fellowships" (2006, p. xiv). The goal of the ACA Twelve Steps is to help the participant arrive at their new identity, the True Self. Throughout the text, members are encouraged to begin working the Steps as soon as possible. Each of the ACA Twelve Steps provides readings, questions, and activities to challenge participants to reflect on family dynamics and roles, evaluate their own behavior, and discover new ways of healthy living. According to the interviewed group members, the family tree exercise found in Step One was incredibly insightful. Readers are asked to draw a family tree and map the roles and relationships of the members of their families. This exercise

helps participants understand the extent of the issues and the generational nature of trauma. Collectively the Steps help the participant understand how the identity of the "adult child" was formed and offers tools and actions for transformation into the True Self.

Group members also reflect on how the ACA Twelve Steps provide a vocabulary and language for their life experiences and healing. The words in the Red Book help participants name and label the issues they struggle with. The text provides phrases and vocabularies that build a language of recovery and healing. Some participants shared that there was a learning curve to the acquisition of the language, but that acquiring the language was important to their recovery. One participant stated,

> In Chapter 8, there is a review of key terms that caught my attention, but it took a long time to understand: inner child, false self, loving parent or reparenting, critical parent. I returned to this page over and over and over, and it took a long time to understand them. Now I have them and will never lose them.

This participant share demonstrates the power in the recovery language in building a new identity. The new identity is formed by understanding and using the new language. The action of working the Steps and speaking the language of recovery all happen within the atmosphere and support of the ACA community and its members.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING THROUGH WEEKLY MEETINGS

The ACA Red Book emphasizes, "The primary purpose of ACA is to create a safe setting in which adults who grew up in dysfunctional homes can feel safe and find a way to share their stories with others in a meaningful manner" (2006, p. xvi). The Red Book points out repeatedly the importance of attending meetings and developing relationships with other group members. Participants are reminded, "You cannot heal in isolation." Community and a sense of belonging are imperative to the formation of the new identity, the True Self. Within the meetings, participants can experience the power of the collective identity, being a part of a group that shares a common experience and intention to heal. A group member shares in the Red Book, "The descriptions can vary among people sitting in ACA meetings listening to the stories of others impacted by chronic loss and abandonment in their growing up years." She goes on,

> Yet, the commonality of the adult child experience overrides any sense of separateness. … The experiences of growing up with loss and abandonment were universal. The healing that would come with having witnesses to one's pain and an avenue in which to find choice in the present day was exhilarating. (2006, pp. xx-xxi)

Through meetings, participants can practice living in a new identity by sharing, listening, and writing about their common experience and their actions to improve.

The ACA Red Book creates these collective healing spaces by functioning as a handbook for how to start and maintain a

weekly meeting. An entire section is dedicated to the details of ACA meetings, including "Sample Meeting Formats" and "Group Organization/Procedures," which lays out the steps participants can take to get a meeting started. During an ACA meeting, a portion of the time is allotted to reading the ACA Red Book aloud, then members share experiences related to the readings. The text of the Red Book is at the center of discussion within the community, driving personal action and social involvement. In the meetings, the participants share how the literature and program are helping create a new identity. According to the Red Book,

> The ACA meeting might focus on reading and discussing ACA literature or a recovery-related topic. We talk about our feelings and our life experiences and how the literature, Step Work, and other ACA recovery work in our lives. We share about personal change, working the Steps, and connecting to our Inner Child (True Self) and Higher Power. (2006, p. 561)

CONCLUSION

Over thirty years ago, the small and growing community of ACA members recognized a need for a text that would help survivors of childhood trauma recognize their struggle and give them a path towards healing. The ACA Red Book was written to meet this need. This case study demonstrates that the ACA Red Book meets this need by helping readers create a new identity, the True Self. Group members create this new identity by naming and recognizing the effects of trauma in their lives, as outlined in the Laundry List, and working towards the life described in the ACA Promises. They accomplish this

transformation by working the ACA Twelve Steps and acquiring the language of recovery. Lastly, the ACA Red Book text provides the structure and instructions for starting weekly meetings that build community and a sense of belonging to a collective identity with a common experience. The ACA Red Book functions well to serve to needs of the trauma community in creating a new and healthy way of living.

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85. I Wrote Something, Now What?

WINNIE JENKINS AND LIBERTY PATTERSON

This project was created for the English 2040: Writing Studies class. We explored how your writing changes when you have the goal of publishing: how your thought process would evolve, how you should involve other people in your writing, and how there are many opportunities to get published. In many cases, writing for publication starts with changing your view of publishing as a whole—thinking about it as something achievable, rather than some far-off unattainable goal. Through this project, we were able to come to the conclusion that publication is not just for those who consider themselves "writers" (such as traditionally published authors), but for everyone who has ideas that they want to share with the world.

- Changing Your Focus: Writing For Class vs Writing for Publication
- Failure, Rejection, and Unexpected Success

- Getting Feedback
- Venues for Publication, Sharing Online, and Opportunities for SLCC Students

INTRODUCTION

Are you a writer?

Your first instinct might be to say "no" or "I wish!" but before you stop reading, hear us out. Every time you write a paper, a social-media post, or even just some random thoughts in a journal, you are writing. Writing isn't just writing stories or books—in fact, every time you take ideas in your head and translate them into words on a page or screen, you are being a writer. And, if you're reading this, you're probably a student as well.

As students and writers, we work hard to write our essays, outlines, and whatever else our professors assign us, sometimes staying up all night in a Red Bull–induced spurt of motivation to get them done in time (when really, the paper was assigned three weeks ago but we just had to marathon *Friends* for the fourth time running instead of doing our homework). But what happens to our papers after they have passed under the threatening gaze of the teacher's red correction pen? After the grades have been entered in Canvas, GPAs have been salvaged, and we all but forget about them entirely?

Should we forget about them?

The straightforward answer is no. As college students preparing to get careers and work in the real world (or as college students who already have careers and work in the real world), it only makes sense to think about our work in the context of them being looked at by other people—being used as texts to inform, instruct, and inspire a wider population than just your professor and a handful of bright-eyed freshmen. How, then, are we to go about garnering an audience for the work we create? How do we transform publication from a far-off, unattainable goal to something actually within our grasp? How should we go about getting published?

The answer is a lot different than what you may think.

CHANGING YOUR FOCUS: WRITING FOR CLASS VS WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

So. Here we are. You've been convinced that maybe you should be thinking about writing for publication, but you're not sure where to start. We can tell you right now that publication does not begin by you submitting your papers and essays and whatever to contests or magazines—it starts much sooner than that. It starts before you've even written a word on the page. Writing for publication starts by changing the way you think about writing as a whole.

For example, say you have an idea that you think would make a really cool essay or story. What is the first thing you think of when you think of getting published? If you're anything like us, you've probably thought about who's going to actually read your work. When writing for publication, it's a good idea to think about who your intended audience is and keep that

audience in mind as you write. That way, you will be able to think about the things they like and relate to, and shape your project around those ideas.

Genre is an important aspect of changing your view of writing, too. Publishers of *National Geographic* will not take your paranormal romance piece, no matter how glorious or well written. *National Geographic* is focused on teaching people about the world around us: that's its genre, and that's what it publishes.

Basically, being aware of genre means being aware of the conventions of that genre. For example, a nonfiction piece will contain true, factual events. You are generally not expected or wanted to make things up. On the other hand, a fantasy piece is expected to have events, places, or characters that are far away from what you would find in real life. Things such as magic, other worlds, or fantasy creatures are norms of the fantasy genre. Some book agents represent only certain genres, and some publications only publish a certain genre—like *National Geographic*. It's helpful to be mindful of genre so that you can submit your work to publishers who are looking for it.

Thinking about genre is important when thinking about your intended audience. Clint Johnson, in his essay "On Genre," states that "knowing the genre makes communication in that situation easier. You know what people expect in your writing and how to give them that." For example, an instruction manual will typically contain step-by-step instructions with pictures. That's the expectation of that genre. If you were to omit the instructions and write a poem instead, readers would no longer consider it an instruction manual. When you are aware of reader's expectations, you are able to communicate so that your writing project can accomplish its purpose more effectively.

If you're a novice writer looking to learn more about the conventions of a certain genre, our advice to you is this: read

a lot of pieces in the genre you're looking to write in, and take notes of what they have in common. If you want to write books, read books. If you are trying to write an academic article, read academic articles. If you are looking to write an instruction manual, look at examples of instruction manuals. As you read more and more, you will find that it gets easier to recognize the conventions of genres. Eventually, you'll be able to make a conscious decision about whether or not to break a genre convention by deciding how you'll best be able to communicate with your audience.

Finally, those who are trying to get published, what you write when you get published will be circulated longer than a few weeks, a semester, or a year, and people will continue to look at it even when you've forgotten what you've written. What you write will ultimately matter in the long-run, so be deliberate about it. Think about how your work will be seen in the future, and use what you gain from thinking of that to write whatever project you end up writing.

FAILURE, REJECTION, AND UNEXPECTED SUCCESS

Not everything gets taken for publication, and that's okay.

Writing is rewriting. The first draft should never be the final draft. When you are first writing down the ideas for a poem, academic paper, or a thoughtful scholarship-application essay, it is not about being perfect, but it is about getting something on the page. Once you have that first verse or first page you will be able to revise and change what doesn't work.

Lisa Bickmore puts it like this: "I, sitting in front of a messy draft, can have some hope: if I'm willing to dive in, look at the connections (or lack thereof), the order (or patent absence

of it), the words (imprecise, not quite right), and hack away, I might find myself with a better draft at the end." [See "Revision IS Writing. That Is All."]

Sometimes we think of failure as being anything but perfect as a writer, but that's not true. Published writers are imperfect all the time, but the thing they all have in common is that they have written words on a page. The only failure when writing is not writing at all.

Sometimes you get rejected from being published, but that is not a reflection of your writing skills. Writing is very subjective. One person might absolutely love something that somebody else hates, and vice versa. Maybe the publisher you submitted to just happened to not like your writing style, but maybe another publisher would absolutely love it. J.K. Rowling, author of the world-famous Harry Potter series, received twelve rejections before the first book was picked up by Bloomsbury. (Read her full story here.)

And even after she got successfully published, she still received rejection letters.

Two rejection letters for J. K. Rowling's THE CASUAL VACANCY, which she published under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith

You never know when you will write something that will get published, and just as long as you keep writing you will be able to get something out to the world.

Maybe you have an idea that you think is awesome, but not everyone else agrees with that. You might have a reader that does not like the genre you are writing in. That's okay because not everyone likes the same stuff. That does not mean your writing is bad; it just means that it is not right for the audience that you are trying to submit to. Just because you get one or ten or even a hundred rejections does not mean that you are

not a good writer. Getting rejected is normal. When you are looking for a place to get published, you never know what piece will get accepted. So keep trying, and never give up.

GETTING FEEDBACK

Get feedback, and take it as you will. We've had our fair share of uninformative, unhelpful, and simply dumb feedback, just like everyone else, but we have also had our fair share of useful and insightful feedback. You just have to know where to look.

To get good feedback, find people you trust and who know how to write in your genre. If you are writing a fiction piece, you do not want someone who writes only science articles to be your only critique partner. However, it might be helpful to have them look over the piece to see if your writing has the first impression you want it to have. Then, you can bring in the expert to help you figure out how best to change it. Find someone else who is writing the same thing as you are, or someone that has knowledge about various genres of writing. If it's a class paper, talk to your classmates and see if you can read over each other's work before you turn it in. You also can go to the student writing center at SLCC and work with a tutor on your paper, if you feel like it needs that extra work. There are so many options you can explore to find what kind of feedback-getting works for you.

VENUES FOR PUBLICATION, SHARING ONLINE, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SLCC STUDENTS

The internet has made it easier to share your work than it was ever before. You can start a blog and write about your passions, or you can use Twitter to share your ideas in 280 characters or less. If you like writing long fiction, you are able to post it for free up on websites like Wattpad. You can go to websites like Submittable to find places to submit your work. You can also self publish your work through Amazon. When you do it through Amazon, your work will end up on their Kindle store, which gives you pretty cool bragging rights.

You might even be thinking that you want to traditionally publish your work—meaning that you want to submit your work to an agent or editor and have them publish your piece. Getting traditionally published takes a lot of work and a lot of patience. It is the practice of writing, revising, submitting, getting rejected until you finally get accepted that helps you develop as a writer. If you want to learn more about traditional publishing we recommend that you checkout sources like Alexa Donnes Youtube channel, or the blog PUB(lishing) Crawl.

It might be daunting to actually find a place to submit your work to; that's why we suggest that you start submitting to small prints and then slowly work your way up. As a student here at SLCC, you might want to first look at all the opportunities we have here at SLCC to get published with, such as Folio, the Anthology, and Chapbook. Submitting to publications like these will give you valuable experience with submitting that will help prepare you for when you submit to magazines, literary journals, agents, and more.

As a student, you can submit your work every spring and fall semester to SLCC's Folio Magazine. You can also take the Publication Studies class in spring and fall semesters. In that

class you will read through students submissions, help decide what will be accepted, and work together with your peers to publish a collection of SLCC pieces. The fall and spring collection is SLCC's Folio. Check it out here.

Then in fall the publication class works on the SLCC Anthology, and you will be able to submit to that at the start of fall semester. The SLCC Anthology is different from Folio because it is not only a collection of students' work, but also anyone in the SLCC community. So anyone with a connection to SLCC will be able to submit to this Anthology. Students are also the main readers for this publication. Check that out here.

Then, at the end of fall semester, you will also be able to submit to the SLCC Chapbook contest. With the Chapbook, unlike Folio and the Anthology where students decide what to publish, a group of faculty will read all of the submissions and send their favorites to a judge. At the end the judge will pick the winner. The winner, as well as the runner-ups, will get to work with the students in the Publication Studies class to publish their project.

Getting published is hard work, but it's worth it to be able to see your name on a piece that more than your class, your friends, or your family will read. In college, we are constantly learning how to rise up. We are constantly told that we have the ability to change our lives, our communities, and even the world. Just think—something you write could teach someone something on the other side of the country. Someone's life could improve because of the work that you do.

I don't know about you, but that's pretty worth it to us.

IN CONCLUSION

When it comes to publishing, we have no control in what

happens. We have no control over what pieces will get accepted, or where. But always remember even if you can't control what happens, you can still control what you do. Continue writing and getting words on the page. Sit down, write, revise, and submit, because the only guarantee of not getting published is not putting yourself out there.

Every now and again you might run into someone who will tell you that getting published is impossible, that you shouldn't even try. To those people we like to quote the great Robin Williams: "I'm sorry. If you were right, I'd agree with you."

Don't listen to the haters. If you continue to submit your work, you will get published one day. Simple as that.

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86. Storytelling and Identity: Writing Yourself Into Existence

SARA AIRD

This text was developed for English 2040: Writing Studies and was the culminating project of the class. The purpose of the assignment was to create a meaningful text grounded in the writing thresholds central to the Open English @SLCC Pressbook that would support writing instruction at SLCC. This paper shows how the elements of storytelling restore identity after trauma and highlights the idea that writing shapes how we do, be and make in the world.

- Timeline
- Scene-Setting
- Voice and Point of View
- Character Development
- What Does It Mean?

Storytelling brought me to Salt Lake Community College, specifically the desire to tell my story. Until recently, I would not have considered myself a writer, even though my life was compelling me to write. For the last ten years, I had been on a journey inside myself. Events in the present had awakened events from the past, revealing a chronically traumatic and forgotten story and self. Joseph Campbell coined the term "the hero's journey," a quest from the known to the unknown, in which the protagonist confronts and overcomes overwhelming obstacles and emerges transformed. The journey grants the hero wisdom and new life. Confronting my traumatic childhood began my hero's journey.

In *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk explains traumas are not simply events from the past, but "the imprint left by that experience on the mind, brain, and body." He goes on to say, "It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think." With an altered perception of reality, he adds, "traumatized people chronically feel unsafe in their bodies: The past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort." Living in a constant state of alert and distress, "they learn to hide from their selves." Trauma changes who we are and how we operate in the world. We often disconnect from our reality and our sense of self. When the unspeakable occurs, we seek to make sense of what has happened. In an effort to feel safe again, we create a story, but that story is often grossly distorted, influenced by the powerlessness and horror of what we have suffered. The story is a reflection of the traumatized self. Because of trauma, my life story was incomplete, inaccurate, and damaging.

Storytelling offers a powerful space to reclaim ourselves and discover our hero's journey. Using timeline, scene-setting, voice and point of view, and character development, we recover our choices. Where we felt powerless and confused about our experiences, we can write our wisdom and power into

existence. Where we lost our "selves," we can "compose (write) ourselves into being while also composing (calming or settling) ourselves into a particular view of the world" (Christiansen, 2016).

TIMELINE

Many people know their personal timeline, the consistent narrative that flows within them. I did not. My timeline had enormous holes. Large chunks of time were completely missing. In fact, it always felt like my timeline began in the third grade; the time before felt empty. Some memories floated around aimlessly; I didn't know where they fit. Other memories were fuzzy and incomplete. A few memories didn't seem to belong to me. My most recent memories had some clarity, but as you traveled back the details faded quickly. As a result, the whole timeline felt unsteady.

When my daughter was born, new memories surfaced. It was as though her timeline began uncovering the missing elements of my timeline. When she started preschool, the revelations became frequent and intense. They didn't come as full stories, and they didn't come in the right order. They came as fragments in disarray. I called those fragments "my bowl of pieces," and I needed to organize them to understand them.

When writing a story, the timeline is central. Stories consist of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Lisa Bickmore, in our OEP, gives insight into the importance of this storytelling element:

> When we, as readers, sit down to read a story, we expect certain things. One is a timeline that we can follow. Some stories use complex timelines, flashing ahead or flashing back. Some stories keep the timeline simple,

> starting with the earliest event, and moving ahead deliberately to the end, or final event. But no matter how the writer manages the timeline, in a story, a reader expects to be anchored explicitly in time, and to be able to orient him or herself in time. [See "The Narrative Effect: Story as the Forward Frame."]

Storytelling requires the writer to organize events along a timeline: what comes first, what follows, how does this event relate in time to that event; but what if the writer is also trying to anchor themselves in time and orient themselves in relation to the events of their story?

During my trauma recovery, I investigated my memories, puzzling out the details to orient myself to their time and place, discovering the relationships between them. The first way I wrote my story was a timeline. I sat at my computer with "my bowl of pieces" and made a list, arranging the memories from the beginning to the present, using small phrases to label the pinpoints of my life. I took a once fragmented and incomplete narrative and constructed the framework, grounding myself in the events of my life and how they unfolded, and laying a foundation for my sense of self.

SCENE-SETTING

When I began therapy, my sessions frequently ended with dissociation. It was a coping mechanism I had used for decades to manage my traumatic experiences. To dissociate is to disconnect from the body, your sense of self, and your personal history. In this case, I dissociated from my sensory experience. When the traumatic triggers became too overwhelming, my therapist invited me to describe my surroundings: what I could

see, hear, smell, taste, and touch, to bring me back into my body when I wanted to escape it. It was a difficult exercise and required a lot of practice.

Lisa Bickmore also discusses the importance of sensory details in creating a world for the reader to live in:

> As readers, we also hope for an opportunity to see into a vivid story-world that has a sense of lived-in-ness, of detail and texture. This is what Herman refers to as the "qualia"—the "what it is like"–ness of a story. Writers create the worlds of their stories by using sensory detail, but also by evoking the narrator's or other character's states of mind.

It is through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste that the reader gets an enhanced experience of the story. Readers are allowed to enter into the world of the writer, to experience what it is like to live there.

I did not want to exist in the world I lived in. I sought to escape it by cutting myself off from its sensations and details. When I wrote about dissociation in therapy, I challenged myself to describe what the office looked like, the feel of the chair on my skin, the sound of my therapist's voice, the dryness in my mouth.

> It is appointment day. I am driving to my therapist's home where he has a basement office. It is musty; the house has a smell that is not familiar to me. In a few minutes, I will be engulfed in an old, over-sized, fuzzy chair in a dimly lit room, the material itching my skin, the dust motes floating in the air, and report on my week. When I arrive, I am annoyed. My therapist always seems so calm and

peaceful during our sessions, sitting in his old, oversized, fuzzy chair speaking in his low, rounded, extended tones. Every week I sit in that chair in that office, and I squirm and fidget, desperate to get out of my skin. Even though the lighting is faint, I feel like a glaring spotlight is hovering over me, exposing every inch of my body, exposing every flaw and weakness. I cough, my mouth dry and irritated. He looks at me like I am supposed to have answers and explanations, waiting for me to have a breakthrough. But I don't break through, I am stuck. All I want to do is escape.

Writing the sensory details around my desire to dissociate helped me learn how to be in my body again; to write was to find a way to live in my world. The act of recreating my world made it feel real and "lived in," allowing me to reconnect to myself and my personal history.

VOICE AND POINT OF VIEW

In addition to dissociating from my sensory experience, I dissociated from parts of myself. I rejected the parts of me that had lived through the trauma, cutting them off and hiding them away. It was as if my soul had been severed into dozens of pieces. My intense personal rejection showed up as chronic self-loathing and harsh, negative self-talk. Each of those abandoned parts of myself carried specific stories, pain, and roles to play. My writing reflected the division; the third-person

point of view demonstrated the separation and my unwillingness to claim those parts of myself.

> At home and everywhere else, I collapse into a version of myself I don't even recognize, and with whom I am completely disgusted. She seems capable of so little and requires so much rescuing. All she can see are her own problems, and they are enormous. I am furious with her. I want to kick her out, and I try but she keeps coming back. She keeps showing up, so burdensome and demanding. She's unhappy when she goes to school. She is unhappy when she skips school. She doesn't want to make dinner, then feels tremendous guilt for being lazy. She makes dinner, and it isn't good enough. She wants to be alone. She needs to be close. She cries if the DVD player isn't working. She is unfeeling when someone else has a bad day. She is a conundrum, a walking conflict. I don't understand why I can't bring Hero home with me. Hero would make everything better. Hero would clean up this mess and get us back on track. Hero feels like a suit I put on for work that dissolves the minute I leave, with me desperately trying to keep the pieces from slipping between my fingers. I need Hero, but most of the time I get Lump instead. Yes, let's call her Lump.

The narrative voice is the point of view, the way in which the reader will hear and experience the story. The first-person point of view invites the reader to see the story through the author's perspective. The narrative voice is a reflection of the writer's personality, a reflection of who they are. The writer displays their voice in the way they tell their story, the words they use,

the aspects they highlight, the feelings they describe. Through the writer's voice, readers can experience an event in a unique way.

Storytelling became the way to bridge the gaps between my warring selves. I collected all the uncovered pieces of my personality and figured out where they intersect. Writing reunited them into a whole and realistic version of myself: first, by having those different perspectives interact together through the third-person point of view, and eventually, merging them into one solid and confident first-person point of view.

> I try to do what my therapist encouraged me to do: be honest and tell her how I feel. I take a deep breath and I say, "I'm not okay, in fact, I'm severely depressed. Sometimes when I'm really low, I think how nice it would be to not be alive. I need help. I need to learn how to take care of myself. I want to be happy. I have a good life. I want to know how to enjoy it."

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

My hero's journey started when I realized the way I was living my life didn't align with how I actually wanted to live my life. I wanted meaningful and authentic relationships with others, and I wanted to be an authentic and open person, but authenticity and meaning required feeling. My lifelong quest had been to avoid painful situations at all costs, a tall order

when you are a human being, and in order to do this, I had inadvertently picked up weapons and defenses: judgment of self and others, black-and-white thinking, distrust and isolation, manipulation and denial. In my effort to silence the suffering, I also lost touch with the joy, peace, and gratitude in my life. In my resistance, my character became flat. I stopped growing.

It is a perfectly ordinary evening. I've curled myself up on my tiny couch anticipating one of my favorite TV programs. During each episode, a celebrity explores their family tree. They get to see where they came from and who came before them. Some of the discoveries are exciting, and others are hard to understand. The journey is almost always beautiful. Tonight an older woman is being interviewed. She sits on a small couch similar to mine. Her hair is gray, and her skin is wrinkled. Her clothes are old-lady clothes, also similar to mine. As she shares her story, I notice that I am incredibly annoyed, which is not the typical feeling for me during this TV program. I love this show, but I am totally irritated. She's complaining and complaining and complaining. She has a life-long list of grievances, grudges, and hurt that has been festering for decades, which she is airing on national television. I think, *Wow! This old lady is so bitter. She should really do something about that. And get off TV, because bitterness is annoying, and not at all beautiful. How can she live her life like that?* As soon as I complete that thought, I am abruptly transported into a microscopic view of my very own

life. Suddenly what I couldn't see with my normal, ordinary, everyday vision is made completely clear. I am the bitter old lady before she actually became the bitter old lady. Outwardly, my life looks exactly how I imagined it, yet it lacks the feelings I always assumed would be there—contentment, joy, peace. All seems well, except that it's not, because I have a list too. I have a detailed list of unresolved pain, disappointments, and resentments that I visit often. I go over my list, starting at the beginning of my life up to the present day, and remember all the hurt. I fully expect to add to that list on a weekly basis, if not daily. I see for the first time how this is destroying me, this enormous burden that I carry around, because I don't know how to put it down. It is hollowing me out, to be one thing on the outside and something else on the inside.

Great stories have relatable characters, and relatable characters are complex. They have a combination of strengths and weaknesses; their personalities contradict. The reader experiences their complexity through physical descriptions, actions, and inner thoughts. Strong characters change and grow. Readers witness the journey and transformation of the character as she overcomes obstacles and works toward solutions, becoming something new through the process. The personal narrative offers a unique opportunity for self-transformation, as you are at once the narrator and the protagonist in the story. Ron Christiansen, in his OEP article "You Will Never Believe What Happened!", shares an insightful quote:

> We shape our identity through these stories. As Julie Beck, senior associate editor at The Atlantic, in "Life's Stories" explains, "A life story is written in chalk, not ink, and it can be changed." Beck then uses Jonathon Adler, a psychologist, to expand on this idea: "You're both the narrator and the main character of your story. ... That can sometimes be a revelation—'Oh, I'm not just living out this story, I am actually in charge of this story.'"

As the narrator to my own story, I regain control of the story. Where I once felt powerless, I now have power. I take my once flat character and fill her out; I explore my own complexity, contradictions, and seek to reveal the development that occurs through the journey.

> I've become a shell. I am the leftover glossy exterior of an animal that once lived. Beautiful on the outside but nothing on the inside. Although, I think at one time I was. Alive. My harsh judgment for bitter old TV lady melts into compassion. She is a shell too. We are the same. Our shells are familiar and keep us safe. They've been painstakingly constructed layer by excruciating layer by the experiences that hardened us. The shell protects us. It's how we feel safe. I can't imagine life without the shell. I've had it for so long it's like I am the shell and the shell is me. I am hard and impenetrable. I watch people tap the outside trying to find me, but I'm not here. I'm gone. I don't know where I went. Instantly, a simple but hard choice unfolds before me. I find myself at a fork in the road of my soul. I can continue down this path, burdened by my pain and resentments, protected by my shell, until I'm only

> left with a bitter aftertaste in my mouth, or I can find a way to come alive. I don't even know what being alive looks like, but I know I want it. I don't want to discover at the closing of my life that I've grown only regret. I don't know how to get started, but I know I need to start.

The personal narrative allowed me to take the main character, myself, and transform her, and in writing the transformation, I, the writer, am also transformed.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

To be human is to search for meaning. I needed to find meaning and purpose in life events that felt hollow, disorienting, and purposeless. At least, I needed to discover what they meant to me. After a decade of seeking, I had been transformed and felt compelled to put the story in writing, to find the wisdom in what happened to me. My trauma changed me. It stole my identity and replaced it with a fractured perspective of myself and my life, a trauma story. I wanted to break that story down and create a new one.

Writing provides the way. Writing empowers me to reclaim myself and rewrite the narrative of my life. Finding meaning is challenging. I wrestle with the words, fight with the language, trying to communicate what has happened and how it has affected me. Writing is a sifting of the soul, an attempt to reveal the true person underneath. Where trauma negatively altered my view of myself, of people, and of the world around me,

storytelling restored my choices. I choose how the timeline unfolds, the world in which I live, the sound of my voice, how I develop, and the purpose in my story. I write myself into the person I was always meant to be.

The most difficult part of writing my story is loving myself through the process. Storytelling is a journey of self-discovery, requiring growth and change, and growth and change can be painful. Compassion is a necessity on the journey. The final stage of writing yourself into existence will be accepting who it is you are finding, believing that who you are creating is real and true and worthy.

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87. The Disgusting Rhetoric Behind Social Media Copywriting

Let's take a journey within the rhetoric behind social media and what it takes to grab your intended audience's attention.

EMME CHADWICK

- Gross … Rhetoric and Social Media?
- You Guess It! Twitter and Instagram
- The Bad, the Horrible, the Ugly
- All the Rhetoric I Know You Love Behind Social Media

Okay, I'll admit it, the title isn't the best, but it got you to click and investigate. Congratulations, you just entered a crash course into the rhetoric behind social media marketing. Here we will observe the different forms of rhetoric used in everyday social media advertising. You'll find that that these examples and the thought that goes behind advertising as a copywriter can be quite simple if you've got "the stuff." Marketing as a copywriter is exciting but also challenging when trying to

communicate your company's overall mission and brand in a couple of words.

GROSS … RHETORIC AND SOCIAL MEDIA?

I know what you're thinking: social media and rhetoric don't go together. This is where you'd be wrong. Have you ever wondered what has drawn you to a specific Facebook ad or why you clicked on something that was sponsored on Instagram? Besides having the money to promote the company, that's only the first step. If the company doesn't immediately snatch their intended audience's attention, it's going to be a bumpy marketing campaign without much success.

The audience is the number one thing to keep in mind when producing any kind of writing, but especially in an online presence. So what makes a good ad? What can you do to grab the attention of those you are trying to reach? Most of all, how do your writing skills get nestled into copywriting for the digital world? Glad you asked; if you didn't I'd be concerned that you are on the wrong page. Let's get started and take a look at several examples of social media ads and what is particularly "good" or "bad" about them and how their use of rhetoric helped them.

YOU GUESSED IT! TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM

When it comes to the social media marketing world, Twitter and Instagram tend to be the things that most companies struggle with. Facebook and LinkedIn, on the other hand, are made for companies and Facebook's ad platform makes it easier to reach your audience and allow you more room for a longer caption. When we observe Instagram and Twitter though, their platforms require a more tactful and, at times, difficult rhetorical approach.

The first example is from the social media platform, Twitter. Anyone who knows Twitter knows that you must keep your post to 280 characters or less. This is particularly challenging when it comes to advertising. You have to fit your information in a catchy, 280-character post. The adjacent image shows Twitter advertising done right. Wendy's was brilliant in the way they took the popular game *League of Legends* and transformed it to fit their company needs by naming this campaign "Feast of Legends." In doing this, they gave themselves what we call an asset.

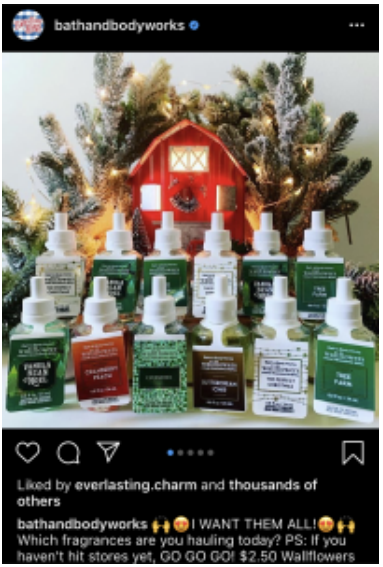
Assets are videos, gifs, pictures, and basically, everything that can digitally go on the platform you're posting on and tie into a specific campaign that you're launching. By creating this for themselves, Wendy's can now successfully run an eye-catching

and engaging campaign that can carry on for weeks, months, or whatever they need to fit their timeline.

The next step that Wendy's did for this campaign was their caption. If your asset is engaging that's awesome! Who wants to read a boring caption? No one. The point of being a social media copywriter is being able to speak to your audience and essentially convince them that your company is the best thing that's ever happened to them.

When Wendy's captioned their post with "the heroes of Beef's Keep have gathered to banish frozen beef from the realm," your first thought is to either laugh or question what they mean, causing further investigation. They cleverly convey to their audience that their beef is never frozen, they play off of *League of Legends*, and they are adept at using all fresh ingredients with their products. Wendy's accomplished their mission by only using 76 characters in their post.

When it comes to Twitter, the simpler, the better. No viewer or customer wants to read a lengthy Twitter post and have to follow an entire thread just to be told that the company's ingredients are fresh. It seems like a lot, right? I promise, it's not. When it comes to the different social media platforms, follow the phrase "read the room." Are your competitors using lengthy language? Are they clever with their campaigns? What can you do to set yourself apart? When it comes to Twitter: simple, short, to the point, clever, and investigation worthy. Hook your audience from the start so that they feel like they have to investigate your company further. The more that you do this, the higher your follower count goes up and your company's website gets a lot of traffic. Go you!



Okay, enough with Wendy's crushing it on Twitter, and let's move on to Bath and Body Works and the magic they create on their social media. Who doesn't love Bath and Body Works? Great candles, body wash, soap, pretty much everything is amazing. They know it. They know their customers come to their location to smell good, get a gift or pick-me-up, and their social media presence reflects this greatly. It's important to convey confidence in your writing about your company, whether you believe in the service or not. Let's say and hope you do, for your sake.

By first looking at the asset in their post we can tell that it's directed at the Christmas season, and our eyes look at the unique setup and colors that are in their posts. Then, finally, we see it … an engaging first line. No one wants to feel like they're being sold something that no one else wants. In today's world, it's all about "keeping up with the Joneses," even though we would like to believe that's not the case. In the media communication world, this is called "fear of missing out." An incredibly useful thing in advertising. Bath and Body Works immediately grabs the customer's attention with their bright emojis and all caps.

Someone who is scrolling through their feed would stop and think, *Is something on sale? What do they have that I want or need?* Bath and Body Works tells the audience in the first line that it's a product that they want, so you should want it too because they are in love with their product by using the line

"Which fragrances are you hauling today? If you haven't hit the stores yet, GO GO GO!" Much different from the examples we will take a look at down below. Grab your audience's attention, keep it there, and don't be afraid to use color!

THE BAD, THE HORRIBLE, THE UGLY

Okay so we saw Wendy's and Bath and Body Works killing the social media game, but what about the companies that need to "beef up" their profile? Let's take a look at the adjacent example. This company, Stiry, simply posted, "Did you guys see our story about @CATCHIdaho yesterday?" First off (this may sound harsh), but who cares? If you don't give your audience a reason to care about your post, they won't. Think of it this way: if you bought a dog who tore up all of your things, was aggressive, and had accidents in the house, it would be harder to love them. Don't say it would be easy, because it wouldn't. On the other hand, if you owned a loyal dog, who stayed by your side, allowed you to hold them, and played with you, it would be easier to love them. This is the same with social media, believe it or not. Boring captions and assets that aren't engaging make it 10X harder to love a company as opposed to businesses that know what they're doing.

This company has one like and one comment to their post. The commenter perfectly summed up why this is such a bad

example, the simple commented, “No.” This viewer is thinking, *Why would I see that? What’s it about? Where’s the link? How can I view it?* And probably a lot more. It’s good to keep your audience guessing but only to an extent. Don’t completely leave them in the dark without any knowledge whatsoever. Give them a little something to get them on the hook and have them discover more.

No one that is in the scope of your intended audience is going to care unless you make them care. Please don’t kidnap people and force them to like your social media posts; instead take the simpler and legal route of drilling your company’s purpose and intended audience into your head. By starting with yourself first, you’ll know how to better reach your customers and would-be customers. Research your competitors on Twitter, look at what they’re doing. What works and what doesn’t? Take it, then improve it to make your post and the asset that can go along with it clever and engaging.

Take a look at the adjacent Instagram screenshot and think about it for a second. This was posted on a band’s Instagram page promoting their new song that just dropped. It gives us the album title, and what the song’s about, and even tags the singers. Great! Although it has the information we need, it has a lot of things in their post that we don’t need. There’s nothing eye-catching in the first line so why would the viewer stop their scrolling to read an entire paragraph with a million commas, no emojis, and not even an exclamation

point? It looks dull right off the start, and their asset has a dark and unappealing color scheme. As I stated before, Twitter and Instagram should be punchy, upbeat, fun, and should also include the infamous emojis that we all know and love.

Emojis are something that can be seen as something bad, but when it comes down to it, they help grab attention in this modern-day age. Keeping up to date with today's modern world will go a long way for you in the marketing world. Those that stop educating themselves on new platforms and techniques are going to die out quickly in the social media world. It's just a fact! Brightening up your company's feed makes it more attractive to customers who may click on your page. If a customer or potential record label company were to look at a dull-colored feed, paragraphs as captions, and overly long unnecessary explanations, they'd click out of it.

Get to the point! In today's world nobody has time to read a lengthy caption, nor do they want to. I stopped reading after the second comma (then I had to actually read it for the purposes of this article); there was no point to be made for me so I quickly became uninterested as would many people if this popped up on their feed. Be bright, bubbly, and engaging while keeping the same professional tone that matches the company. You don't want to be dropping in a heart-eyed emoji after every word for a funeral home. Read the room and take notes.

No one wants a lengthy post that has too much information. That's for Facebook! Here's something that won't make sense: you want to be direct but indirect. Huh? I know, but let me explain, get the company's point across immediately. Like Wendy's stating that they never freeze their beef, then they leave the viewer hanging like Bath and Body Works not even mentioning their sale till the last line. Know the platform you're working with inside and out. An engaged audience is an audience that will investigate and could become a potential client or customer.

ALL THE RHETORIC I KNOW YOU LOVE BEHIND SOCIAL MEDIA

You're almost to the end, and to be frank, I'm surprised you've lasted this long (especially if it's for an assignment or research), but I've tried my best to keep this interesting. Keep reading, because I'd like to think the information here is pure gold.

So you're basically an expert now, right? You know all about rhetoric and you're feeling like you're up to the task of promoting a company. First off, no one really understands rhetoric (just kidding, please don't yell at me)—you can always be learning new ways to market yourself and the company you work for.

If your company is just getting started, get with the big boss to see what they have envisioned for the company's future and then come up with a branding goal that includes the tone of writing, colors, and look that your company wants to portray. The tone and language of writing will most likely be the two most important things that you can have in your rhetoric tool belt. Rhetoric in social media is the best way to ensure that a connection is made with your intended audience, along with a great asset to go along with the campaign. Play on people's "fear of missing out," and get into a rhythm of confidence in your company. Make your intended audience feel like they need your company in order to survive and thrive.

Being a social media copywriter is a challenging task at times, and perfecting being a good writer can help you hone in on that challenge. Rhetoric is essential in conveying your meaning as well as making you stand out as a copywriter. Writing is a competitive field, but a useful one to go into as

companies will most likely always need someone that has strong rhetoric and writing skills.

Constantly improve on your writing and try to examine the good, the bad, and the ugly of other companies' social media. Pull your audience in and make them feel like they are a part of your company's community, but also be sure to know the purpose of your company. People want to feel included, and by tactfully using rhetoric you can accomplish the mission that you and your boss want.

Rhetoric is the way to go when it comes to being the best social media copywriter. Be confident in your rhetoric use and apply yourself. Looking at competitor's social media isn't cheating, it's helping you elevate your platform to be better than theirs. Companies are looking for those that know all the ins and outs of social media as well as your use of rhetoric and your potential as a writer. Confidence in yourself and your company is key, fellow writers. So write on and get some money!

88. The Incompatibility Between Classroom Literacies

YGOR NOBLOTT

This case study was written for English 2040: Writing Studies. The purpose of the assignment was to explore writing and literacy within the context of place to discover where they exist, how they are practiced, and how they circulate, specifically in the Salt Lake Valley. I chose to analyze the literacies of students and teachers in a middle-school classroom. The case study revealed that the sponsors of literacy help create identities in their recipients which then struggle to have their own voice represented in the classroom, reinforcing the threshold concepts that writing is a tool that people use to do things, be things, and make things in the world; and meaningful writing is achieved through sustained engagement in literate practices.

- Participants
- Context
- Classroom

When it comes to the educational system there is hardly a more influential subject than literacy. How and what students in grade school are reading and writing will affect everything from how they see the world to their identity. When analyzing the effects of the literacies of middle-school students, it is imperative that adequate examination be given to the topic of sponsorship: who is promoting the reading and writing for the students. This case study, undertaken at West Jordan Middle School, aims to identify the interplay between the literacy histories of those in the classroom—students and sponsors—and their implications. The project is valuable for educators as literacy instructors and sponsors, in order to apply appropriate techniques for the development of their student's personal literacies.

The project methods consisted of interviews, classroom observation, text analysis, and context analysis. The classroom

observed belonged to Brian Bowler, a ninth-grade English teacher at West Jordan Middle school. Mr. Bowler and two of his students (Brinley and Yamileth) were interviewed about their literacy history and practices. The classroom was also observed for insights regarding related literacy learning activities—the text analysis took place in class as well. Lastly, the context analysis was done with research on the educational system and an interview with the school Librarian, Lisa Morey.

PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Bowler, the first participant, learned to read from his parents (his primary literacy sponsors) who read to him when he was young. He had lots of books in his home which he read often: The Little Critters series among other children's books. That, and frequent trips to the library, coupled with composition courses in school, were influential in the literacy learning of Mr. Bowler. These literacy practices translated to his present: most of the writing he does is centered around his work, with the exception of stand-up comedy. For fun he reads genres such as philosophy, biography, religion, classic literature, world wars, sci-fi, and dystopias. His positive experience may be why Mr. Bowler views literacy as "everything." He believes that it is a way for people to escape the world and also helps in identifying con-men—those who seek to manipulate others—a skill which he aims to impart to his students.

Unlike her teacher's sponsors, Brinley's parents didn't read much. It was her sister (Brinley's primary sponsor) who imparted her love of reading to Brinley when she was young. Now she enjoys reading manga, comics, chapter books, and anime like *My Hero Academia*; she also writes essays about

television shows and movies in her leisure time. Brinley believes that she, as a student, owns her literacy, because she has a choice when it comes to absorbing the content of the class and the literature she reads.

Yamileth's history is similar to her teacher's and Brinley's, although her experience with her primary sponsor (her mother) differed. Yamileth's mother compelled her to read everything she saw when out and about, and would impose strict writing practices from a very early age which Yamileth disliked. Being Hispanic, they saw the benefit of increasing literacy in order to excel in their new home in The States. Yamileth now reads, but very little: typically drama novels. She struggles to grasp the content of her English class which is centered on classical European literature and American styled coursework.

CONTEXT

Although the school system directs literacy with the core standards, it does not have full control over the classroom. Both Mr. Bowler and the librarian, Mrs. Morey, play a major role with what is being read and written. Mr. Bowler chooses his books and class content with a combination of tradition from previous teachers, collaboration with other professionals, and personal preference. Mrs. Morey works similarly and chooses the books in the library with full autonomy. Outside of the district's review standards, she chooses the content according to age levels, instructional materials, reviews, interest levels, and a large degree of personal experience and preference. The library contains books of a variety of topics but mostly teen fiction, graphic novels, and sports as the main genres. While

books about other cultures are available, books from other cultures are not as common.

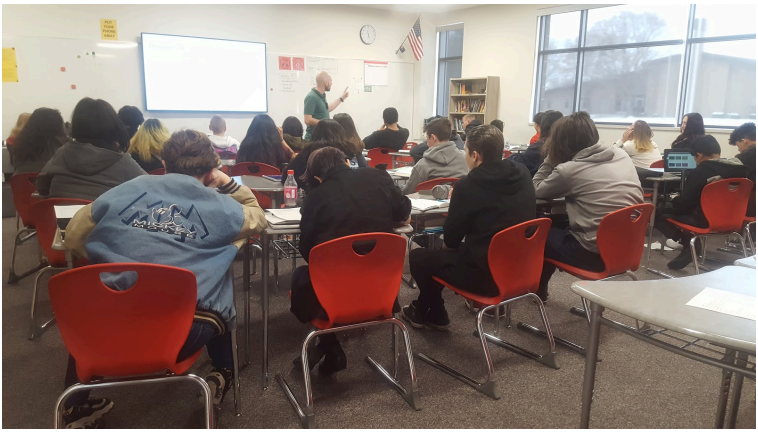
CLASSROOM

The classroom is organized simply, with little propaganda on the walls, and a small bookshelf with Mr. Bowler's personal collection. Writing prompts are given every day for five minutes at the start of class, reading log entries with library trips are done often, and projects that include an analysis of classic literature like *The Odyssey* and *Romeo & Juliet* are common as well. During study times, less than half of the class reads and most of the content seems to go unnoticed.

As with most educators, the personal literacy history of Mr. Bowler directly affects his teaching and sponsoring, despite attempts to eliminate subjectivity. What he has read in the past and the genres he enjoys now dictate much of the content. The students like Brinley who have similar literacy practices to that of Mr. Bowler's seem to be more engaged. Yamileth mentioned that her mother reads and that she wanted to read the same book as her mother, but when the classroom was given time for their reading log, she continually neglected participation. There seems to be a gap between her and students like Brinley who read more often and focus comfortably on the reading assignments. The difference may lie in their cultural disparities: Yamileth, being Hispanic, doesn't appear to have as much to relate to in the class as Brinley does, who is a native and shares a similar background with Mr. Bowler and Mrs. Morey.

Almost all of what Mr. Bowler and Mrs. Morey chose to sponsor was chosen by personal preference, which creates a breach for students like Yamileth, who, although they have literature in Spanish available to them, still have difficulty

relating to the context and content of the class. Yamileth has little interest in *The Odyssey*, but Brinley does. The rest of the class reflects these two's experiences: the Hispanics, in particular, often disregard their teacher's instruction, which they see as irrelevant (as do some Caucasian students); and only a handful of students (those with native English-speaking backgrounds and particularly strong literacy practices already in place) are invested in their learning. While *The Odyssey* may be significant, there is other equally powerful Spanish literature, translated into English, that could be used to reach those students that cannot relate to the cultural literacies of Mr. Bowler. Works by Spanish writers such as Cervantes, Borges, and Marquez have been studied in schools all throughout Latin America, and have been translated into many other languages including English. Their influence is equally as comprehensive as that of *The Odyssey*. This suggests a possible homogeneity in the development of English teachers, who are taught to welcome variety but are trained with a fixed list that comes from their own sponsors, therefore restricting their personal literacies and the relatability of the content they are teaching.



Mr. Bowler instructs his class on the reading assignment.

Mr. Bowler's goal as an educator is to make critical thinkers of his students, but his goal doesn't seem to produce much fruit unless the student already has a background as a reader, like Brinley, or shares commonalities with Mr. Bowler. Other students don't think too much on topics presented in the classroom while students like Brinley, who are accustomed to certain literacy practices, answer not only often but thoughtfully. Brinley believes that she has full control of her literacy, which differs from the receiver mind-frame of students like Yamileth that do not grasp the literacy objectives of their sponsor Mr. Bowler—a common outlook among other Hispanic students that have not acquired the literacy practices or commonalities of their teacher.

CONCLUSION

This case study presents a number of interesting applications for the analysis of literacy within the educational system. While it may be difficult to separate personal preferences from one's work, a better understanding and application of cultural knowledge may greatly benefit literacy learners in schools. The literacy histories of each participant demand a place in the classroom—which can become problematic for both the sponsors and recipients—each pleading for representation and understanding. An issue that no doubt will impact them greatly.

Furthermore, an argument could be given for the degree of influence that the family has versus the classroom, regarding literacy sponsoring and learning and the identities they create. For student's like Brinley, their positive experience with their sponsor will determine who they will become. Much like Mr. Bowler with his love of comedy and his literacy-sponsored

critical thinking skills, his students will become what they read and write. For some non-native English-speakers like Yamileth, identity might mean something else, since she is fighting to retain her culture while living in a world that differs from home. Her literacy journey will be more difficult to determine and examine; an ideal issue to explore in a much larger case study in the future.

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PART VIII

ARTICLES FOR INSTRUCTORS

Pedagogy is an art and discipline that requires teachers to also be continual learners, and we aim to publish articles written by instructors for their colleagues in the spirit of sharing and learning together.

89. Service-Learning in English Studies and Writing Studies

ANDREA MALOUF

- What Is Service-Learning?
- Choices for Service-Learning
- Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning
- Service-Learning in Composition Studies
- How Service-Learning in English Studies Compares with Composition Studies
- Creating Cultural Competence for Service-Learning
- Establishing Community–Campus Partnerships
- Designing Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- Planning Course Instruction and Activities
- Critical Reflection for Service-Learning Courses
- Designing Assessments, Evaluations, and Improvement Plans

For many students, active citizenship is not always a given

in terms of knowledge or attitude. Citizenship is a set of skills that need to be learned, and yet that is not always easily done within just academic settings or from textbooks. Learned skills of citizenship are experiential by nature—learning by doing, learning through problem-solving—but not all experiential learning has full frameworks in which to reflect on the full student experience.

Service-learning in college courses provides opportunities to develop responsible citizenship skills by addressing problems and needs beyond the classroom and in communities. Students are asked to not just identify the needs of the communities they serve, but to recognize assets and contributions of those communities. Students are entering into complex and dynamic spaces with collaboration as a goal. Service-learning asks students to not only take part in a community-based or civic experience, but to reflect on that experience, which requires critical thinking and hands-on approaches. It connects their course curriculum and skills of analysis and problem-solving to their community-based experience, as well as their personal lived experiences.

Service-learning is based on reciprocity, so that not just the students benefit from the experience but communities benefit as well and have an equal say in designing the experience. It is also a democratic process, in that it requires students to work together with their teachers and community partners in planning educational strategies for their own learning and for the benefit of the communities they work with—all activities that build citizenship skills.

More than anything, service-learning experiences are about challenging, shaping, and reshaping narratives, whether it is recognizing and challenging our own biased narratives, or learning about new narratives and synthesizing our own stories as they intersect with others in the community.

As such, the pedagogies of service-learning, English, and composition studies overlap in many ways. Both writing and

community-engaged practices are deeply context-dependent activities. “Literacy learning happens both inside and outside schools, and … literacy learning is a social and ideological process rather than simply a textual translation” (Deans, Roswell, et al., 2010). Writing and literary studies comprise many transferable skills that align with practices of context-based engagement. In this chapter, we’ll explore service-learning from core foundational principles and definitions to specific English Studies approaches and course-design concepts.

WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Many research studies have proven the efficacy of service-learning as a high-impact practice. And yet, the term service-learning often means something different for each person. It is important that if you are teaching effective service-learning practices as an instructor that you work with students to construct working definitions of service-learning throughout the course and as it aligns with the discipline. Also be sure to provide students with the combined learning outcomes to be achieved with the practice of service-learning and the discipline. One way to do that is to offer a sampling of service-learning definitions, including the following:

> “As a pedagogy, service learning is education that is grounded in experience as a basis for learning and on the centrality of critical reflection intentionally

designed to enable learning to occur" (Jacoby & Howard, 2015).

"Service-learning combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility to engage students. Service-learning programs involve students in activities that address local needs while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community" (Blinn College).

"Service-learning is a teaching method that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and communities. Young people apply academic skills to solving real-world issues, linking established learning objectives with genuine needs. They lead the process, with adults as partners, applying critical thinking and problem-solving skills to concerns such as hunger, pollution and diversity" (National Youth Leadership Council).

What service-learning is NOT:

While we can help students construct various definitions of service-learning throughout the course, we should help them to also understand the various ways attitudes and practices can actually cause unintentional harm without the proper framework, cultural competencies and student interest. Service-learning is NOT

- taking pity on others
- an internship to boost a resume
- simply volunteering
- an opportunity to show others the "right" way to do things
- proselytizing

(Courtney, 2009)

> If service in the community focuses solely on student-learning rather than community benefits, then students tend to operate in a traditional learning environment where experimentation and failure are encouraged. But communities are not traditional spaces of learning. Students are entering into dynamic and intact worlds within community settings, where experimentation and failure are not encouraged unless already a member of that community. For example, if students enter into communities with a charity mindset, they tend to see communities as needy and spaces of deficit, rather than communities with many positive assets but suffering from unjust systems without ways to fully address those injustices.

I've experienced the difference of community contexts as an instructor when I have created condensed-weekend, direct-service projects with the Homeless Youth Resource Center (YRC) in Salt Lake City. These condensed weekends not only help students schedule their service-learning hours into two weekends but also provide a more immersive experience. Students help out in the center doing various projects one weekend, and then the following weekend they cook and serve

a meal to the youth and eat together in a communal space, as well as help with a donation fund-drive.

Because issues of homelessness—especially with youth—are very complex, we spend weeks in class before the service understanding connections between homelessness and the foster care system, of which many of the YRC clients have merely aged out of. Many of the youth may also identify as LGBTQ or have been abused at or excused from their family homes, all of which suggest localized and national social issues beyond the scope of just youth experiencing homelessness. Juvenile detention centers also come into play, as being a homeless youth is illegal, and many have citations for loitering and trespassing, which they often cannot pay, and they end up in juvenile court or even in juvenile detention centers with a permanent record.

In light of the hardships youth experiencing homelessness face, SLCC students also explore the ways in which these youth are resourceful and motivated. Many of the YRC clients are still in high school and work to navigate a complicated system into stability of education and work despite their current, and hopefully temporary, circumstances. Many are finding ways into the workforce with mentors at the Youth Resource Center, as there were not many mentors in their domestic lives. By the time my SLCC students enter the YRC, they have a sense of understanding and empathy for the clients. They have challenged many of their own stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness and often understand it from their own experiences as young adults.

As an instructor, I also work beside them for a full day to provide the meal and facilitate interaction with the youth during the meal. This side-by-side instructor–student interaction creates a great sense of camaraderie with the students, as well as a space to model respect and to address any questions during and after the shared experience.

On one occasion, however, a student from another course

joined us in our weekends of service. He did not have the previous, context-based understanding my students had, and quickly started to judge the clients of the YRC as lazy drug addicts. He complained to the volunteer coordinator that the YRC needed job training (which is already offered at the YRC). This student did not come with a basis of understanding or any efforts at research or prior reflection as my students had, and his negative experience, without context, only solidified his stereotypes of people experiencing homelessness instead of creating spaces of inquiry in which to address the issue in a broader perspective. This situation also challenged our relationship with the community partner, as this student was not as prepared for the community he was entering, and offended community partners who were used to my own students' knowledge and understanding prior to the service.

CHOICES FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

Regardless of the terms or working definitions you will create with your students, it is important that students have a choice between the kinds of service they can do. Many instructors choose to make service-learning voluntary or as an option to another assignment. Others offer a variety of service options for students who may not be ready to work directly with communities. Forcing students to work in the community could have unintended consequences for those students who may not be prepared or willing to work in the community. Indirect or engaged research projects might help students engage in community-based projects at their own pace and comfort level before entering into direct service later on.

One way to engage students in service-learning is to offer more than just direct service, especially if the student is not

prepared to enter into dynamic and spaces very different from one's own. There are various forms of community service and community-based learning, such as the following:

Direct Service: Working directly with the clients and/or a target population served by a community organization. For example, delivering hot meals to home-bound seniors is a direct service. Mentoring programs or facilitated community writing groups would also be direct service.

Indirect Service: Not directly serving clients or working with the target population served by a community organization but assisting the organization to fulfill their mission in other ways. For instance, building a website or planning the logistics of a charity walk is an indirect service.

Advocacy Work: Active support of an idea or cause, especially the act of pleading or arguing for something typically performed in a political or social justice context. An example might be coordinating a letter-writing campaign to educate the Salt Lake Valley about domestic violence and creating resources for survivors.

Research & Consultation: Using an academic skill set to investigate an issue impacting a community organization and presenting this knowledge in a way that benefits the work of that organization. For example, gathering statistics about Salt Lake children in foster care and presenting research and recommendations to the Salt Lake County Division

of Youth Services or engaging in survey data compilation for the ACLU are projects students can do that perform a service. Or perhaps doing research and creating resource guides, such as an annotated scholarship list for specifically identified populations, such as undocumented or refugee students.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN COMBINING SERVICE AND LEARNING

Theoretical foundations of service-learning are rooted in scholarship dating as far back as John Dewey (*Democracy and Education,* 1916). Over the decades, scholars have created practical guides to service-learning pedagogy and practices. Jean Piage, Kurt Lewin, and David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model provides a clear model based on four elements: 1) concrete experience, 2) observation of and reflection on that experience, 3) formation and synthesis of abstract concepts based upon the reflection, and 4) active experimentation that tests the concepts in new situations (Jacoby & Howard, 2015):

> The model helps students not only learn to identify and engage in issues, but to gain a deeper understanding of root causes of need and potential actions toward problem solving.

While this provides a clear and simple model, service-learning

pedagogy is more complex in terms of helping students understand important concepts, such as reciprocity, implicit bias, and equity-minded practices. A college course that is successful in combining service *and* learning includes the following activities:

1. Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
2. Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
3. Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
4. Allows for those in need to define those needs.
5. Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
6. Matches service providers and service needs.
7. Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
8. Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
9. Ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.
10. Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

(Porter-Honnet & Poulson, 1990)

Notice that this list emphasizes that the work combines service *and* learning, meaning the service cannot be stand-alone, but

connected to the course content and the learning outcomes. This combination is the reason many service-learning practitioners choose to use a hyphen to connect the two. For some, service-learning may not be a broad enough term, and so some instructors use terms such as community-based learning and community-engaged learning as a way to reflect the centrality of community partners to the practice and heighten the sense of reciprocity.

The term service for some may also have negative connotations, such as implying inequality amongst participants, or for some in the African American community who identify the term "service" with involuntary servitude. Providing students choices in how they interact with the community provides new ways of understanding service that is connected to their learning.

SERVICE-LEARNING IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

In the mid to late 1990s in the U.S., service-learning—as both pedagogy and research—became popular in composition and rhetoric studies, because of its beneficial focus on literacy, academic discourse, public writing and social justice issues. This particular focus of service-learning in composition and rhetoric studies is based on Thomas Deans' model for connecting writing to service-learning, which focuses on three ways of literacy engagement: writing *for*, *about* and *with* community. "If the general inclination of members of the discipline is to theorize about writing as a social act, then service-learning is one means by which to underscore and extend this commitment" (Deans, 2000).

For Deans, service-learning affirms many of the theoretical

stances in composition, including writing beyond the classroom, situating writing in both discipline and wider non-academic communities, crossing cultural and class boundaries through collaboration, and connecting writing with pragmatic civic action.

Three models of writing *about*, *for*, or *with* community take on different scaffolding approaches. Students writing *about* community serve in the community and make the subject of assigned essays about that lived experience. Here the student work focuses on addressing an issue in writing, and particularly in their own reflective writings. The experience becomes the content, but the writing is embedded in the course.

Writing *for* the community asks students to collaborate with non-profits to provide writing for a given agency, whether it be newsletters, grant research, or writing for "real-world" situations. The students have to negotiate the needs of the audience and work within the expectations of the non-profit organization. The experience and the writing are based within the community, with both the community partner and instructor engaging in feedback for the writer.

Whereas, writing *with* the community adopts more of a grassroots sensibility, according to Deans. Instead of prescribed forms of writing or working directly with a nonprofit, writing with the community is about broader collaborations with the faculty, students and community members to address local problems. This work values many different literacies and often hybrid literacies and tends to focus on collaborative problem-solving. This might include mentoring a writing group at a senior center or tutoring writing at an after-school program. The student might help organize a Writers' Resist event and participate in that event, as some of my students have done. The point is, the student is also a writer and is contributing writing with those in the community, as well as facilitating spaces for that writing to happen together.

Regardless of the approach students choose, it's important

as instructors that we make sure that if students' writing is to be part of the public sphere and/or a community organization, that those students feel comfortable enough with their writing skills first as to avoid the pressure public writing can have on a new writer. If they are not confident enough to contribute and they receive negative feedback or lack of circulation with their writing in the community, they may struggle with self-esteem with any new writing project. Otherwise, offer choices for indirect service or research, in which the writing stays within the classroom.

HOW SERVICE-LEARNING IN ENGLISH STUDIES COMPARES WITH COMPOSITION STUDIES

The same benefits of service-learning for students in composition and composition studies also apply to students in English Studies. The realms of literary studies and creative writing have often fewer service-learning courses in higher education, which can be historically traced back to the distancing of literary/creative studies with service-learning. Theorists have traced this disconnect back to a traditional disconnect with composition and literary studies. "This reluctance to embrace service learning has its earliest roots in traditional academic debates about the uses of literature" (Grobman & Rosenberg, 2015). This section provides insight in how literary and creative writing studies can also be conduits for engaged community-based inquiry and service.

Service-learning in literary studies:

Threshold concepts of literary studies are often similar to but can be different from composition/rhetoric studies. While both look at how and why certain writing makes impacts with audience identification, purpose, and style, literary studies also looks at the broader ramifications of literature's impact on society and the individual, including literature as a record of the human condition over time.

This type of study is less about the skill of writing and more about critical thinking of not only narrative theory but also critical theory in how literature shapes, as well as offers, voice to cultures and individuals. Literature similarly considers issues and the discourse of ideas, such as how literature can "produce critically, civically, and globally minded college graduates who possess problem-solving and leadership abilities for more socially equitable and sustainable communities as part of healthy, functioning democratic societies" (Cress & Donahue, 2011).

As mentioned, literature has a humanizing impact in that it is often a record of the human condition or mindset of a given time. It is the difference between learning about the history of WWII and then reading Anne Frank's diary or the poetry of Sidney Keys about WWII from an experiential, emotional, and reflective framework. Literature as a discourse addresses critical and often civic awareness. It can often be a transactional discourse used to propel action.

Best Practices for combining service-learning and literary studies include the following:

- Expose students to service-learning scholarship, including the importance of public engagement, citizenship, and social justice.
- Provide students with an awareness of current social problems and systemic injustice as well as the confidence to address these situations through community activism.
- Expose students to critical multiculturalism and the concepts that emanate from it: mainstream and its margins, the importance of listening as well as speaking, respect for difference and diversity.
- Integrate the literary and theoretical content of the course with service-learning placements and activities by providing significant time in class to make connections between their reading and civic-engagement experiences. Group discussion and dialogue through classroom conversation, journal writing, and online discussion boards are vital components of the learning experience.
- Encourage to 'read' both literary and life experiences as part of their textual study and course work, analyzing the ways in which literature does and does not reflect their actual experiences, including the ability of literature to

imagine possibilities for bettering human lives.

- Require reflective writing and other critical-thinking assignments that articulate both connections and dissonances between the reading of literature and service-learning experiences.
- Allow for interdisciplinary research that helps students clarify and make sense of their experiences as literary readers and civic participants.
- Assign course projects or papers that benefit community partners and may include the production of, for example, public writing, research and oral presentations, performances, oral histories, fundraising letters, research grants, Web sites, blogs, and social media productions.

(Grobman & Rosenberg, 2015)

Service-learning and creative nonfiction:

Memoirists and other nonfiction writers almost always face the humble acknowledgement of their limits with point of view and the complexity of truth in autobiographical writing. But within this dynamic is also the complexity of a self-reflexive narrative as

intergenerational or intersectional—something that provides the lens of the human experience with the actual experience. This might include students working with after-school programs to assist children in learning to write journals, or working with hospice memoir programs, or even writing bios for various nonprofit agencies. Students' understanding of personal narrative as action offers a critical approach to the ways stories circulate and make change.

A few ways to scaffold service-learning activities in a creative nonfiction course:

- Design brief autobiographical contexts and texts for students to respond to the service and to prompts. (How does their experience intersect with the community-based experience and their own lives?)
- Create a digital story that relates their intersectional/interconnected experiences to a social justice issue and then made public to address an issue or problem.
- Work with archivists to interview and create archived stories of personal experiences, often within social identities and constructs for the public (e.g., connecting experiences of veterans, refugees, hospice patients, to the issue and their roles in community).
- Work with the Humane Society to create

brief personality bios of pets up for adoption.

One of my most fulfilling community-based nonfiction projects included my service-learning students in partnership with the Community Writing Center (CWC), the Salt Lake City Public Library, and the Sorenson Community Youth Center. The director of the Sorenson Center wanted to help bring voices together within and about the Glendale community in an online project titled One-City that would be featured in the Salt Lake Public Library publications and archives.

My service-learning students participated by facilitating interviews with senior citizens paired with high-school students from the community. My students created the prompts and facilitated the one-on-one interactions. As the high school students and seniors interviewed each other, they were prompted to share stories of their communities with each other, which resulted in a rich tapestry of different experiences over time and space, and community adversity, as well as communities of resilience.

My service-learning students, with the help of CWC Writing Assistants, then facilitated a writing workshop to help the seniors and youth members write stories of their communities and what they had learned from each other. The students also contributed their reflections about what they might learn about their own communities through this process. The work was published in an online anthology and shared through the Salt Lake Public Library online connections.

It was an engaging, semester-long project that involved the students' creative nonfiction writing and

mentoring experiences *with* the community's personal writing experiences for an online anthology. It also fostered strong relationships with the seniors and the teens in that community that lasted well beyond the project (including weekly Nintendo Wii bowling tournaments with the local teens and seniors).

Service-learning, creative writing, cultural studies, and social justice:

Service-learning in creative writing does not, and maybe should not, always be about the personal. As mentioned in the literary studies section, the power of words is immense, whether they be firsthand or fictional. Some of the best social-justice writers were those of science fiction, imagining utopian or dystopian worlds that remind us of actions on the social fabric of our lives.

While the creation of creative works such as poetry and fiction can come from service experiences, students can also engage others to have such a voice, such as with group community readings, writing groups, or writing-for-change activities to legislatures, etc. This type of service is best done in groups. "Discussions moving between literature and the students' experiences with community members create an environment of deep reflection, cognitive dissonance, and empathy that can lead to transformation" (Grobman Rosenberg 191).

CREATING CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

While service-learning can be an engaging force in creating student empathy and understanding of diverse cultures and life experiences, it also has the limitation of reinforcing privilege if not handled with care. "The meaningful practice of cultural competence must be incorporated at every level of the service-learning course planning and implementation process" (Engaged Faculty Institute, 2015).

As instructors, we need to help students become more culturally competent by the following measures outlined by the Engaged Faculty Institute, which is a service-learning training program developed in collaboration with Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, Campus Compact for the Mountain West, and California Campus Compact.

Students can gain the necessary skills and knowledge to be culturally competent through service-learning experiences via the following activities:

- learning more about other cultures and understanding their values, beliefs and practices
- discussing the meaning of cultural competence
- discussing the roles that poverty and education play in the community and identify creative strategies for reducing poverty and increasing education through community service activities

- participating in required and extra-curricular courses to learn more about the needs of racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the community
- taking a proactive stance to learning more about being a culturally competent professional
- inviting speakers from different cultures and backgrounds to present to campus student groups focused on issues related to culture, diversity and disparities

(Engaged Faculty Institute, 2015)

Without proper student understanding and preparation for diverse and often very complex experiences, students may unintentionally reinforce biases instead of being open to challenging them. Cultural competency training can help students to identify issues of privilege, difference, and implicit bias.

A recent case study, "Crossing the Color Line into America's Prisons: Volunteers of Color Reflect on Race and Identity in a College Service-Learning Project" (Tilton 2015), explores a group of primarily white service-learning students who worked within a juvenile incarceration system of primarily people of color. Without proper frameworks and understanding about equity, diversity and inclusivity concepts, some students easily developed an unintentional framework of privilege and "right" ways based on bias that established for them their service as hierarchical and based in concepts of charity. Other students in the study from non-privileged backgrounds saw themselves alike those incarcerated, and thereby felt inferior or not bonded

with the college students of privilege but more with those of minority populations behind bars. “Volunteers in a wide range of community service projects often see these kinds of stark racial and class contrasts, but they struggle to understand how exactly race matters in an ostensibly colorblind era, when racial boundaries are both more porous and flexible than in the Jim Crow era” (Tilton, 2015).

If students understand initial impacts of their service, they can also negotiate how their involvement in communities matters in different ways. As an instructor, I make very clear with my students that their service is not solving issues of juvenile incarceration or homelessness or communities divided, etc. Instead, their service offers a temporary community benefit but also provides them, the students, with a deeper, first-hand understanding of larger issues that involve more complex and analytical involvement and collaborations for their future interactions, inquiries, and social activism.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY–CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

Instructors and/or students working early on with community partners in the development phases of the partnerships can help to create an understanding of dynamic communities, which may be a stark contrast from some students’ own lived experiences. For students new to service-learning or volunteering, instructors should be involved in establishing community partnerships and incorporate such into the classroom experience early on before students enter into community settings. This might include classroom visits from community partners to discuss their organization and the service projects. Students experienced in volunteering or

service-learning may already have skills to establish a community partnership. Either way, establishing some guiding principles for creating community partnerships can help. As per the national Engaged Faculty Institute (EFI), best practices for developing sustainable community partnerships include the following:

1. The partnership forms to serve a specific purpose and my take on new goals over time.
2. The partnership agrees upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and processes for accountability.
3. The relationship between partners in the partnership is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
4. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
5. The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority in the partnership by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests and developing a common language.
7. Principals and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
8. There is feedback among all stakeholders in

the partnership's accomplishments.

9. Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments.
10. Partnerships can dissolve, and when they do, need to plan a process for closure.
11. Partnerships consider the nature of the environment within which they exist as a principle of the design, evaluation, and sustainability.
12. The partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.

(Engaged Faculty Institute, 2015)

It is important to note that not all community partners have the capacity to be as involved as others. Some community partners may be removed from direct contact with the students and rely on part-time and often rotating volunteer coordinators. In some of those cases, it is important the instructor has an active role if needed. SLCC's service-learning meet-and-greets, the Engaged Faculty Institute, and activities through the Thayne Center are excellent ways for instructors to meet current SLCC community partners and establish ways to create new partnerships.

Instructor involvement may happen not just in establishing a community partnership, but sometimes as a way to model activity in the community. My involvement with one particular project really helped students to gain confidence to do the project without much of my time needed. The Burrito Project is an SLC community project in collaboration with Rico Brand foods to help feed the hungry and homeless in downtown SLC. The project includes volunteers making burritos in the

Rico Goods kitchen and then personally delivering to people experiencing homelessness on the streets or anyone in need of a burrito in downtown routes.

While students needed to do this on a weekly basis to fulfill their 15 hours of service, many were not sure at first if they were prepared to deliver burritos face-to-face in these particular areas. So, I chose to go with students for the first delivery. As I modeled how one might offer burritos to those in our routes, students began to feel more comfortable. They discovered the process was not as scary, and in fact found recipients to be very grateful and kind. In doing so, students were able to challenge and move beyond their initial assumptions and stereotypes. Being able to talk with me, the instructor, as we walked and delivered food, also helped to set students' minds at ease. Students then continued their service in pairs and with more confidence for the duration of the project. We continued to have conversations from shared experiences in the classroom. That shared context engaged students even more in their class participation and later in their reflections.

DESIGNING COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Demonstrating evidence of student learning is imperative in all teaching, but it is equally important instructors clearly identify "service" and "learning objectives" first thing in the course. If students see these two as separate, then they don't have the important and critical skill of connecting critical learning to community and global issues. According to the EFI, "Course objectives should be clearly identified as learning and service objectives and prioritized and selected according to the

interests of the partnership rather than the individual parties involved" (Engaged Faculty Institute, 2015).

Key terms for designing objectives and outcomes:

> **Educational Outcomes**: Educational outcomes provide evidence showing the degree to which program purposes and objectives are or are not being attained, including achievement of appropriate skills and competencies by students.
>
> **Learning Objectives**: The learning objectives describe the outcome competencies learners should acquire or achieve as a result of the course or curriculum. They also help provide a 'road map' for planning course instruction and define standards and criteria.
>
> **Competencies**: Competencies are the set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are necessary for effective practice in a particular field or profession.
>
> (Engaged Faculty Institute, 2015)

In beginning the process of designing your course with solid learning objectives, review competencies from your discipline and then engage community partners on their ideas for student learning with their organization, so the two align. Establish learning and service objectives for the course. And most importantly, identify the competencies your students will need to demonstrate following the course. Will the students be expected to develop skills for interdisciplinary collaboration or focus on community-based research? The tasks the students are expected to perform should be appropriate, given the

community setting and the expectations of members of the community.

Furthermore, both sets of objectives should progress from actions that are clearly measurable and demonstrable. A learning objective would be for students to be able to describe aspects of rhetorical situations including purpose, audience, and context. A service objective would be for students to be able to develop a brochure for a community partner in the language of the target community.

PLANNING COURSE INSTRUCTION AND ACTIVITIES

As instructors, our focus is almost always on the immediate impact of our teaching on students. Service-learning is different, in that there has to be a mutual benefit and reciprocity of engagement to avoid the "charity" and "privilege-helping" attitudes that often come with the "savior-model" of service. Point is, this work must be within a framework of collaboration and reciprocity.

One way to ensure key activities and interests is to provide a syllabus with an opportunity of expectations that also clarify the role that service-learning can play in the overall educational process. It should also be understood that the course is part of a complex and multi-faceted goal system (engaged scholars or other social justice programs) that sets them apart from traditional courses. With such mentioned, these courses should be designated as "SL-Service-Learning courses" so students understand the expectations.

CRITICAL REFLECTION FOR SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES

Critical reflection activities are most affective when they are connected to learning outcomes and objectives. This may sound easier than it seems and requires critical reflection of the instructor to make sure learning outcomes connecting service-learning course content are thoroughly connected to the course content. Early in the course, concepts of critical reflection need to be introduced and practiced in the classroom. Instructors should make sure to also design a reflection strategy that is integrated throughout the course and service experiences to achieve the learning outcomes. These critical actions early in the design of the course will ensure more opportunities for student success.

How do we help students engage in this type of experiential learning, while also engaging in processes of analysis? Critical reflection becomes the bridge that engages course content and learning objectives with the community-based experience and the students' own lived experiences outside of school. It is the "critical" element of service-learning.

Critical reflection, then, is a sort of reverse-design perspective, meaning the goal is for students to have knowledge at all steps, and not just at the end. Four general categories of reflection formats or mediums:

1. *Speaking*, or oral reflection;
2. *Writing*, or writing that takes form as journals, problem-analysis case studies, essays, theory-to-practice papers, press-releases,

drafting legislation, and letters to elected officials, editors, or reflection in both curricular and co-curricular experiences;

3. *Activities*, which include anything from classroom role play to teamwork activities exploring experience with the issues at hand; and
4. *Artistic creation*, which could include media design, collective collages, art, poetry or any creative medium in which a student can express themselves about what they've learned, and often to either broad or specific audiences beyond the instructor.

(Jacoby & Howard, 2015)

Considerations for designing a reflection survey:

1. What learning outcomes do you want to achieve through reflection?
2. When and how often will refection occur? Will it be at regular intervals, for example, weekly or biweekly?
3. Will students reflect iteratively so that reflection becomes a habit and builds upon itself over the course of the semester?
4. Where will reflection occur? Inside or outside the classroom? At a service-site? ...

5. Who will facilitate the reflection? Will the faculty member join in? Community organization staff or clients? All?
6. Through what medium or mediums will reflection occur? Speaking, writing, activities, media?
7. Will students reflect individually, in small groups, as a group of the whole, through a combination of these?
8. What prompts will guide reflection?
9. How will you know whether students achieve your desired learning outcomes?

(Jacoby & Howard, 2015)

DESIGNING ASSESSMENTS, EVALUATIONS, AND IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Assessment, or the tools and/or methods that educators use to evaluate learning, can occur in multiple ways and at multiples levels of learning, especially in terms of service-learning.

> Assessment of service-learning enables its practitioners, participants, supporters, advocates, and funders to gain an understanding of its value to students, faculty,

> community leaders and members, the institution, and to higher education and society. (Jacoby & Howard, 2015)

Terms included in many types of assessments involve "counting" (numbers of participants, organizations and programs); "evaluation" (measures of effectiveness); "benchmarking" (comparisons with other programs or other institutions) and "outcomes assessment" (measures of desired outcomes).

Examples of types of assessments in English and Composition Studies can include achievement testing, content analysis of student work, interviews with not only students but community partners, community focus groups, observation, and case studies. In my courses, assessment takes on a variety of approaches, depending on the course. I almost always ask students keep a service-learning journal that is staged with prompts prior to, during, and after service. This helps them to see how their own perceptions may have changed through various experiences, as well as address cultural competency issues, while also showing progress as to their understanding of being an engaged citizen.

Good assessments involve multiple stakeholders. As an instructor, be sure to have important early community partner conversations about outcomes each seek, as well as the institution's learning outcomes. "It is also worthwhile for the partners to discuss what information is easiest to collect that would be useful in assessing the extent to which community outcomes were achieved" (Jacoby & Howard, 2015). For community partners, I ask the desired change they need within their organization, as well as the community. Perhaps it is a counting assessment based on more community members served because there were more service-learning students. Or maybe it is project-based with the completion of a task or product the student produces. For some community partners, it might be more evaluative of the quality of community

member experiences, which is often shared in the form of surveys.

One of the challenges to creating good assessments is designing the accessibility and appropriateness of service-learning for all students, including students of all races, ethnicities, social classes, ability levels, religions, ages, sexual orientations, etc. As educators, we must respect and support current realities students bring to service-learning. Some students may not be able to let go of long-held or family-based prejudices, which can create a belief in their own superiority over others in community settings. Recognizing that students are able participants in their own development means that we must anticipate a student's relationships with difference. "This includes facing the fact that some white students have never before been asked to examine their own racial identities and privileges or to confront their stereotypes" (Jacoby & Howard, 2015). Creating non-threatening reflection assessments related to issues of difference can help students navigate their perceptions in relation to the experiences.

CONCLUSION

Educating students for social responsibility and ethical citizenry cannot be taught from a textbook. Our local, national and global communities face a growing number of divisive and complex problems. Service-learning can prepare students to be more socially responsible citizens and leaders, and it can also help them to contribute to democratic engagement and intercultural competencies to solve profound problems through critical thinking, effective teamwork, and an understanding of how communities function.

As such, service-learning requires initial and concrete

planning that incorporates students' experiential learning to the discipline-specific learning and even more importantly to a deep analytical and empathetic understanding of the communities in which they serve. For studies in English, Linguistics, Cultural, and Writing Studies, students must be immersed in the studies of what it means to write *about*, *with*, and *for* diverse and dynamic communities, while also replacing deficit-thinking about communities with asset-based understandings.

Service-learning can also be a tool to help students develop a global perspective through local service-learning. Whether it is working with immigrant communities or with a local non-profit working to solve global issues, students can gain a transformative education as to the intersectionality of local, national, and global issues.

Personal transformation through service-learning is a result of more engaged students and instructors. Instead of education as an often passive transactional experience of information, students, community partners, and instructors alike are actively engaged in dynamic ways of approaching problems and diverse community cultures through teamwork, critical thinking and communication. This form of collaboration builds bridges toward empathy and the unique assets of all involved, as well as creates personal bonds for students and makes boundaries between college and communities more permeable.

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90. Code-Switching in the Digital Age: “Text Speak” in Academic Writing

A self-study might allow students to better understand how social media and digital technology has influenced the many facets of communication in their life and work.

DANIELLE SUSI-DITTMORE

If you close your eyes, you might still be able to hear the gurgling beeps and honks of a dial-up Internet connection. Or maybe the gentle buzzing and ping of a notification on your iPhone feels more familiar. Since the 1980s, the invention of the Internet has quickly evolved into home computers, social networks, and personal mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

The Digital Revolution, characterized by an increased use of the Internet for purposes unrelated to academic research and the emergence of computers for everyday use has, like many revolutions, taken a turn toward the alteration of social and intellectual behavior. While this revolution has offered increased connectivity and access to websites enabling intellectual thought, it has also deeply altered the way human beings read and write. We have become so accustomed to communicating with one another via our cell phones, “you”

becomes u, “to be honest” turns into tbh—lmk, brb, lol. Even “too long; didn’t read” is initialized to tl;dr.

Coming of age surrounded by any sort of technology directly affects the persona and psyche of an individual. Millennials and Gen-Xers have grown up in a world in which so much communication is done in a kind of digital shorthand and abbreviation, and some of that shorthand has begun to sneak into academic assignments.

While all language is real and viable, the expectations of some instructors for students to use more formal academic language in their assignments may require students to “code-switch.” Code-switching is the back and forth that occurs when a speaker (or writer, in this case) must alter their language to fit the context and situation they are in. You may recognize this as being common for those who are multi-lingual and who may speak one language at home and another at school or work. This kind of code-switching, which can be important for academic success based on an instructor’s requirements, can also apply to job resumes and cover letters, as well as emails to colleagues and co-workers.

Susan Maushart’s *The Winter of Our Disconnect* dives into the terms “Digital Natives” and “Digital Immigrants.” Those who were “born into” the digital revolution and the era of email and Facebook are considered Digital Natives, and those who are of an older generation are called Digital Immigrants because they are transplants in a world seemingly built around digital media. Maushart states that Digital Natives “are no more frightened by new media than they are by a new pair of running shoes. They just jump right in and start sprinting” (50).

The ages of college students vary significantly, especially at a community college, but many new students are primarily Digital Natives. In their day-to-day lives, students may be using the Internet mostly for entertainment rather than research, and the negative effect it has on academic writing could be critical if students do not become aware of their own habits

when crossing between social and scholarly writing. This is not to say that social media–centric writing cannot be intellectual. In fact, despite how "productive" these virtual conversations may or may not be, we often engage in stimulating conversations about social issues more on social media than in "real life." However—for the time being, and in many classrooms—abbreviations, poor grammar and spelling, and the use of "text speak" are not considered acceptable within assignments.

While students currently have the most information Internet users have ever had access to, a failure to code-switch can also make them seem less academically driven in their essays or other academic assignments—despite having the knowledge and skill to complete the assignment. When students are able to perform a self-study of their own writing, then they are able to identify how they must cognitively switch between "text speak" and what is traditionally known in Western cultures as "academic writing." Of course, we need to take great care in how we measure intelligence and capability. And because it is community, family, and education that molds our style of speaking and writing, we must also acknowledge the classist implications of assuming all student writers understand Western approaches to academic writing. This applies to the instructor's understanding of their own Westernized expectations, but also to students during peer review and discussion.

As students likely already know, and will be reminded of again and again in their English courses, language and writing are resources we use to do, make, and be things in the world. In a self-study of their own writing, students can research and analyze their many writing practices (social, professional, academic, etc) with the goal of reaching critical insight about how they use language and writing resourcefully in multiple aspects of their life. The self-study asks students to use "field research" to collect information, or data, that they will examine

to discover interesting ideas about their varied writing practices in a particular writing situation. For example, to compare and contrast their writing styles from particular situations, a student could use text messages to friends, an email to a co-worker, and a research paper they felt was successful. The self-study's primary purpose is to raise awareness of and think critically about the work a student's writing does for them and for their intended audiences, ideally garnering a better understanding of academic expectations.

Self-Study Sample Assignment

1. Select at least three writing samples from different parts of your life.

- For example, maybe one is a text to a friend, one is a journal assignment from a class, and one is an email to your boss.

2. Create an analysis of yourself as a writer.

- This analysis will be layered and multi-faceted. Your analysis should illustrate key points about how you use, or have used, writing and language as resources in your life. You will develop content for your analysis by studying the three writing samples you've produced and producing other samples throughout the research process. Producing other samples of writing within the same genre will allow you to examine how you might use the same method of communication

for different audiences and how the style of writing may shift. For example, more text messages but to your co-workers or spouse instead of a friend.

    - You might look at how you portray your identity in your writing sample based on purpose or audience.
    - You might look at your process more closely when writing in a particular genre and talk about how that process shapes the features of the writing samples.
    - You might look at common features or "moves" you make in your writing and think about how they are unique to the purposes and audiences you are writing for.

3. Reflect on the process of creating this analysis.

- What insights have you gained about your writing practices from doing the project?
- How did it challenge you as a writer?
- How did you respond?
- How can you use what you've learned in future writing situations?

A self-study might allow students to better understand how social media and digital technology has influenced the many facets of communication in their life and work. It may also lead them to the conclusion that "text speak" and other digitally-influenced language may have a place in the classroom—a place in which it can be scrutinized and analyzed so that

students may discover their own writing abilities, habits, and interests.

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91. Rhetorical Storytelling in the Classroom

BERNICE OLIVAS

- Background
- The Lesson Plan
    - Part I: The Handout
    - Part II: Making the Rhetorical Situation Transparent
    - Part III: Narrative Strategies
- Conclusion

In the fall of 2019, I found myself frustrated by trying to teach a short narrative section in my rhetoric and research class. I was struggling to connect, in my own mind, the narrative unit to the rest of what I was teaching. Worse, I had completely failed to connect this short unit on storytelling to the study of rhetorical arguments and researched essays. I had been mulling over it for some time when I received an email from the writing center reminding us that we would see several scholarship applications soon. Then it clicked.

BACKGROUND

In my past life, I was a student emerging from poverty, working too hard, too long, and running from a "rough" life where abuse, tragedy, and trauma were normalized and education was a flimsy lifeline; I was a student who understood that failing meant a lifetime of "rough." In that past life, I learned that storytelling was one of the most powerful survival tools I had. It was the tool that helped me find money, resources, information, and support.

I learned this as a Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program Scholar (The McNair Scholars Program), which is a federal TRIO Program. TRIO refers to variety of federally funded outreach and support programs that create access to higher education for underrepresented populations. The McNair Scholars Program is a two-year program that prepares students to apply to graduate programs in academic fields. We focus on writing and research as well as socialization and emotional intelligence. McNair taught me to control my own narrative so that it benefited me. Two years after graduating from the program and starting a PhD program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I returned to Boise State in the summer as a writing consultant. After graduation I worked with the program full-time for two years.

As a McNair writing consultant, I had taught several generations of scholars to use story in the same way, starting with teaching them to write engaging, thoughtful statements of purpose that used a combination of narration and exposition to help grab their audience's attention. I taught my scholars to be "the girl who had to stitch her own leg in a skiing accident" instead of the student who "wanted to study human anatomy since high school" to a graduate school search committee.

We discussed and demystified the inherent inequitable reality of how college is funded, explained that most of the time

the search committee would be made up of well-meaning folks whose privilege made it hard for them to see past the things an academia built for white middle- and upper-class students rendered important, things they decided showed potential. I taught them that the humanity that connects all of us shares a common truth—people love a good story. Tell it right and the search committee will remember the "boy who slept in his car for two years because it was the only way he could afford to be part of the Robotics Club" despite his less than perfect GPA and GRE score. Tell it right and they will want to meet the "boy who dumpster dived to build his robot" even though his CV lacked internships and conferences. Tell it right and they want to fund "the boy who won that competition with his trash-robot."

Why not lean into what I was good at? I would teach my students that narrative, exposition, and audience awareness can be the key to getting exactly what they want. I would use real-world, *important shit*—money—to show them how to read a rhetorical situation and use their growing rhetorical skills. The assignment, under all the outcomes and academic language, would be simple. The students would try to meet their purpose—getting paid—by figuring out what the audience wanted—a reason to believe that if they gave this student the scholarship, this student would do something with it, this student would finish their program; this student would win—and give it to them.

The goal of the unit would be two fold. First, I would show my students that writing is important to them, that it can have a real impact on their real world. We would write the scholarship essay; I would show them or walk them through the process of writing for a scholarship essay. We would go through each step. We would locate SLCC's scholarship applications, analyze the rhetorical situation, create a timeline and plan, write emails for recommendation letters, workshop the scholarship essays, and apply for the scholarship. Just as importantly, I would connect this assignment directly to learning narration and exposition.

This unit would directly connect the strategies they were learning—to tell a story with real-world consequences for the purpose of winning a scholarship, which is real in a way that the possibility of publishing or doing a reading just isn't. A scholarship is money in the hand; it is being paid for their story. I wanted them to see that being able to tell a story rhetorically and get what they want from the audience is a marketable skill.

Would this unit be about all the higher ideals we embrace and try to pass on to our students? Would it teach habits of the mind, give them a deeper understanding of humanity, teach them to love the complex beauty of rhetoric? Nah, this unit would offer my students one of the survival skills of being a BIPOC, immigrant, refugee, working class, poor, undocumented, or first generation in academia. It would teach them how to craft a narrative about themselves that doesn't showcase their poverty, their pain, or their trauma as the reason they deserve support. It would show them how to write a narrative that didn't turn them into inspiration porn for the scholarship committee. Instead, they would learn to write a narrative that invited the reader to see their strength, their power, their grit. Take the boy in robotics club: his narrative didn't focus on why he was homeless or where his parents were, instead it spent two paragraphs talking about the local auto parts dealer who saw what he was doing, offered help, equipment, and parts because that is how the people in their community supported each other.

THE LESSON PLAN

As I developed this lesson plan, I knew I needed to focus on three things:

1. explaining to the students how to shape a rhetorical story—that is, a story with a very specific end goal
2. making the rhetorical situation transparent to the students
3. teaching strategies for writing good narratives

Part 1. The Handout

I created the following handout for my students. I called this "The Everyday Writing Task" because, as students, filling out applications for funding is something they will do often. It will be a normal task for them until they graduate. Then we spent a day in class discussing the scholarships, explaining the process, and looking up where the money was coming from. We all created an account and signed in.

The Everyday Writing Task

PURPOSE

To provide experience:

1. exploring a variety of rhetorical choices, including creative, reflective, and expressive writing
2. developing a complex, multifaceted exploration of an important everyday writing

task
3. practicing critical thinking, interpreting, and extrapolating about how to write for a specific audience

Writing is a part of our day-to-day lives. As college students, you are expected to write about yourselves—that is, to narrate your own stories. The most typical example of this kind of writing is the scholarship essay or statement of purpose. In many ways, this is a strange genre that asks the writer to make a lot of complex choices. In this essay, we will complete an everyday writing task from start to finish and then reflect on the experience.

Salt Lake Community Community College has over 120 privately funded scholarships and many tuition waiver opportunities that represent over a million dollars in assistance for SLCC students each year. Scholarships are available for all students, and applications are free. Each semester, we have thousands of dollars in scholarship funding that goes un-awarded due to low or no student applications.

For this assignment we will complete this writing task from start to finish. It will require a variety of thinking and writing tasks. For example, we will analyze the rhetoric of the application to better understand what our audience is looking for, we will research the

scholarships offered to better understand that audience, we will write narratives in our essays, we will work together to craft emails for letters of recommendation.

WORK/POINTS BREAKDOWN

– Peer Review Draft = 50pts
– Final Draft = 100pts
– Extra Credit = 25pts if you submit the application on time

ESSAY OVERVIEW

Please read the following background information BEFORE you start writing. This is the application given to all students—therefore it is also our assignment handout. Please read it carefully. SLCC Scholarships and Tuition Waivers

1. Read the document carefully.
2. Create a schedule to meet the deadline.
3. Make a list of the various tasks you need to complete.
4. Begin brainstorming your essays.

This project will include the following tasks:

– brainstorming a narrative about yourself that will help fix you in the audience's mind

– creating a list of details that will help the audience get to know you
– asking for a recommendation letter
– drafting 4 mini essays
– peer reviewing and editing

FINAL DRAFT REQUIREMENTS

Application meets the expectations of the scholarship program.

Part Two: Making the Rhetorical Situation Transparent

Rhetorical storytelling is a fancy way of referring to a story that is told to persuade a certain action. Among the Pueblo tribes there are teaching stories that are told the exact same way every time because the goal is for the children to memorize the story and the structure. Tribe members can start the story and have others chime in with the exact same wording, rhythm, and emphasis. We see rhetorical storytelling when politicians tell stories in a congress—they are using the story to persuade others to vote a specific way.

To teach the concept and process of rhetorical storytelling, I began by drawing the rhetorical triangle on the board and asking the students to think about who the audience was,

what they wanted and how best to give it to them. Through guided discussion, we ended up with the following on the board:

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

– situation = scholarship opportunity
– writer's purpose = get money via scholarship
– reader's purpose = decide who deserves the money

WHAT DOES THAT TELL US?

What does the writer need to do?

The writer needs to be memorable. The writer needs to be honest. The writer needs to balance pathos and ethos. The writer needs to persuade the reader that they will use the money to finish college. The writer should use Standard Academic English unless they feel a different English will have a stronger impact. The writer needs to stay organized. The writer needs to answer all parts of the application. The writer needs to do everything on time.

Who is the reader? And what do we think the reader really wants?

The reader is faculty, the reader is most likely not working class, the reader is not being paid

extra to do this, wants a human connection. The reader wants to be assured that if they give the scholarship, the student will finish college.

What clues does the situation give us?

There are clichés and tropes we want to avoid. We are one of many so memorable is more important that perfectly matched to the scholarship, the reader is going to be reading a lot of these, the reader wants to help but may not understand the writer's lived experiences, this is a document where mechanics are critically important.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

What should the application essay include?

– a personal narrative that connects directly to the writer's clearly defined goals
– a personal narrative that helps the reader understand the writer's determination
– an explicit statement of how the scholarship will help the writer finish their program

Part Three: Narrative Strategies

From here I focused on teaching different strategies for writing narrative. I provided examples of short essays that were created to persuade readers toward a certain action. We brainstormed, drafted, revised, workshopped. During this process, I used my own experience as an example and I kept asking questions about how the student was meeting the purpose of this—how does this convince the reader that you will finish your program? How will this show your reader that you have really considered your goals?

For example, one early homework assignment was this:

Brainstorming Stories

The application essay asks you to do the following:

1. Outline your academic/career goals and what made you decide to pursue these goals (150–300 words).

2. Describe three qualities you posses and how they will help you enhance your education & succeed in college (150–300 words).

3. Summarize one educational obstacle you have encountered, how you overcame it, and what you learned through that experience (150–300 words).

Please decide on three stories you might tell to help you meet these tasks. For example:

1. In my first-year college writing course I realized that a lot of smart, competent first-generation writers were struggling, and I wanted to better understand why. Throughout my academic career I have continued to be fascinated by this problem which led me to becoming a writing teacher.

*

2. I am curious, determined, and open to constructive criticism. For example, in graduate school I took a fiction class with a very well-known writer. At this point in my writing life, I had always been praised by my fiction professors; this one, however, was brutal. After my first story, I thought about giving up but then I made myself do the revisions she asked for and a beautiful thing happened—my story changed and grew into the story I wanted but hadn't been able to reach. I went on to take three more classes with this professor. She gave me an A- in each of them—the lowest grades I ever received in grad school—but it was worth it.

*

3. When I was in first grade, I was left-handed; my parents, fearing this meant I would suffer from learning disabilities, decide to make me write with my right hand …

This is an example from a student who received $4,000 in scholarship money with her essay:

SLCC Awards and Tuition Waiver Application Essays

Q1: Outline your academic/career goals and what made you decide to pursue these goals (150–300 words).

My academic goal is to get my associate degree in science at Salt Lake Community College and then transfer to the University of Utah to complete my bachelor's degree. My interest in science started with my brother. He is a fantastic veterinarian and always shows me things that would make me curious in learning more about it.

*

The second person who impacted my career goals was my biology high school teacher that showed me how biology connects everything that we know. After having two years of classes with him, I decided that I would be a researcher and a teacher.

*

I want to be a researcher in the biology field, related to climate change, wildlife conservation, human illnesses, or sustainability. I want to be in the research field because I want to help the

planet in some way. Aiming for a career that needs to be continuously updated information- and technique-wise, I will always be learning.

*

My second goal in my career is to be a biology teacher. I want to teach because I will be helping people to grow and understand a subject that students fear most of the time. On top of that, I can share all the knowledge I have gained throughout my years of studying, and I hope to bring awareness to environmental issues.

Q2: Describe three qualities you possess and how they will help you enhance your education & succeed in college (150–300 words).

I would say that I am determined. When I have an objective in my mind, I will do everything I can to reach it. Determination is key to keep me studying so I can achieve my personal goals. When I was about eleven years old, I decided to try to draw, and it was a disaster as everyone when learning a new skill. I was frustrated in the beginning, but I keep practicing, drawing simple things, and failing. I never gave up, and now I can finally say that I learned how to draw.

*

I am an analytical person. I like to understand

how things work and why they work that way. This skill is essential when researching because you must analyze each step of your experiment and conclusion. The last one is my leadership skills. I can lead a group to our goals in a way that, in the end, we reached our goal with an outstanding result. Having this ability, I could help people that were struggling with a subject, and together, we achieved a better outcome.

Q3: Summarize one educational obstacle you have encountered, how you overcame it, and what you learned through that experience (150–300 words).

English is not my first language but studying outside of my country was always a dream. Starting in SLCC, I thought that English would be the hardest part for me, that I would not be able to understand the teachers and my colleagues. However, after a summer term in SLCC, I realized that English was not a barrier to my success. My main obstacle was talking to people, talking to colleagues and teachers. I was shy, and in the first month, this trait was holding me back.

*

The one thing that made me realize how shyness was an obstacle and how it was preventing me from being the best that I could be was in the communication class here at

SLCC. To be more specific, a project that we analyzed ourselves, and by the end of it, I could see that being shy was taking opportunities away from me. Since that day, I have been working on being a more open and talkative person, and I am improving every day. Working on that trait, I achieved better grades and made many friends.

Q4: Address any special personal or family circumstances impacting your need for financial assistance (150–300 words).

Until August of 2018, I was going to apply for a public university in Brazil, but my father was transferred, and everything changed. One of the most significant changes was that we needed to pay for college. However, we did not save any money for college or university, because in Brazil, most of them are free. We are paying rent now, which is an extra expense from what we had before. I have a younger sister that is now in high school, but soon she will be applying to university, and we have to save money for her tuition too.

*

After thinking about all those expenses, we are starting to realize that we will have difficulties paying my tuition. Because of that situation, I am taking precautions and applying for

scholarships so I can make sure that I will be able to keep up with my studies and finish my associate degree in SLCC.

CONCLUSION

Looking back now, I realize that so much of teaching comes from drawing on our own experiences, on our strengths, and on being empathizing with our students. I was struggling because I was not connecting the assignments to any of those things. Once I stopped to think about my experience, about what I care most about, and what my students really need, I was able to create an assignment that worked for me and them. This assignment will continue to remind me that no matter what concepts or content I am teaching, if I make the effort, I can offer it to the students in a way that connects to their lives. I can show them how the things I love—reading, writing, and rhetoric—are important in real, lived-experience ways.

92. Adapting to the Situation: A Rhetorical Approach to Teaching ESL Writing

ANN FILLMORE

- Standard American English: Whose Standard Is It Anyway?
- What Does It Mean to Teach Writing Rhetorically?
- Understanding the Purpose
- Understanding the Audience
- Understanding the Context
- Understanding Genre

This article is written for ESL teachers who, like me, had traditional, grammar-based training in second language acquisition and pedagogy.

Like many others trained in TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language), my graduate studies focused on the four skills of language acquisition: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Grammar was highly prioritized in the program, and I learned how to plan lessons based around particular linguistic elements, like plurals, phrasal verbs, and non-count nouns. I completed over one hundred hours of student teaching in

various classrooms using this approach, and when I finally earned my degree, I felt confident and prepared to teach ESL.

After a few years teaching as an adjunct professor, I landed a tenure-track position in the English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies department at a college in Salt Lake City. I was only one of a handful of faculty with an ESL background, as the majority were English majors. It was there that I learned a very important lesson: English majors are taught how to teach writing in a totally different manner than TESOL majors. They rely on rhetoric, rather than grammar, to guide students, rather than dictate, how to use language in order to get things done in the world. The difference in disciplinary pedagogy led me to entirely rethink my philosophy of teaching.

It wasn't only me; many of my students have had similar experiences with this methodological shift when transitioning from ESL to college-level "Freshman Comp" courses. We are all familiar with the stereotype of an English teacher marking mistakes on an essay with a red pen. Unfortunately, this is how many students have been taught in the past. In fact, every semester, I have students inquire about grammar when they enroll in my writing classes. And, I've noticed this is especially true for ELLs (English Language Learners.) It's not hard to imagine why this happens because proper grammar is emphasized in academic work. Don't get me wrong; understanding a language's grammar rules *is* important. However, too much focus can become problematic for ESL students as they advance in their studies.

STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH: WHOSE STANDARD IS IT ANYWAY?

We rarely stop to consider who standardized our language. As

stated by Curzan and Adams in their book, *How English Works: A Linguistic Introduction*:

> Throughout our schooling, we have been sent to dictionaries, grammar books, and style guides in order to learn "the rules" for the written language, but who are the people empowered to write these books? Why do they assume authority over English, and why do we cede authority to them? (34)

As a professor and scholar, I have an understanding of how power and politics play a role in the standardization of any language. However, as a new teacher, I taught Standard English as the only acceptable form of writing without giving it much thought. My rationale was something like "This is how I learned, so it must be an effective way for everyone to learn." After all, I loved grammar. I earned an A in almost every English class I took from elementary through graduate school. For me, grammar was English.

But, grammar isn't everything. I remember the time a frustrated student confessed to me, "Only *you* can understand my English. No one else understands me. A child in my building asked me why I speak and write like his grandfather." I recognized my student's frustration and confessed that I had also experienced the same thing as an international student in Mexico. The proper Spanish I learned in class only got me so far in "regular life" situations, and I often felt embarrassed because of it.

It was after this and other similar conversations that I realized my old school-teaching approach led students to believe that grammar was the most important aspect of their learning, which unfortunately led to the misconception that there was only one "correct" way to use English, and everything else was "wrong." I was tired of focusing on the "problems" or "errors" in student writing which also tended to produce negative feelings, diminished self-confidence, and hypercorrection in

their work (too much focus on being "correct" to the point that it interferes with understanding). I finally accepted that by using a grammar-based approach, I was ignoring how the language worked in the real world.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH WRITING RHETORICALLY?

Working in the English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies department taught me to focus on rhetorical awareness in my classes. More than anything else, I learned it is important to teach students how to think like writers in order for them to be successful writers. This methodology has helped my students to understand that writing isn't a standardized activity and that effective writing depends on the situation. As Justin Jory explains in another article in this Open English text,

> The term "rhetorical situation" refers to the circumstances that bring texts into existence. The concept emphasizes that writing is … produced by people in particular situations for particular goals. It helps individuals understand that, because writing is highly situated and responds to specific human needs in a particular time and place, texts should be produced and interpreted with these needs and contexts in mind.

Writing doesn't happen by accident. It is a process of deliberation that involves identifying and enacting strategic choices, strategies, and moves. Developing from a beginning to an advanced-level writer requires students to pay attention to how writers use language in the real world. This is complex work, and it should be the focus of our ESL writing courses.

The following section provides suggestions on how to help students strengthen their rhetorical awareness and think like writers in order to accomplish this.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE

Every piece of writing has a purpose, and when students investigate the influences that motivate an author to write, it gives them a greater understanding of how English works in particular situations. I find that starting out with reading is the most effective way to have students learn to think rhetorically. When they are comfortable identifying and analyzing these elements in others' writing, it is a smoother transition to incorporate this reasoning into their own work. The question prompts below will help students research possible factors that led to the creation of a text as well as what action(s) the author desires from the audience.

To think rhetorically about purpose is to ask particular questions about the motivations and goals that lead writers to produce texts:

- What motivates the writer to write? What issues, events, or problems led the writer to take action?
- What is the writer's response to the larger issue(s)? How does the text support this

response?

- What is the goal of this text? What does the writer want his audience to do, feel, or believe?

(Blankenship and Jory)

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE

Writing is a social activity. It is important that we, as teachers, emphasize that writing is a conversation between the author and the reader, which can be a shift in thinking for students. In my classes, I highlight the fact that writers make specific rhetorical decisions in order to engage particular individuals (the intended audience) in the larger conversation. The question prompts below provide an opportunity for students to consider the effects a particular audience may have on an author's rhetorical decisions.

To think rhetorically about audience is to ask particular questions about the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the people whom texts are written for:

- Who is the audience?
- What does the audience know or need to learn about the issue? What are their relevant experiences? What stance(s) might they hold?
- What's the best way for the author to reach this audience? Which rhetorical strategies would be the most effective?

(Blankenship and Jory)

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

There are many factors that motivate individuals to write, and it is important to get students to "dig deep" into the circumstances that influence authors to put pen to paper. To do this, I find it valuable to develop prompts that lead students to investigate multiple viewpoints of complex cultural, social, political, historical, and ideological issues. The question prompts below provide a good opportunity to get started, and to help students make explicit connections about how, when, and why people write about controversial issues.

To think rhetorically about context is to ask particular

questions about the factors that "set the stage" for writing to take place:

- What do I need to know about the history of this issue to get up to speed? Has any action been taken on this issue recently? How has writing influenced action?
- What laws or social norms may influence the perception of the text?
- What limitations might the context place upon the writer's arguments, evidence, or genre of composition? How does the author address these issues?

(Blankenship and Jory)

UNDERSTANDING GENRE

Though the rhetorical situation consists of purpose, audience, and context, I find it beneficial to incorporate the study of genre in my writing classes as well. In basic terms, "genre" is the form of a text that an author produces to meet the needs of the writing task at hand. It is important for students to understand that the form, as well as the messaging, is contextual. As Clint Johnson says in the *Open English @ SLCC* chapter "On Genre,"

> Each genre is different in form but also in how, when, and why it is used. This is because each genre exists for specific reasons, to do particular things in the world. By studying genre, we improve our ability to learn and then use forms of communication effectively in various situations.

My ELL students love practicing with genre. One activity I find very effective is to have students discuss situations about when/why a writer might send a text message instead of making a phone call; when/why a writer might create a website versus a flyer; or when/why a writer might create a video rather than an academic essay, etc. By having students analyze various writing scenarios, they begin to understand how certain genres could be more effective than others, and that each genre requires different rhetorical choices, depending on the situation at hand. The question prompts below are designed to help students analyze genre characteristics, understand how the form of a text can affect the messaging, and examine a writer's rhetorical moves within the genre.

To think rhetorically about genre is to ask particular questions about how the form of a text will affect meaning:

- In which form/genre does the author share their ideas? Is there a particular form that would communicate their message to the audience more effectively?
- In which situation(s) is this genre used? What are the characteristics of the genre?
- Which rhetorical choices did the author make?

How does the author use language in this particular genre?

CONCLUSION

Incorporating rhetorical awareness as the framework for my writing courses has not only strengthened my teaching practice but has helped my ELL students to gain a more practical awareness of how English works in the world around them. I see how the critical thinking skills that students develop help them to better adapt to new genres and new writing situations, whether in academics, work, or personal life because anywhere there is language, "there's potential for rhetorical thinking" (Blankenship and Jory). In conclusion, we need to teach our students how to think like writers because ...

"A writer is someone who pays attention to the world."

— Susan Sontag

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93. The Three R's of Writing Identity: Recognition, Representation, and Reinvestment

BERNICE OLIVAS

In 1967—in response to the Vietnam War and widespread civil unrest—Mary Rose O'Reilley asked, "Is it possible to teach English so people will stop killing each other?" It's 2021 and we're still killing each other. People of color, women, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ communities are still marching in the streets, raising their voices to share their narratives, their mourning songs, their pain, fear, and frustration at the systemic inequality they face. As a nation, we are still in the same identity crisis we were in during 1967.

Maybe we need to be asking, "Is it possible to teach *writing* so people will stop killing each other?" I don't have an answer. I want to say yes. I want to offer all the best ways to teach writing so that people will stop killing each other. But I can't. What I can do is suggest that instead of looking to *new* ways of teaching, we look back and deepen some of the ways we are already teaching. We can teach writing so that our students leave our classrooms with a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

Now these suggestions will sound deceptively simple and maybe even out of touch in this complicated, technological time. But bear with me.

My first suggestion is to encourage students to write about themselves, to look inward, to the words that tell their stories.

When I say we should encourage students to write about themselves—I don't mean "what I did last summer" essays or asking our students to write about how they felt about their dark times they've survived. Instead, I am suggesting that we frame identity as a rich site of study and inquiry. To do that we need to be very clear about what we mean by identity because writing about identity is more than just writing something personal. Personal implies information not readily available to the public, information we can choose to share, information that we have the privilege of keeping close to us. The personal is mine, I have ownership over it.

For example, I am married—that is personal information. I don't need to tell you that and you can't tell just by looking at me. It's personal.

Identity, on the other hand, is something we only have a small amount of control over because our identity is contextualized by our society. Our identity is defined by markers that we did not construct, that were premade for us by a society that was here long before us, and that we can't control. Our identities have built in the privileges and biases regardless of how we feel about it. I'm a woman. I'm a woman of color. I cannot decide who does or doesn't know that. It's written on my skin, it's woven into my hair, it is in the shape of me.

What I am saying is that we should encourage our students to analyze their own identities in relationship to the rest of humanity and teach students that writing and identity are intertwined. We should give our students permission to use writing as a way of critically analyzing what they know to be true of the world. More importantly we should teach our students to critically analyze how they came to know what they know to be true of the world. Because the only way for any of us to change our worldview is for us to see that it needs to be

changed. We need to know where our worldviews came from so we can decide we want to live there.

I write this during the Covid-19 epidemic. At this moment it feels like the right moment to look inward. Now, while our physical is distanced, while we are forced to sit with ourselves, is the time to remember that Victor Villanueva taught us that "personal discourse, the narrative, the auto/biography … is a necessary adjunct to the academic. Looking back, we look ahead, and giving ourselves up to the looking back and the looking ahead, knowing the self, and, critically, knowing the self in relation to others, maybe we can be an instrument whereby students can hear the call" (19). Our own complex identities are rich sites of inquiry. And maybe, by taking a deep dive into better understanding our own humanity in relationships the humanity of others, we can begin to find some answer to Mary Rose O'Reilley's question.

We need to grapple with the hard truths—this work can't be done at a distance, it must be up close and bone deep, it must be about each of us, and it starts with analyzing our own identity and the experiences and relationships that shape our identity. And I know that studying the self in relation to others may not sound like a realistic approach to vigorous intellectual pedagogy. But it isn't new—it's a deepening of what so many of us are already doing.

We already frame identity as lived experiences contextualized by relationships with communities, institutions, and governing bodies. We ask our students to analyze their own communities and institutions through their own lenses. We ask our students to "do discourse" in ways that promote empathy, compassion, and solidarity.

And we certainly already think about developing praxis in our classroom that will act to help writers develop intellectual and critical habits of the mind. The Council of Writing Program Administrators, The National Councils of Teachers of English,

and The National Writing Project identify eight habits of mind essential for success in academic writing:

- **Curiosity**: The desire to know more about the world.
- **Openness**: The willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- **Engagement**: A sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- **Creativity**: The ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- **Persistence**: The ability to sustain interest in and attention to short-term and long-term projects.
- **Responsibility**: The ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- **Flexibility**: The ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- **Meta-cognition**: The ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge. (1)

Framing writing courses around inquiry into the students lived experiences and identities not only supports all eight habits of the mind, but it also helps our students better understand the ways the discourse can other, dehumanize, and marginalize people in the world, how the othering places people into systems of privilege and marginalization, and how they have been shaped and affected by the discourse around identity.

We already know that promoting empathy, compassion, and solidarity means guiding our students through a process of unlearning color-blindness, unlearning complicit silence, and unlearning an easy and innocent version of the world we live in. We already know that before we can develop empathy, compassion, and solidarity, we all must unlearn bias. We need to untangle a thousand different lessons that we absorbed and

often can't even name. Identity and the discourses around their identities shape the lives of our students. All of them. Those who are marginalized and, though it may seem contrary to the way we think of power dynamics, those who have privilege. They are Linda Flower's "people who stand within a circle of privilege [who] may also be standing in need of empowerment." Our history is a legacy that weighs heavily on all of us.

Consider what Frankie Condon says about White supremacy thinking. It is an illusion covering deep wounds to the self and the community. She says:

> There are few matters in life about which I possess any degree of certainty, but this I know, both as a matter of life experience and as a result of my studies: racism splits us, slices us apart from one another, from our humanity, even from ourselves. Racism chains us to small, crabbed, notions of self. (3)

This holds true for sexism, homophobia, class issues—when we lose touch with each other's humanity we are chaining ourselves to "small, crabbed, notions of self."

So, if we agree that we live in a world where, as James Gee tells us, discourse shapes our "identity kit[s]," if we agree that discourse can create a toxic "doing-being-valuing-believing" combination of language and social practices, if we agree the discourse of othering supports behaviors and ways of thinking that make it possible for *all* of us to enact social injustice based in racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia—then it falls to those us who *already* study rhetoric and language to speak loudly that discourse *is a learned behavior* and learned behaviors can be *challenged, disrupted, and dismantled*.

Villanueva says, "The personal done well is sensorial and intellectual, complete, knowledge known throughout mind and body, even if vicariously." So too is writing about our

identity. When we tell our stories about uncovering the why of our biases, or our fears, or our rage, that story is "sensorial and intellectual, complete, knowledge known throughout the mind and body" of our readers. When we offer our *memoria*—our cultural, community, and familial memories—we invite our readers to live vicariously with us.

I am saying that writing about identity can be an important way of learning about the world.

I am saying that we can write about our identities in ways that are active, vibrant, and effective.

More importantly, I am saying we can write about our identities in a way that promotes empathy, compassion, and solidarity.

I might even be suggesting that conceptualizing identity as a rich site for inquiry and analysis might help us teach writing so that people stop killing each other.

My second is more about strategies to craft writing projects that help our students stay connected to the academic world. For too many of our students' academia is a new and alien space. There are so many new things to grasp. We need to give students work that will ground them, give them writing opportunities that help them develop a sense of belonging to their college community because Dr. Ann Penrose found that students who fail to figure out where they belong on campus are much less likely to graduate. She says that "helping students see themselves as members of the academic community may be the most important challenge faced in the university at large."

We need to craft writing projects that help students develop a sense of belonging. Students are already "inventing the university" and "learning to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (4). Students need to see themselves as belonging *on our campus, in our programs, at*

our institutions. Because when they do not, they are more likely to fail.

I remember, in my first year in undergrad, I didn't know what "office hours" were, and when my writing teacher suggested I come by his office hours, I was terrified. My identity as a First-Generation Mexican woman saw that invitation as threatening. I stopped sitting in front, I stopped raising my hand, I stopped talking. I was terrified to do something that would change that invitation to an order. I was in my junior year before I felt like I deserved to be there, that I belonged on campus.

Now, I laugh at this experience, but I always, without evening thinking about it, offer my own students an explanation of office hours. I tell them that these are hours I set aside just for them, because I want to be able to answer questions, chat, look at writing, or whatever. I remind them that office hours are for them. Every semester. I do everything I can to make my classroom and as much of campus as possible as comfortable, as much theirs, as their local park, or the local auntie's bodega, or their church. I want them—no, *need* them—to see the campus, the knowledge we house here, as theirs. Full stop. No caveats.

In this I speak from experience: I was that student who was disconnected and I was struggling until I joined the McNair Scholars. The McNair scholars' program is a Trio program that prepares and supports marginalized undergraduates to get into graduate school. Each program is a little different depending on who developed it. The program at my college really focused on encouraging students to see themselves as scholars and to see that graduate school was a possibility for them. It was two years of studying ourselves and the world of graduate education.

And it wasn't easy to convince some of us that we belonged in graduate school. We fear losing our families and culture even while we want to grasp everything graduate school offers. We spend two years trying to understand who we are in the

contexts of scholars and researchers. In my cohort, I was only one of many who had never seen a professor like themselves. I had never had a Mexican teacher; there was only one Latina in my English department. Everywhere I looked, my campus was telling me that I didn't belong. Every class, every portrait of alumni, every face represented a world that was not built for me. As a McNair scholar I spent a summer researching why students like me failed Composition 101 and dropped out. In graduate school, I keep researching that same issue by spending two years observing the writing pedagogy used at my McNair program in hopes of finding some practical answers. And not just because McNair was where I developed into a scholar, but because TRIO programs have a proven success rate of graduating and advancing underrepresented students and First-Generation students into graduate programs. These factors made my McNair Program a rich site to research how their writing intensive program helps students develop their confidence and sense of belonging.

What I found was that the McNair Scholars Program used three key strategies to conceptualize identity as a site of inquiry and analysis. And they used them to help students develop a sense of belonging.

First, they ask their students to write about themselves. A lot. They examine their histories, analyze their motivations, and identify the most useful skills and characteristics they brought with them from home.

These three strategies are what I call **recognition**, **representation**, and **reinvestment**. These strategies situated them as members of the academic community.

Recognition means that the writing project encourages students to recognize how the strengths they developed in their home communities make them better students.

Representation means that the writing project guides them in locating representation from their community in academia.

Re-investment means the writing projects shine a light on

the kinds of opportunities they will have to re-invest into their home communities once they have completed their education.

The McNair program crafted writing projects that focused on recognizing their students' strengths, by helping them to find representation in academia, and by honoring their dedication to their family and home community.

But what does that look like in the classroom?

Centering **recognition** might look like a literacy narrative that asks students to tell the stories of members of their family or community that emphasize the skills taught in their communities. This project presumes that their families and communities are full of strong, smart, successful people, and helps the student better understand how their culture and background supports their intellectual goals. It also shows them that I honor their community's ways of being. Recognizing those ways of making knowledge is inviting the student to embrace those ways of making knowledge in their intellectual journey.

Centering **representation** might look like a rhetorical analysis of a newsletter or yearbook from an early two-year college as a way of showing students how our past student bodies were First Generation students—the sons of farmers, laborers, and immigrants. It might look like an analysis of their areas of interest or career path. It might ask them to locate and email a successful member of academia who is also a member of one of their home communities so they can see themselves in the future.

Centering assignments in **re-investment** might look like a research paper focused on the needs of their home communities to locate the ways their education might benefit the people they love. It might look like collecting narratives from their elders to preserve for the next generation, it may look like an op-ed about an issue that has a real impact on their homes.

In my classroom, using these strategies might look like

asking the students to research and apply to a local scholarship. Apply the concept of the rhetorical situation to help them plan their essays. Pinpoint what the writer wants—they want the money to finish their classes. Consider what the audience wants—they want reassurance that the scholarship winner will finish their education. Then work together to craft an essay that mixes narrative and exposition in a way that gives the reader a person, a whole person—the young woman who watched the hospice nurses gently usher her grandmother out of this world and thought, "I want to be like them," instead of the kid who has always wanted to be a nurse.

It might look like writing protest essays about a local issue, reading James Baldwin and June Jordan or a watch party of "Salt of The Earth" a 1954 American drama about Mexican workers protesting unsafe practices of a copper mining company. It might look like sending them to create and share a protest playlist and writing a reflection on how they put that list together. It might look like interviewing their elders in search of historical narratives.

Now, looking back, I can point out the exact moment my identity shifted from outsider to belonging, the exact moment my academic identity snapped into being and I knew what it meant for me to be an academic. The McNair Co-director, whose graduate education was also in English, encouraged me to attend a reading by Dr. Victor Villanueva. She said Dr. Villanueva was exactly the kind of scholar I needed in my body of knowledge. He was First Generation, he was Latino, he was in my field, and he was a teacher. She was right. I read his essay, "Memoria Is a Friend of Ours: On the Discourses of Color," the night before, and the creative writer in me loved that his essay mixed poetry, narrative, and formal academic language. While I listened to him reading in a voice that sounded like home, using expressions that I understood but could not translate because he is Puerto Rican and I am Mexican and I don't really

speak Spanish, I *recognized* characteristics we shared. I listened to that beautiful reading, and I was proud to be *represented* by him, proud to hear him speak truth and power. I looked at him and thought, I can do this. I felt the power of his words, the charisma of his personality, and I knew—really knew—that people like me belonged in academia, that we did this work. That I could do this work. More importantly, I knew that I owed it to my nieces and nephews, to other students like me to *reinvest* my education so that I would someday stand, as he stood, reaching a hand to others like me.

This moment never fails to remind me that our students don't just "invent the university" on their own—they do it in relation to us, their faculty, their mentors, their advisors, and their peers. The student is not just learning to "speak our language," they are developing a whole new way of being—one that will allow them to join us at the table.

So that's my second way of teaching writing so that our students learn more about what it means to be human. I show them people like themselves doing academia. I give them stories by folks who share that cultural, community, and familial memoria. I encourage them to dream of a future where they are holding their hand out to lift the next generation.

Whatever it looks like in your classroom, give them work that reminds them that they belong here. Give them work that helps them understand themselves and each other better. Give them work that lets them dream about the future. This is the work that keeps us connected. This is the work that might just help us finally answer the question, "Is it possible to teach writing so people will stop killing each other?"

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