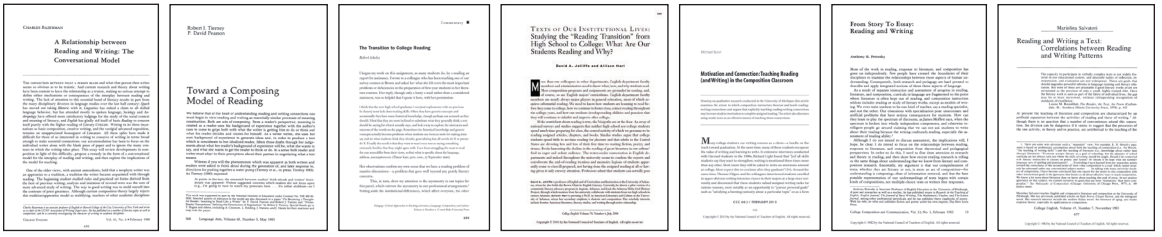
Chapter 6. Readings on Reading

This chapter serves as a bridge between Part One of this textbook, which includes the instruction, and Part Two, which includes the readings on technology and related assignments. You'll find selections on the subject of reading written by scholar-teachers within the fields of composition, rhetoric, literacy studies, and education. These are peer-reviewed scholarly essays that have been published in some of the most prestigious scholarly journals. In these essays, scholars address a range of issues surrounding reading. Some essays describe research on how well students read and what motivates students to read. Others explore the most effective ways of defining and teaching reading in writing classes, and others, still, address the difficulties students have transitioning from the expectations of high-school-level reading to those of college-level reading. Although you may have some difficulty reading these dense pieces—and are encouraged to use the reading strategies outlined in Chapter 2—the subjects these essays address should be rather familiar to you. After all, students, and particularly first-year students, figure prominently in these pieces. At the end of this chapter you will find general questions about the reading selections that will help you understand, respond, and apply what you have learned from these pieces. These essays will support your understanding of the very concept of reading and set you on a path toward becoming a more reflective reader.



Prior to Reading Each Selection in This Chapter

Look at the questions at the end of the chapter. What are you expected to do after reading the selections? In other words, what are your purposes for reading? Although you will be asked to apply particular reading strategies in order to complete some of the tasks, other questions will leave the choice of strategy up to you. Refer to the descriptions of the reading strategies in Chapter 2 and decide which will be most useful in helping you accomplish those tasks.

College English Volume 41, Number 6, February 1980

A Relationship between Reading and Writing: The Conversational Model[1]

Charles Bazerman[2]

The connection between what a person reads and what that person then writes seems so obvious as to be truistic. And current research and theory about writing have been content to leave the relationship as a truism, making no serious attempt to define either mechanisms or consequences of the interplay between reading and writing. The lack of attention to this essential bond of literacy results in part from the many disciplinary divorces in language studies over the last half century: *Speech* has moved out taking *Rhetoric* with it; *Linguistics* has staked a claim to all skilled language behavior, but has attended mostly to spoken language; *Sociology* and *Anthropology* have offered more satisfactory lodgings for the study of the social context and meaning of literacy; and *English* has gladly rid itself of basic *Reading* to concern itself purely with the higher reading of *Literary Criticism.* Writing in its three incarnations as basic composition, creative writing, and the vestigial advanced exposition, remains an unappreciated houseguest of *Literature.* All these splits have made it difficult for those of us interested in writing to conceive of writing in terms broad enough to make essential connections: our accommodation has been to focus on the individual writer alone with the blank piece of paper and to ignore the many contexts in which the writing takes place. This essay will review developments in composition in light of this difficulty, propose a remedy in the form of a conversational model for the interplay of reading and writing, and then explore the implications of the model for teaching.

One of the older views, with ancient antecedents, held that a neophyte writer was an apprentice to a tradition, a tradition the writer became acquainted with through reading. The beginning student studied rules and practiced set forms derived from the best of previous writing; analysis and imitation of revered texts was the core of more advanced study of writing. The way to good writing was to mold oneself into the contours of prior greatness. Although current composition theory largely rejects this tradition/apprentice model as stultifying, teachers of other academic disciplines still find the model attractive, because writing in content disciplines requires mastery of disciplinary literature. The accumulated knowledge and accepted forms of writing circumscribe what and how a

1 **Citation:** Bazerman, Charles. "A Relationship between Reading and Writing: The Conversation Model." *College English*, vol. 41, no. 6, 1980, pp. 656–661.

2 Charles Bazerman is an associate professor of English at Baruch College of the City University of New York and serves as co-chair of the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors. He has published on a number of literary topics as well as composition, and he is currently investigating the character of writing in academic disciplines.

student may write in disciplines such as history, biology, and philosophy.

Recent work in composition has chosen instead to emphasize the writer's original voice, which has its source in an independent self. The model of the individual writer shaping thought through language informs recent investigations into the composing process, growth of syntactic maturity, and the source of error. We have aided the student in the struggle to express the self by revealing the logic of syntax, by asking for experiential and personal writing, and by offering techniques for pre-writing and invention to help the student get closer to the wellsprings of thought that lie inside. Even traditional rhetoric finds its new justification in the reflection of organic psychological realities. By establishing the importance of the voice of the writer and the authority of personal perception, we have learned to give weight to what the student wants to say, to be patient with the complex process of writing, to offer sympathetic advice on *how to* rather than *what not to,* and to help the student discover the personal motivations to learn to write.

Yet the close observation of the plight of the individual writer has led us to remember that writing is not contained entirely in the envelope of experience, native thought, and personal motivation to communicate. Communication presupposes an audience, and deference to that audience has led to a revived concern for the forms of what is now called Standard Written English. E. D. Hirsch, in *The Philosophy of Composition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), locates the entire philosophy in readability; that is, concern for the audience. We have also noticed that most writing our students do during college is in the context of their academic studies; interest in writing across the curriculum has been the result. In the most thoughtful study coming out of this approach, *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)* (London: Macmillan, 1975), James Britton and his colleagues begin to notice that students use readings, but in personal and original ways, in order to write for their academic courses. "Source-book material may be used in various ways involving different levels of activity by the writer" (p. 23).

We may begin to understand those "various ways" and "different levels of activity" Britton refers to if we consider each piece of writing as a contribution to an on-going, written conversation. Conversation requires absorption of what prior speakers have said, consideration of how earlier comments relate to the responder's thoughts, and a response framed to the situation and the responder's purposes. Until a final statement is made or participants disengage themselves, the process of response continues. The immediacy of spoken conversation does, I must admit, differ significantly from the reflectiveness of written conversation, but the differences more illuminate the special character of writing than diminish the force of the model. Speech melody, gestural communication, rapidly shifting dynamics, and immediate validation on one side are set against explicitness, development, complexity, contemplation, and revision on the other. The written conversation also may bring together a more diffuse range of participants than the spoken one, although the example of an exchange of office memos or the closed circle represented in professional journals indicates that

such is not always the case. Further, in spoken conversation the makers of previous comments are more likely to be the auditors of the response. But again the counter-examples of the teacher who turns one student's question into the occasion for a lecture to the entire class, or the printed back and forth of a literary war, suggest that this distinction should not be oversimplified.

The conversational model points up the fact that writing occurs within the context of previous writing and advances the total sum of the discourse. Earlier comments provide subjects at issue, factual content, ideas to work with, and models of discourse appropriate to the subject. Later comments build on what came before and may, therefore, go farther. Later comments also define themselves against the earlier even as they dispute particulars, redefine issues, add new material, or otherwise shift the discussion.

If as teachers of writing we want to prepare our students to enter into the written interchanges of their chosen disciplines and the various discussions of personal and public interest, we must cultivate various techniques of absorbing, reformulating, commenting on, and using reading. In the tradition/apprentice model such skills were fostered only implicitly under the umbrella assignment of the research paper, but they were not given explicit, careful attention. Only access to the tradition (information gathering) and acknowledgement of the tradition (documentation) were the foci of instruction. In the newer model of the voice of the individual self, assignments such as the research paper are superfluous, remaining only as vestiges of former syllabi or as the penance imposed on a service department. The model of the conversation, however, suggests a full curriculum of skills and stages in the process of relating new comments to previously written materials. The following partial catalogue of stages, skills, and assignments points toward the kinds of issues that might be addressed in writing courses. The suggestions are in the form of a framework rather than of specific lessons in order to leave each teacher free to interpret the consequences of the model through the matrix of individual thoughts, experiences, and teaching styles. Similarly the teacher will need to interpret the model through those conversations that are most familiar and important to students. Given the diversity of existing written conversations and the variety of individual responses, it is not profitable to prescribe a single course for everyone.

Intelligent response begins with *accurate understanding of prior comments,* not just of the facts and ideas stated, but of what the other writer was trying to achieve. A potential respondent needs to know not just the claims a writer was making, but also whether the writer was trying to call established beliefs into question or simply add some detail to generally agreed upon ideas. The respondent needs to be able to tell whether a prior statement was attempting to arouse emotions or to call forth dispassionate judgment. The more we understand of the dynamics as well as the content of a conversation, the more we have to respond to. Vague understanding is more than careless; it is soporific. Particular writing assignments can help students become more perceptive readers and can help break down the tendency toward vague inarticulateness resulting from purely private read-

ing. Paraphrase encourages precise understanding of individual terms and statements; the act of translating thoughts from one set of words to another makes the student consider exactly what was said and what was not. Summary reveals the structure of arguments and the continuity of thought; the student must ferret out the important claims and those elements that unify the entire piece of writing. Both paraphrase and summary will also be useful skills when in the course of making original arguments the student will have to refer to the thoughts of others with some accuracy and efficiency. Finally, having students analyze the technique of writing in relation to the writing's apparent purpose will make students sensitive to the ways writing can create effects that go beyond the overt content. Analysis of propaganda and advertising will provide the extreme and easy cases, but analysis of more subtle designs, such as that of legal arguments or of reports of biological research, will more fully reveal the purposive nature of writing.

The next stage, *reacting to reading,* gives students a sense of their own opinions and identity defined against the reading material. As they try to reconcile what they read with what they already think, students begin to explore their assumptions and frameworks of thought. At first their responses may be uninformed, either fending off the new material or acquiescing totally to what appears to be the indisputable authority of the printed word. But with time and opportunities to articulate their changing responses, students can become more comfortable with the questions raised by their reading; they enter into a more dialectical relationship with those who have written before. Prior assimilated reading becomes grist for processing new reading. Three kinds of exercise encourage the development of more extensive and thoughtful reactions: marginal comments on reading, reading journals, and informal reaction essays. From early in the semester teachers should encourage students to record their thoughts about the reading in marginal notes. The teacher must be careful to distinguish this kind of reaction annotation from the more familiar study skills kind of content annotation, perhaps by suggesting that content annotations go on the inside margin and reactions go on the wider outside margins. This reaction in the margins increases the student's awareness of moment-by-moment responses to individual statements and examples. Reading journals written after each day's reading give the student additional room to explore the immediate responses at greater length and to develop larger themes. Again the teacher must insist on the distinction between content summaries and reactions, no matter how tentative the latter may at first be. Finally, the informal response essay allows the student to develop a single reaction at length, perhaps drawing on a number of related, more immediate responses. Here the teacher should make sure that the response maintains contact with issues growing out of the reading and does not become purely a rhapsody on a personal theme unrelated to the reading. For all three types of assignment the teacher can refer the student to previously held opinions, experiences, observations, and other readings as starting points for reactions. As students become more sensitive to their responses to reading, they will spontaneously recognize likely starting points.

Developing reactions leads to more formal *evaluation of reading,* measuring what a book or article actually accomplishes compared to its apparent ambitions, compared to reality, and compared to other books. The evaluative review, if treated as more than just a notice covered with a thin wash of reaction, is an effective exercise, for it requires the student both to represent and to assess the claims of the book or article. The reader's reaction to the book is also significant to the evaluation, for if the reader finds herself laughing when she should be nodding in assent, the book has failed to meet at least some of its purposes. Another kind of evaluative essay measures the claims of the reading against observable reality. The data the student compares to the book's claims may be from prior experience, new observations, formal data-gathering using social science techniques, or technical experiments. Here the teacher may discuss the variety of purposes, criteria, and techniques of data gathering in different academic disciplines as well as other human endeavors. Finally the student may be asked to compare the claims and evidence of a number of different sources. In this kind of exercise the students have to judge whether there is agreement, disagreement, or merely discussion of different ideas; then the student must identify on what level the agreement or disagreement occurs, whether of simple fact, interpretation, idea, or underlying approach; and finally he must determine how the agreements can be fitted together and the disagreements reconciled or adjudicated. Conflicts cannot, of course, always be resolved, but students become aware of the difficulties of evaluation. Comparison of matched selections, reports requiring synthesis, reviews of literature, and annotated bibliographies are all assignments compatible with this last purpose. Reviews of literature and annotated bibliographies also give the student a coherent picture of how previous comments add up in pursuit of common issues.

Students can then begin to define those *issues* they wish to pursue and to develop *informed views* on those issues. Two kinds of exercise, definitions of problem areas and research proposals, require the student to identify some issue he or she would like to know more about, to assemble the prior statements relevant to the issue, and to indicate the limitations of those sources. The proposal requires the further task of planning how the gap of knowledge in the literature can be overcome. Problem definitions and proposals are early stages of the familiar assignment of the research paper. Also familiar is the teacher's disappointment upon receiving a derivative research report instead of an original, informed view in the form of a research essay. The use of preparatory assignments—not just the proposal, but also progress reports, reflections on the evidence, hypothesis testing and idea sketches—will help remind the student of the original goal of the work while encouraging creative and detailed use of the source material. Prior instruction in the skills discussed above will also insure that the student knows how to use reading to form independent attitudes toward the sources and so facilitate the development of original theses. Other, more specific exercises that set the conditions for the development of informed views involve setting factual and theoretical sources against each other. Three case studies can be compared to elicit general patterns, or one writer's theories can

be measured against another's factual material. These two assignments are, in fact, forms of critical analysis using a coherent set of categories derived from a theoretical standpoint to sort out specifics. Such exercises show the student the many uses of source material beyond simple citation of authority in support of predetermined opinion.

The independent, critical standpoint the student develops with respect to reading other people's works can also help the student frame and revise his or her own writing to be a purposeful and appropriate contribution to an on-going conversation. Consideration of the relationship to previous statements will help the student decide what techniques are likely to serve new purposes. Will a redefinition of basic concepts, the introduction of a new concept, or the close analysis of a case study best resolve confusion? Or perhaps only a head-on persuasive argument will serve. Further, knowledge of the literature likely to have been read by an audience helps a writer determine what needs to be explained at length and what issues need to be addressed.

The model of written conversation even transforms the technical skills of reference and citation. The variety of uses to be made of quotation, the options for referring to others' ideas and information (e.g., quotation, paraphrase, summary, name only), and the techniques of introducing and discussing source materials are the tools which allow the accurate but pointed connection of one's argument to earlier statements. The mechanics of documentation, more than being an exercise in intellectual etiquette, become the means of indicating the full range of comments to which the new essay is responding.

When we ask students to write purely from their selves, we may tap only those prior conversations that they are still engaged in and so limit the extent and variety of their thinking and writing. We can use reading to present new conversational opportunities that draw the students into wider public, professional, and academic communities. Thus the students will learn to write within the heavily literate contexts they will meet in college and later life. Whether writing tasks are explicitly embedded in prior written material—a review of literature, a research paper, or a legal brief—or whether they are only implicitly related to the thought and writing of others, as in critical analyses or matters of public debate, if students are not taught the skills of creating new statements through evaluating, assimilating, and responding to the prior statements of the written conversation, we offer them the meager choice of being parrots of authority or raconteurs stocked with anecdotes for every occasion. Only a fortunate few will learn to enter the community of the literate on their own.

Language Arts, Volume 60, Number 5, May 1983

Toward a Composing Model of Reading[1]

Robert J. Tierney and P. David Pearson[2]

We believe that at the heart of understanding reading and writing connections one must begin to view reading and writing as essentially similar processes of meaning construction. Both are acts of composing.[3] From a reader's perspective, meaning is created as a reader uses his background of experience together with the author's cues to come to grips both with what the writer is getting him to do or think and what the reader decides and creates for himself. As a writer writes, she uses her own background of experience to generate ideas and, in order to produce a test which is considerate to her idealized reader, filters these drafts through her judgments about what her reader's background of experiences will be, what she wants to say, and what she wants to get the reader to think or do. In a sense both reader and writers must adapt to their perceptions about their partner in negotiating what a text means.

Witness if you will the phenomenon which was apparent as both writers and readers were asked to think aloud during the generation of, and later response to, directions for putting together a water pump (Tierney at al., in press; Tierney 1983). As Tierney (1983) reported:

> At points in the text, the mismatch between readers' think-alouds and writers' think-alouds was apparent: Writers suggested concerns which readers did not focus upon (e.g., I'm going to have to watch my pronouns here . . . . It's rather stubborn—so I better tell how to push it hard . . . he should see that it looks very much like a syringe), and readers expressed concerns which writers did not appear to consider (I'm wondering why I should do this . . . what function does it serve). As writers thought aloud, generated text, and moved to the next set of sub-assembly directions, they would often comment about the *writers' craft* as readers might (e.g., no confusion there . . . . That's a fairly clear descriptor . . . and we've already defined what that is). There was also a sense in which writers marked

1 **Citation:** Tierney, Robert J. and P. David Pearson. "Toward a Composing Model of Reading." *Language Arts*, vol. 60, no. 5, May 1983 pp. 568–580.

2 Robert J. Tierney and P. David Pearson are associated with the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

3 This work was supported in part by the National Institute of Education under Contract No. NIE 400-81-0030. Selected aspects of relevance to the model are also discussed in a paper "On Becoming a Thoughtful Reader: Learning to Read Like a Writer" by P. David Pearson and Robert J. Tierney and "Writer Reader Interactions: Defining the Dimensions of Negotiation" by Robert J. Tierney. Special Thanks go to T. Rogers and others, including A. Crismore, L. Fielding, J. Hansen, and J. Harste for their reactions and help with the paper.

> their compositions with an "okay" as if the "okay" marked a movement from a turn as reader to a turn as writer. Analyses of the readers' *think alouds* suggested that the readers often felt frustrated by the writers' failure to explain why they were doing what they were doing. Also the readers were often critical of *the writer's craft,* including writers' choice of words, clarity, and accuracy. There was a sense in which the readers' *think alouds* assumed a reflexive character as if the readers were rewriting the texts. If one perceived the readers as craftpersons, unwilling to blame their tools for an ineffective product, then one might view the readers as unwilling to let the text provided stand in the way of their successful achievement of their goals or pursuit of understanding. (p. 150)

These data and other descriptions of the reading act (e.g., Bruce 1981; Collins, Brown and Larkin 1970; Rosenblatt 1976, 1980; Tompkins 1980) are consistent with the view that texts are written and read in a tug of war between authors and readers. These think-alouds highlight the kinds of internal struggles that we all face (whether consciously or unconsciously) as we compose the meaning of a text in front of us.

Few would disagree that writers compose meaning. In this paper we argue that readers also compose meaning (that there is no meaning on the page until a reader decides there is). We will develop this position by describing some aspects of the composing process held in parallel by reading and writing. In particular, we will address the essential characteristics of effective composing: planning, drafting, aligning, revising and monitoring.

Planning

As a writer initially plans her writing, so a reader plans his reading. Planning involves two complementary processes: goal-setting and knowledge mobilization. Taken together, they reflect some commonly accepted behaviors, such as setting purposes, evaluating one's current state of knowledge about a topic, focusing or narrowing topics and goals, and self-questioning.

Flower and Hayes (1981) have suggested that a writer's goals may be procedural (e.g., how do I approach this topic), substantive (e.g., I want to say something about how rockets work), or intentional (e.g., I want to convince people of the problem). So may a reader's goals be procedural (e.g., I want to get a sense of this topic overall), substantive (e.g., I need to find out about the relationship between England and France), or intentional (e.g., I wonder what this author is trying to say) or some combination of all three. These goals can be embedded in one another or addressed concurrently; they may be conflicting or complementary. As a reader reads (just as when a writer writes) goals may emerge, be discovered, or change. For example, a reader or writer may broaden, fine tune, redefine, delete, or replace goals. A fourth grade writer whom we interviewed about a project he had

completed on American Indians illustrates these notions well: As he stated his changing goals, " . . . I began with the topic of Indians but that was too broad, I decided to narrow my focus on Hopis, but that was not what I was really interested in. Finally, I decided that what I really wanted to learn about was medicine men . . . I really found some interesting things to write about." In coming to grips with his goals our writer suggested both procedural and substantive goals. Note also that he refined his goals prior to drafting. In preparation for reading or writing a draft, goals usually change; mostly they become focused at a level of specificity sufficient to allow the reading or writing to continue. Consider how a novel might be read. We begin reading a novel to discover the plot, yet find ourselves asking specific questions about events and attending to the author's craft—how she uses the language to create certain effects.

The goals that readers or writers set have a symbiotic relationship with the knowledge they mobilize, and together they influence what is produced or understood in a text (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz 1977; Anderson, Pichert and Shirey 1979; Hays and Tierney 1981; Tierney and Mosenthal 1981). A writer plans what she wants to say with the knowledge resources at her disposal. Our fourth grade writer changed his goals as a function of the specificity of the knowledge domain to which he successively switched. Likewise readers, depending on their level of topic knowledge and what they want to learn from their reading, vary the goals they initiate and pursue. As an example of this symbiosis in a reader, consider the following statement from a reader of *Psychology Today.*

> I picked up an issue of *Psychology Today.* One particular article dealing with women in movies caught my attention. I guess it was the photos of Streep, Fonda, Lange, that interested me. As I had seen most of their recent movies I felt as if I knew something about the topic. As I started reading, the author had me recalling my reactions to these movies (Streep in "Sophie's Choice," Lange in "Tootsie," Fonda in "Julia"). At first I intended to glance at the article. But as I read on, recalling various scenes, I became more and more interested in the author's perspective. Now that my reactions were nicely mobilized, this author (definitely a feminist) was able to convince me of her case for stereotyping. I had not realized the extent to which women are either portrayed as the victim, cast with men, or not developed at all as a character in their own right. This author carried me back through these movies and revealed things I had not realized. It was as if I had my own purposes in mind but I saw things through her eyes.

What is interesting in this example is how the reader's knowledge about films and feminism was mobilized at the same time as his purposes became gradually welded to those of the author's. The reader went *from* almost free association, *to* reflection, *to* directed study of what he knew. It is this directed study of what one knows that is so important in knowledge mobilization. A writer does not just throw out ideas randomly; she carefully plans the placement of ideas in text so that each

idea acquires just the right degree of emphasis in text. A successful reader uses his knowledge just as carefully; at just the right moment he accesses just the right knowledge structures necessary to interpret the text at hand in a way consistent with his goals. Note also how the goals a reader sets can determine the knowledge he calls up; at the same time, that knowledge, especially as it is modified in conjunction with the reader's engagement of the text, causes him to alter his goals. Initially, a reader might "brainstorm" his store of knowledge and maybe organize some of it (e.g., clustering ideas using general questions such as who, what, when, where, or why *or* developing outlines). Some readers might make notes; others might merely think about what they know, how this information clusters, and what they want to pursue. Or, just as a writer sometimes uses a first draft to explore what she knows and what she wants to say, so a reader might scan the text as a way of fine tuning the range of knowledge and goals to engage, creating a kind of a "draft" reading of the text. It is to this topic of drafting that we now turn your attention.

Drafting

We define drafting as the refinement of meaning which occurs as readers and writers deal directly with the print on the page. All of us who have had to write something (be it an article, a novel, a memo, a letter, or a theme), know just how difficult getting started can be. Many of us feel that if we could only get a draft on paper, we could rework and revise our way to completion. We want to argue that getting started is just as important a step in reading. What every reader needs, like every writer, is a first draft. And the first step in producing that draft is finding the right "lead." Murray (1982) describes the importance of finding the lead:

> The lead is the beginning of the beginning, those few lines the reader may glance at in deciding to read or pass on. These few words—fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, ten—establish the tone, the point of view, the order, the dimensions of the article. In a sense, the entire article is coiled in the first few words waiting to be released.
>
> An article, perhaps even a book, can only say one thing and when the lead is found, the writer knows what is included in the article and what is left out, what must be left out. As one word is chosen for the lead another rejected, as a comma is put in and another taken away, the lead begins to feel right and the pressure builds up until it is almost impossible not to write. (p. 99)

From a reader's perspective, the key points to note from Murray's description are these: 1) "the entire article is coiled in these first few words waiting to be released," and 2) "the lead begins to feel right . . . ." The reader, as he reads, has that same feeling as he begins to draft his understanding of a text. The whole point of hypothesis testing models of reading like those of Goodman (1967) and

Smith (1971) is that the current hypothesis one holds about what a text means creates strong expectations about what succeeding text ought to address. So strong are these hypotheses, these "coilings," these drafts of meaning a reader creates that incoming text failing to cohere with them may be ignored or rejected.

Follow us as we describe a hypothetical reader and writer beginning their initial drafts.

A reader opens his or her textbook, magazine or novel; a writer reaches for his pen. The reader scans the pages for a place to begin; the writer holds the pen poised. The reader looks over the first few lines of the article or story in search of a sense of what the general scenario is. (This occurs whether the reader is reading a murder mystery, a newspaper account of unemployment, or a magazine article on underwater life.) Our writer searches for the lead statement or introduction to her text. For the reader, knowing the scenario may involve knowing that the story is about women engaged in career advancement from a feminist perspective, knowing the murder mystery involves the death of a wealthy husband vacationing abroad. For the writer, establishing the scenario involves prescribing those few ideas which introduce or define the topic. Once established, the reader proceeds through the text, refining and building upon his sense of what is going on; the writer does likewise. Once the writer has found the "right" lead, she proceeds to develop the plot, expositions, or descriptions. As the need to change scenarios occurs, so the process is repeated. From a schema-theoretic perspective, coming to grips with a lead statement or, if you are a reader, gleaning an initial scenario, can be viewed as schema selection (which is somewhat equivalent to choosing a script for a play); filling in the slots or refining the scenario is equivalent to schema instantiation.

As our descriptions of a hypothetical reader suggest, what drives reading and writing is this desire to make sense of what is happening—to make things cohere. A writer, achieves that fit by deciding what information to include and what to withhold. The reader accomplishes that fit by filling in gaps (it must be early in the morning) or making uncued connections (he must have become angry because they lost the game). All readers, like all writers, ought to strive for this fit between the whole and the parts and among the parts. Unfortunately, some readers and writers are satisfied with a piecemeal experience (dealing with each part separately), or, alternatively, a sense of the whole without a sense of how the parts relate to it. Other readers and writers become "bogged down" in their desire to achieve a perfect text or "fit" on the first draft. For language educators our task is to help readers and writers to achieve the best fit among the whole and the parts. It is with this concern in mind that we now consider the role of alignment and then revision.

Aligning

In conjunction with the planning and drafting initiated, we believe that the alignment a reader or writer adopts can have an overriding influence on a composer's ability to achieve coherence. We

see alignment as having two facets: stances a reader or writer assumes in collaboration with their author or audience, and roles within which the reader or writer immerse themselves as they proceed with the topic. In other words, as readers and writers approach a text they vary the nature of their stance or collaboration with their author (if they are a reader) or audience (if they are a writer) and, in conjunction with this collaboration, immerse themselves in a variety of roles. A writer's stance toward her readers might be intimate, challenging or quite neutral. And, within the contexts of these collaborations she might share what she wants to say through characters or as an observer of events. Likewise, a reader can adopt a stance toward the writer which is sympathetic, critical or passive. And, within the context of these collaborations, he can immerse himself in the text as an observer or eye witness, participant or character.

As we have suggested, alignment results in certain benefits. Indeed, direct and indirect support for the facilitative benefits of adopting alignments comes from research on a variety of fronts. For example, schema theoretic studies involving an analysis of the influence of a reader's perspective have shown that if readers are given different alignments prior to or after reading a selection, they will vary in what and how much they will recall (Pichert 1979; Spiro 1977). For example, readers told to read a description of a house from the perspective of a homebuyer or burglar tend to recall more information and are more apt to include in their recollections information consistent with their perspective. Furthermore, when asked to consider an alternative perspective these same readers were able to generate information which they previously had not retrieved and which was important to the new perspective. Researchers interested in the effects of imaging have examined the effects of visualizing—a form of alignment which we would argue is equivalent to eye witnessing. Across a number of studies it has been shown that readers who are encouraged to visualize usually perform better on comprehension tasks (e.g., Sodoski, in press). The work on children's development of the ability to recognize point of view (Hay and Brewer 1982; Applebee 1978) suggests that facility with alignment develops with comprehension maturity. From our own interviews with young readers and writers we have found that the identification with characters and immersion in a story reported by our interviewees accounts for much of the vibrancy, sense of control and fulfillment experienced during reading and writing. Likewise, some of the research analyzing proficient writing suggests that proficient writers are those writers who, when they read over what they have written, comment on the extent to which their story and characters are engaging (Birnbaum 1982). A number of studies in both psychotherapy and creativity provide support for the importance of alignment. For purposes of generating solutions to problems, psychotherapists have found it useful to encourage individuals to exchange roles (e.g., mother with daughter). In an attempt to generate discoveries, researchers have had experts identify with the experiences of inanimate objects (e.g., paint on metal) as a means of considering previously inaccessible solutions (e.g., a paint which does not peel).

Based upon these findings and our own observations, we hypothesize that adopting an align-

ment is akin to achieving a foothold from which meaning can be more readily negotiated. Just as a filmmaker can adopt and vary the angle from which a scene is depicted in order to maximize the richness of a filmgoer's experience, so too can a reader and writer adopt and vary the angle from which language meanings are negotiated. This suggests, for language educators, support for those questions or activities which help readers or writers take a stance on a topic and immerse themselves in the ideas or story. This might entail having students read or write with a definite point of view or attitude. It might suggest having students project themselves into a scene as a character, eye witness or object (imagine you are Churchill, a reporter, the sea). This might occur at the hands of questioning, dramatization, or simply role playing. In line with our hypothesis, we believe that in these contexts students almost spontaneously acquire a sense of the whole as well as the parts.

To illustrate how the notion of alignment might manifest itself for different readers, consider the following statement offered by a professor describing the stances he takes while reading an academic paper:

> When I read something for the first time, I read it argumentatively. I also find later that I made marginal notations that were quite nastty like, "You're crazy!" or "Why do you want to say that?" Sometimes they are not really fair and that's why I really think to read philosophy you have to read it twice . . . . The second time you read it over you should read it as sympathetically as possible. This time you read it trying to defend the person against the very criticisms that you made the first time through. You read every sentence and if there is an issue that bothers you, you say to yourself, "This guy who wrote this is really very smart. It sounds like what he is saying is wrong; I must be misunderstanding him. What could he really want to be saying?" (Freeman 1981, p. 11)

Also, consider Eleanor Gibson's description of how she approaches the work of Jane Austen:

> Her novels are not for airport reading. They are for reading over and over, savoring every phrase, memorizing the best of them, and getting an even deeper understanding of Jane's "sense of human comedy . . . ."As I read the book for perhaps the twenty fifth time, I consider what point she is trying to make in the similarities and differences between the characters . . . . I want to discover for myself what this sensitive and perceptive individual is trying to tell me. Sometimes I only want to sink back and enjoy it and laugh myself. (Gibson and Levin 1975, pp. 458-460)

Our professor adjusted his stance from critic to sympathetic coauthor across different readings. Our reader of Austen was, at times, a highly active and sympathetic collaborator and, at other times, more neutral and passive.

Obviously, the text itself prompts certain alignments. For example, consider how an author's

choice of words, arguments, or selection of genre may invite a reader to assume different stances and, in the context of these collaborations, different roles.[4] The opening paragraph of Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1977) illustrates how the use of first person along with the descriptive power of words (e.g., cramped . . . metal bottom . . . rising . . . rolling . . . bouncing) compels the reader to engage in a sympathetic collaboration with an author and be immersed as an active participant in a truck ride across the hills of San Francisco.

> That's good thinking there, Cool Breeze. Cool Breeze is a kid with 3 or 4 days' beard sitting next to me on the cramped metal bottom of the open back part of the pickup truck. Bouncing along. Dipping and rising and rolling on these rotten springs like a boat. Out the back of the truck the city of San Francisco is bouncing down the hill, all those endless staggers of bay windows, slums with a view, bouncing and streaming down the hill. One after another, electric signs with neon martini glasses lit up on them, the San Francisco symbol of "bar"—thousands of neon-magenta martini glasses bouncing and streaming down the hill, and beneath them thousands of people wheeling around to look at this freaking crazed truck we're in, their white faces erupting from their lapels like marshmallows—streaming and bouncing down the hill—and God knows they've got plenty to look at. (p. 1)

Also, consider the differences in collaboration and role taking the following text segments invite. While both texts deal with the same information, in one text, the information is presented through a conversation between two children, and in the other text, the information is presented in a more "straight forward" expository style.

> FLY
>
> Lisa and Mike were bored. It was Saturday and they did not know what to do until Lisa had an idea. "I know a game we can play that they play in some countries . . . .
>
> FLY
>
> All over the world children like to play different games. In some countries, children enjoy playing a game called "Fly."

We have found that readers of the first text usually assume a sympathetic collaboration with the writer and identify with the characters. They view the game through the eyes of the children and remain rather neutral with respect to the author. Our readers of the second text tend to have difficulty

4 It is not within the scope of this paper to characterize the various mechanisms by which writers engage readers. We would encourage readers to examine different texts for themselves and some of the analytic schemes generated by Bruce (1981) and Gibson (1975), among others.

understanding the game at the same time as they are critical of the author. They adopt a role more akin to an observer who, lacking a specific angle, catches glimpses of the game without acquiring an overall understanding. Some of us have experienced a similar phenomenon as viewers of an overseas telecast of an unfamiliar sport (e.g., the game of cricket on British television). The camera angles provided by the British sportscasters are disorienting for the native viewer.

Clearly a number of factors may influence the nature of a reader's alignment and the extent to which his resulting interpretation is viable. A reader, as our last example illustrated, might adopt an alignment which interferes with how well he will be able to negotiate an understanding. Sometimes a reader might adopt an alignment which overindulges certain biases, predispositions, and personal experiences. Doris Lessing (1973) described this phenomenon in a discussion of readers' responses to her *The Golden Notebook:*

> Ten years after I wrote [it], I can get, in one week, three letters about it . . . . One letter is entirely about the sex war, about man's inhumanity to woman, and woman's inhumanity to man, and the writer has produced pages and pages all about nothing else, for she—but not always a she—can't see anything else in the book.
>
> The second is about politics, probably from an old Red like myself, and he or she writes many pages about politics, and never mentions any other theme.
>
> These two letters used, when the book was—as it were—young, to be the most common.
>
> The third letter, once rare but now catching up on the others, is written by a man or a woman who can see nothing in it but the theme of mental illness.
>
> But it is the same book.
>
> And naturally these incidents bring up again questions of what people see when they read a book, and why one person sees one pattern and nothing at all of another pattern, and how odd it is to have, as author, such a clear picture of a book, that is seen so very differently by its readers. (p. xi)

Such occurrences should not be regarded as novel. It is this phenomenon of reader-author engagement and idiosyncratic response which has been at the center of a debate among literary theorists, some of whom (e.g., Jakobson and Levi Strauss 1962) would suggest that a "true" reading experience has been instantiated only when readers assume an alignment which involves close collaboration with authors. Others would argue that readers can assume a variety of alignments, whether these alignments are constrained by the author (Iser 1974) or initiated freely by the reader (Fish 1970). They would rarely go so far as to suggest the destruction of the text, but instead, as Tompkins (1980) suggested, they might begin to view reading and writing as joining hands, changing places, "and finally becoming distinguishable only as two names for the same activity" (p. ii).

We do not wish to debate the distinctions represented by these and other theorists, but to suggest that there appears to be at least some consensus that effective reading involves a form of alignment which emerges in conjunction with a working relationship between readers and writers. In our opinion, this does not necessitate bridling readers and writers to one another. Indeed, we would hypothesize that new insights are more likely discovered and appreciations derived when readers and writers try out different alignments as they read and write their texts. This suggests spending time rethinking, reexamining, reviewing and rereading. For this type of experience does not occur on a single reading; rather it emerges only after several rereadings, reexaminations, and drafts. It is to this notion of reexamination and revision that we now turn.

Revising

While it is common to think of a writer as a reviser it is *not* common to think of a reader as someone who revises unless perhaps he has a job involving some editorial functions. We believe that this is unfortunate. We would like to suggest that revising should be considered as integral to reading as it is to writing. If readers are to develop some control over and a sense of discovery with the models of meaning they build, they must approach text with the same deliberation, time, and reflection that a writer employs as she revises a text. They must examine their developing interpretations and view the models they build as draft-like in quality—subject to revision. We would like to see students engage in behaviors such as rereading (especially with different alignments), annotating the text on the page with reactions, and questioning whether the model they have built is what they really want. With this in mind let us tum our attention to revising in writing.

We have emphasized that writing is not merely taking ideas from one's head and placing them onto the page. A writer must choose words which best represent these ideas; that is, she must choose words which have the desired impact. Sometimes this demands knowing what she wants to say and how to say it. At other times, it warrants examining what is written or read to discover and clarify one's ideas. Thus a writer will repeatedly reread, reexamine, delete, shape, and correct what she is writing. She will consider whether and how her ideas fit together, how well her words represent the ideas to be shared and how her text can be fine tuned. For some writers this development and redevelopment will appear to be happening effortlessly. For others, revision demands hard labor and sometimes several painful drafts. Some rework the drafts in their head before they rewrite; others slowly rework pages as they go. From analyses of the revision strategies of experienced writers, it appears that the driving force behind revision is a sense of emphasis and proportion. As Sommers (1980) suggested, one of the questions most experienced writers ask themselves is "what does my essay as a *whole* need for form, balance, rhythm, and communication?" (p. 386). In trying to answer this question, writers proceed through revision cycles with sometimes overlapping and sometimes

novel concerns. Initial revision cycles might be directed predominately at topical development; later cycles might be directed at stylistic concerns.

For most readers, revision is an unheard-of experience. Observations of secondary students reveal that most readers view reading competency as the ability to read rapidly a single text once with maximum recall (Schallert and Tierney 1982). It seems that students rarely pause to reflect on their ideas or to judge the quality of their developing interpretations. Nor do they often reread a text either from the same or a different perspective. In fact, to suggest that a reader should approach text as a writer who crafts an understanding across several drafts—who pauses, rethinks, and revises—is almost contrary to some well-established goals readers proclaim for themselves (e.g., that efficient reading is equivalent to maximum recall based upon a single fast reading).

Suppose we could convince students that they ought to revise their readings of a text; would they be able to do it? We should not assume that merely allowing time for pausing, reflecting, and reexamining will guarantee that students will revise their readings. Students need to be given support and feedback at so doing. Students need to be aware of strategies they can pursue to accomplish revisions, to get things restarted when they stall, and to compare one draft or reading with another. The pursuit of a second draft of a reading should have a purpose. Sometimes this purpose can emerge from discussing a text with the teacher and peers; sometimes it may come from within; sometimes it will not occur unless the student has a reason or functional context for revision as well as help from a thoughtful teacher.

Monitoring

Hand in hand with planning, aligning, drafting, and revising, readers and writers must be able to distance themselves from the texts they have created to evaluate what they have developed. We call this executive function monitoring. Monitoring usually occurs tacitly, but it can be under conscious control. The monitor in us keeps track of and control over our other functions. Our monitor decides whether we have planned, aligned, drafted, and/or revised properly. It decides when one activity should dominate over the others. Our monitor tells us when we have done a good job and when we have not. It tells us when to go back to the drawing board and when we can relax.

The complexity of the type of juggling which the monitor is capable of has been captured aptly in an analogy of a switchboard operator, used by Flower and Hayes (1980) to describe how writers juggle constraints:

> She has two important calls on hold. (Don't forget that idea.)
>
> Four lights just started flashing. (They demand immediate attention or they'll be lost.) A party of five wants to be hooked up together. (They need to be connected somehow.) A party of two thinks they've been incorrectly connected. (Where do they go?)

> And throughout this complicated process of remembering, retrieving, and connecting, the operator's voice must project calmness, confidence, and complete control. (p. 33)

The monitor has one final task—to engage in a dialogue with the inner reader.

When writers and readers compose text they negotiate its meaning with what Murray (1982) calls the other self—that inner reader (the author's first reader) who continually reacts to what the writer has written, is writing and will write or what the reader has read, is reading and will read. It is this other self which is the reader's or writer's counsel, and judge, and prompter. This other self oversees what the reader and writer is trying to do, defines the nature of collaboration between reader and author, and decides how well the reader as writer or writer as reader is achieving his or her goals.

A Summary and Discussion

To reiterate, we view both reading and writing as acts of composing. We see these acts of composing as involving continuous, recurring, and recursive transactions among readers and writers, their respective inner selves, and their perceptions of each other's goals and desires. Consider the reader's role as we envision it. At the same time as the reader considers what he perceives to be the author's intentions (or what the reader perceives to be what the author is trying to get the reader to do or think), he negotiates goals with his inner self (or what he would like to achieve). With these goals being continuously negotiated (sometimes embedded within each other) the reader proceeds to take different alignments (critic, co-author, editor, character, reporter, eye witness, etc.) as he uses features from his own experiential arrays and what he perceives to be arrayed by the author in order to create a model of meaning for the text. These models of meaning must assume a coherent, holistic quality in which everything fits together. The development of these models of meaning occurs from the vantage point of different alignments which the reader adopts with respect to these arrays. It is from these vantage points that the various arrays are perceived, and their position adjusted such that the reader's goals and desire for a sense of completeness are achieved. Our diagrammatic representation of the major components of these processes is given in Figure 1.

Such an account of reading distinguishes itself from previous descriptions of reading and reading-writing relationships in several notable ways:

1. Most accounts of reading versus writing (as well as accounts of how readers develop a model of meaning) tend to emphasize reading as a receptive rather than productive activity. Some, in fact, regard reading as the mirror image of writing.
2. Most language accounts suggest that reading and writing are interrelated. They do not address the suggestion that reading and writing are multidimensional, multi-modal processes—both acts of composing.

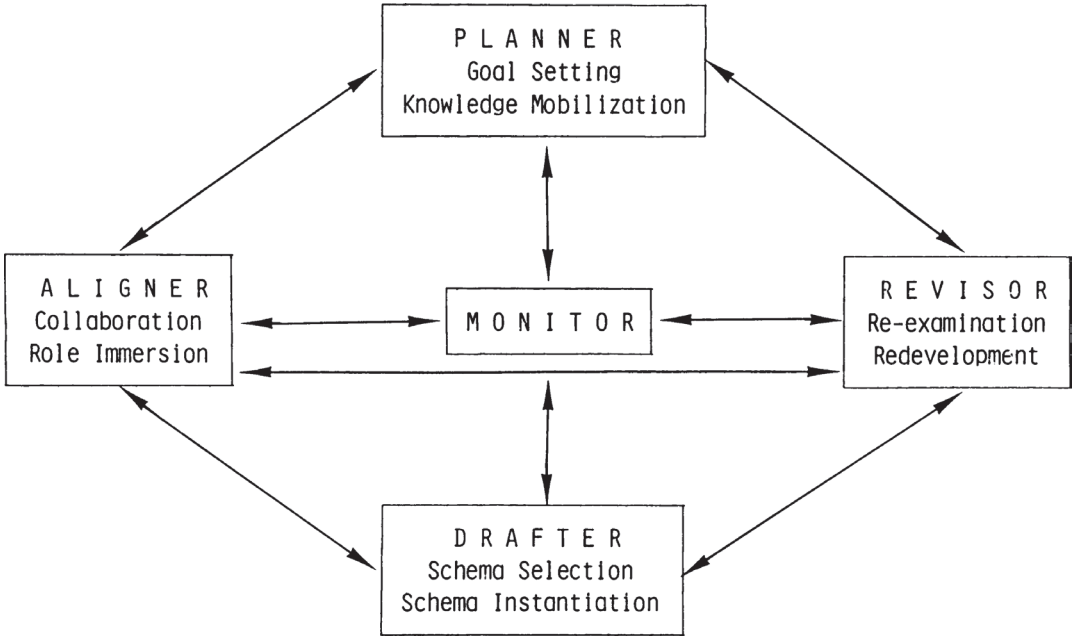


Figure 1. Some Components of the Composing Model of Reading

3. The phenomenon of alignment as integral to composing has rarely been explored.
4. Most descriptions of how readers build models of meaning fail to consider how the processes of planning, drafting, aligning, and revising are manifested.
5. Previous interactional and transactional accounts of reading (Rosenblatt 1978; Rumelhart 1980) give little consideration to the transaction which occurs among the inner selves of the reader and writer.

What our account fails to do is thoroughly differentiate how these composing behaviors manifest themselves in the various contexts of reading and writing. Nor does it address the pattern of interactions among these behaviors across moments during any reading and writing experience. For example, we give the impression of sequential stages even though we believe in simultaneous processes. We hope to clarify and extend these notions in subsequent writings.

References

Anderson, R. C.; Pichert, J. W.; and Shirey, L. L. *Effects of the Reader's Schema at Different Points in Time.*

Technical Report No. 119. Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, April 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 169 523)

Anderson, R. C.; Reynolds, R. E.; Schallert, D. L.; and Goetz, E. T. "Frameworks for Comprehending Discourse." *American Educational Research Journal* 14 (1977): 367-382.

Applebee, A. N. *The Child's Concept of Story.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Birnbaum, J. C. "The Reading and Composing Behavior of Selected Fourth and Seventh Grade Students." *Research in the Teaching of English* 16 (1982): 241-260.

Bruce, B. "A Social Interaction Model of Reading." *Discourse Processes* 4 (1981): 273-311.

Collins, A.; Brown, J. S.; and Larkin, K. M. "Inference in Text Understanding." In *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension,* edited by R. J. Spiro, 8. C. Bruce, and W. F. Brewer. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1980.

Fish, S. "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." *New Literary History* 2 (1970): 123-162. Flower, L. and Hayes, J. R. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 32 (1981): 365-387.

Freeman, M. "How to Read a Philosophical Text." Unpublished paper, Harvard University, 1982.

Gibson, E. J. and Levin, H. *The Psychology of Reading.* Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1975. Gibson, W. *Persona.* New York: Random House, 1969.

Goodman, K. S. "Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game." *Journal of the Reading Specialist* 6 (1967): 126-135.

Hay, A. and Brewer, W. F. *Children's Understanding of the Narrator's Point of View in Prose.* Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, 1982.

Hayes, D. and Tierney, R. "Developing Readers' Knowledge Through Analogy." *Reading Research Quarterly* 17 (1982): 256-280.

Iser, W. *The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974.

Jakobson, R. and Levi-Strauss, C. "Les Chats de Charles Baudelave." *L'Homme* 2 (1962): 5-21.

Lessing, D. *Introduction to The Golden Notebook.* New York: Bantam Books, 1973.

Murray, D. *Learning by Teaching.* Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1982. Murray, D. "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader." *College Composition and Communication* 33 (1982): 140-147.

Pichert, J. W. *Sensitivity to What Is Important in Prose.* Technical Report No. 149. Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, November 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 179 946)

Rosenblatt, L. M. *Literature As Exploration,* 3rd edition. New York: Noble and Noble, 1976 (originally published 1939).

Rosenblatt, L. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Rumelhart, D. "Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition." In *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension,* edited by R. J. Spiro, B. Bruce, and W. Brewer. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1980.

Sadoski, M. "An Exploratory Study of the Relationships Between Reported Imagery and the Comprehension and Recall of a Story." *Reading Research Quarterly,* in press.

Schallert, D. and Tierney, R. J. *Learning from Expository Text: The Interaction of Text Structure with Reader Characteristics.* Final report. National Institute of Education, 1982.

Smith, F. *Understanding Reading.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.

Sommers, N. I. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." *College Composition and Communication* 31 (1980): 378-388.

Spiro, R. J. "Remembering Information from Text: The 'State of Schema' Approach." In *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge,* edited by R. C. Anderson, R. J. Spiro, and W. E. Montague. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977.

Tierney, R. J. "Writer-Reader Transactions: Defining the Dimensions of Negotiation." In *Forum: Essays on Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing,* edited by P. Stock. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1983.

Tierney, R. J.; LaZansky, J.; Raphael, T.; and Cohen, P. "Author's Intentions and Reader's Interpretation." In *Understanding Readers Understanding,* edited by R. J. Tierney, P. Anders, and J. Mitchell. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, in press.

Tierney, R. J. and Mosenthal, J. *The Cohesion Concept's Relationship to the Coherence of Text.* Technical Report No. 221. Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, October 1981. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 212 991)

Tompkins, J. P. *Reader-Response Criticism.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980. Wolfe, T. *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.* New York: Bantam, 1977.

Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, Volume 2, Number 2, © 2002 Duke University Press

Commentary

The Transition to College Reading[1]

Robert Scholes

I began my work on this assignment, as many students do, by e-mailing an expert for assistance. I wrote to a colleague who has been teaching one of our survey courses at Brown and asked her what she felt were the most important problems or deficiencies in the preparation of first-year students in her literature courses. Her reply, though only a hasty e-mail rather than a considered statement, was so helpful that I quote it here, with her permission:

> I think that the new high school graduates I see (and sophomores with no previous lit classes) most lack close reading skills. Often they have generic concepts and occasionally they have some historical knowledge, though perhaps not as much as they should. I find that they are most inclined to substitute what they generally think a text should be saying for what it actually says, and lack a way to explore the intricacies and interests of the words on the page. Sometimes the historical knowledge and generic concepts actually become problems when students use them as tools for making texts say and do what students think they should, generalizing that all novels do X or poems do Y. Usually the result is that they want to read every text as saying something extremely familiar that they might agree with. I see them struggling the most to read the way texts differ from their views, to find what is specific about the language, address, assumptions etc. (Tamar Katz, pers. com., 17 September 2001)

Her observations confirm my own sense that we have a reading problem of massive dimensions— a problem that goes well beyond any purely literary concerns.

This, in turn, drew my attention to the asymmetry in our topics for this panel, which mirrors the asymmetry in our professional arrangements.[i] Setting aside the institutional differences, which affect everyone, the other two topics were divided into writing and literature. The natural reciprocal of writing— which, of course, is reading— had somehow disappeared, apparently subsumed under the topic of literature. (I have taken the liberty of compensating for this asymmetry in my own title for this piece by replacing the word *literature* with the word *reading*.) But this division of the English project is not just an aberration in the thought of this session's organizer. It is the way that most

1 **Citation:** Scholes, Robert. "The Transition to College Reading." *Pedagogy*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2002, pp. 165–172.

English departments at college and secondary levels think of their enterprise. This, as I have argued for some time, is an unfortunate error that we need to correct.

Why is it an error? I shall spend the rest of this essay counting the ways. We normally acknowledge, however grudgingly, that writing must be taught and continue to be taught from high school to college and perhaps beyond. We accept it, I believe, because we can see writing, and we know that much of the writing we see is not good enough. But we do not see reading. We see some writing about reading, to be sure, but we do not see reading. I am certain, though, that if we could see it, we would be appalled. My colleague Tamar Katz, like many perceptive teachers, has caught a glimpse of the real problem, which she puts this way: "They want to read every text as saying something extremely familiar that they might agree with." The problem emerges as one of difference, or otherness— a difficulty in moving from the words of the text to some set of intentions that are different from one's own, some values or presuppositions different from one's own and possibly opposed to them.[ii] This problem, as I see it, has two closely related parts. One is a failure to focus sharply on the language of the text. The other is a failure to imagine the otherness of the text's author.

One of the great ironies in this situation is that the study of literature, especially as conceived by the New Critics, whose thought still shapes much of our literary education, was supposed to develop the student's ability to focus on the language of texts. If we nonetheless fail to teach close reading—and many of us would agree with Katz and with Arlene Wilner (in this issue) that we do—then the problem may lie not so much in the words themselves as in the otherness of their authors. That is, if the words belong to the reader, they are likely to express the reader's thoughts. What we actually mean by "close" reading may be distant reading—reading as if the words belonged to a person at some distance from ourselves in thought or feeling. Perhaps they must be seen as the words of someone else before they can be seen as words at all— or, more particularly, as words that need to be read with close attention. It is no secret, of course, that the New Critics defined as a fallacy any attempt to read a text for its author's intention. Since then we have had the death of the author, reader-response criticism, the self-deconstructing text, and the symptomatic readings of cultural studies, all of which, in various ways, undermine the notion of authorial intention as a feature of the reading process. And all of them, in various degrees and respects, are right and useful, but only if reading for authorial intention precedes them. The author must live before the author can die. We teachers must help our students bring the author to life.

The reading problems of our students can themselves be read as a symptom of a larger cultural problem. We are not good, as a culture, at imagining the other. After 11 September 2001 we have begun to learn, perhaps, that this deficiency is serious, though I am afraid that much of our response has been to shout our own words louder and to try to suppress those that differ from ours. On the present occasion, however, we must focus on this problem at the level of schooling. I mention the larger picture not to aggrandize the topic but to indicate the depth of the problem, which is as much

a matter of ideology as of methodology. English teachers must solve it at the level of the curriculum and the classroom. We must make some changes both in what we teach and in how we teach it, starting in secondary schools.

First, the past. Consider the following advice from a textbook on reading:

> The great object to be accomplished in reading as a rhetorical exercise is to convey to the *hearer*, fully and clearly, the ideas and feelings of the writer.
>
> In order to do this, it is necessary that a selection should be carefully studied by the pupil before he attempts to read it. In accordance with this view, a preliminary rule of importance is the following:
>
> Rule I.— Before attempting to read a lesson, the learner should make himself fully acquainted with the subject as treated of in that lesson, and endeavor to make the thought, and feeling, and sentiments of the writer his own.

I linger over the word *hearer*, which I have emphasized in this quotation. What has a hearer to do with reading? This unexpected word alerts me to the fact that I am facing a text that I must read carefully, attending to presuppositions different from my own. This advice about the teaching of reading comes immediately after the table of contents in McGuffey's (1879: 9) *Fifth Eclectic Reader*. It applies to what the text calls "reading as a rhetorical exercise," that is, reading aloud—and also reading to express "the thought, and feeling, and sentiments of the writer." That is where the hearer comes in. Odd, isn't it, that attending to "the thought, and feeling, and sentiments of the writer" is exactly what our students now find difficult? The older pedagogy saw it as a problem, too, but had a solution for it. The solution was "elocution," or reading aloud. That is one thing we can learn from our predecessors, for reading aloud makes the reading process evident to the ear in tone and rhythm and to the eye in bodily posture and facial expression, just as writing makes the composing process evident in written signs. In this older dispensation, failure to "get" the author's thought, feeling, and sentiments would emerge during an elocutionary performance. I am not certain how close we can come to the McGuffey method in our classrooms, but I think that we should try to bridge the gap. [iii] I know that we can come very close to it in teaching drama, where the move to oral interpretation requires no explanation or apology—which is an argument for getting more drama into our courses.

It should follow that we need to consider including in our courses texts that are difficult for students to read as "saying something extremely familiar that they might agree with"— texts that say things that many students will not, in fact, agree with and that we may not agree with, either. For some years Gerald Graff has urged us to "teach the conflicts." Insofar as our intradepartmental conflicts are concerned, I have never been persuaded that students would care enough about them to make the enterprise worthwhile, but Graff (forthcoming) is clearly broadening his notion of conflicts in *Clueless in Academe*, and I am happy to agree with him about the need to teach texts that

express conflicting positions. There has been concern, since Quintilian at least, and probably since the Sophists, about whether a good rhetorician was necessarily a good person. Without rushing in where angels like Richard Lanham have trod warily, I want to say that a good person, in our time, needs to have the rhetorical capacity to imagine the other's thought, feeling, and sentiments. That is, though not all rhetoricians are good people, all good citizens must be rhetoricians to the extent that they can imagine themselves in the place of another and understand views different from their own. It is our responsibility as English teachers to help our students develop this form of textual power, in which strength comes, paradoxically, from subordinating one's own thoughts temporarily to the views and values of another person.

This is one reason that I think it is a bad idea for the Bush administration to tell television networks to censor the words of our enemies in the videos they broadcast. We Americans are seen as arrogant by a large part of the world— and not just the Islamic part— precisely because we do not listen to other points of view, but we have never made it a national policy not to listen to them until now. Nor can our government plead the fact that other parts of the world do not listen to us or understand us as an excuse for refusing to allow us to listen to them. Our form of government and our sort of society depend on the freedom of individuals to interpret texts for themselves. Our roots, as a culture, are deeply embedded in a Protestant tradition of individual interpretation of sacred texts, which rests on access to those texts for all. People died for the right to translate and circulate these crucial texts, taking them out of the hands of a priestly caste. This tradition has also allowed the publication and discussion of profane texts, on the grounds that truth will prevail. It is disheartening, at a time of national crisis, for our government to seek to suppress the words that may enable us to understand our enemies' motives. It is, writ large, the same problem we encounter in students who cannot understand a point of view different from their own.

Katz points out one form of the problem: students simply assimilate the thought and feeling in a text to their own thoughts and feelings. Wilner points out another: students recognize a different position and simply refuse to read it or think about it. These two responses to otherness constitute the American way, I am afraid, and it is a way of responding to texts that we, as teachers, have a duty to counteract. If rhetoric is a schooling in textual virtue as well as in textual power, as I believe it is, this virtue consists largely in our being able to assume another person's point of view before criticizing it and resuming our own. We, and our students, must learn to put ourselves into a text before taking ourselves out of it. Even in these difficult times we must remain open to otherness.

If we accept this rhetorical goal as a part of our teaching mission, it follows that we must organize a curriculum to support it. Our present emphasis on literature, however, is at cross-purposes to this goal because of the way we have defined the term *literature* and because of the methods we employ. In our educational tradition "literature," and its predecessor, "belles lettres," once included powerful speeches and essays along with poems, plays, and stories. But over the past two centuries

an opposition between the aesthetic text and the rhetorical text has developed, so that the term *literature* now excludes texts intended to persuade, whether they be essays or orations, advertising or propaganda, in print or in other media. The process through which this has happened is too long and complex for treatment here, but it assuredly did happen, and we are dealing with the results. The insistence that literary texts "should not mean, but be," as Archibald MacLeish put it in his well-known poem "Ars Poetica," contributed mightily. (MacLeish, we should note, was making an argument in a poem that argued against making arguments in poems.) In any case, literature became defined as texts that do not speak to us except with a forked tongue. Paraphrase became a heresy, intentionality a fallacy, the author a mute corpse, and the literary text a self-deconstructing artifact or ideological symptom.

We need to change our definitions as well as our curriculum. First, we need to include more overtly persuasive or argumentative texts in our curricula. We can do it in virtually every kind of course now in the literary curriculum. In the American literature survey, for instance, we can include not only more speeches and documents but texts in traditional literary forms that take strong positions, like Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Justice Denied in Massachusetts," about the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. We can also include critical interpretations of such texts, for example, Allen Tate's attack on Millay's poem in his essay "Tension in Literature" (see Scholes 2001: 17 – 21, 64 – 75, for Tate's and Millay's texts).

We can and should do this, in both secondary school and college. The objections to including criticism in literature courses are mainly made on behalf of greater coverage of literature itself, since critical texts must displace some literary texts if they are included. The primary answer to these objections is that, if we are teaching reading, we must give some examples of how it is done, but there is a secondary answer as well. Critical texts, if properly chosen, will differ with one another, so that reading them will lead students to recognize difference itself as they situate their own readings in relation to those of the critics. The purpose of this approach is not to make literary critics more important. They have become too important already. It is to bring criticism out into the open so that every student can be a critical reader. It is to bring criticism back to earth.

Second, newer technologies also offer possibilities for the teaching of reading that we are only beginning to explore. There is a lot of writing on the Web that takes positions and makes arguments, well or badly. There are ongoing arguments, on all sorts of topics, that can be traced through particular threads on Web sites. Part of the problem we face in classrooms, especially in the general-education classrooms of colleges and in the English courses of secondary schools, is that debates about literary interpretation simply do not engage many of our students. These same students, however, may go right from our classrooms to their terminals, where they engage in serious debate about issues that are important to them.

Let me give a trivial example. For my sins, no doubt, I frequently follow discussions on a Web

site devoted to the New England Patriots football team. On these pages I have found, and find regularly, debates conducted with a high degree of seriousness and skill over matters related directly to football, including coaching strategies, personnel, media coverage, and training methods. Despite the occasional flame war, these debates typically involve the presentation of evidence (often statistical), the drawing of conclusions, the consideration of opposing views, the eloquent expression of attitudes— in short, all the things that go into persuasive and argumentative writing. One can also find examples of exposition and explanation, such as a clear and cogent description of the differences between one-gap and two-gap defensive-line play. There are hundreds if not thousands of comparable sites dealing with everything from motorcycles to religion. We need to see the Web as a constantly replenished source of textual materials for study. We should be asking students to bring back examples from sites of interest to them and to discuss the positions taken, the quality of various presentations, and their own views of the matters at hand.

We need, in short, to connect the development of reading and writing skills to the real world around us and to the virtual world in which that actual world becomes available to us in the form of texts. Without education, as Thomas Jefferson well understood, participatory democracy cannot function. The basis of an education for the citizens of a democracy lies in that apparently simple but actually difficult act of reading so as to grasp and evaluate the thoughts and feelings of that mysterious other person: the writer. The primary pedagogical responsibility of English teachers is to help students develop those skills. We need to give this humble task more attention, and we need to do a better job of it, too. We can start by recognizing it as a crucial object of our discipline— as more fundamental and more important than "covering" any canon of literary works.

Notes

i. This commentary is a revised version of a talk delivered during a session at the National Council of Teachers of English Conference in Baltimore in November 2001. The session, organized by David Laurence, national director of the Association of Departments of English, focused on the transition from high school to college. Each panelist addressed a specific problem: Sandy Stephan, institutional differences; Tom Jehn, college writing; and Robert Scholes, college literature.

ii. See Arlene Wilner's discussion of this problem in "Confronting Resistance: Sonny's Blues—and Mine" in this issue.

iii. In " 'Reading Fiction/Teaching Fiction': A Pedagogical Experiment," Jerome McGann (2001: 147) makes a similar argument for what he calls "recitation": "Over some years I have observed the (perhaps increasing) disability that students have in negotiating language in an articulate way. This weakness seems to propagate others, most especially an inclination to 'read' texts at relatively high levels of textual abstraction. With diminished skills in perceiving words as such comes, it seems, a weakened ability to notice

other close details of language—semantic, grammatical, rhetorical. Recitation—I am talking about oral recitation of the fictional text—forces students to return to elementary levels of linguistic attention. To be effective as a pedagogical tool, however, it must be performed regularly and explicitly discussed and reflected upon. These exercises form the basis for developing higher-level acts of linguistic attention."

Works Cited

Graff, Gerald. Forthcoming. *Clueless in Academe*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. McGann, Jerome. 2001. "'Reading Fiction/Teaching Fiction': A Pedagogical Experiment." *Pedagogy* 1: 143 – 65.

McGuffey, William H. 1879. *Fifth Eclectic Reader*. Rev. ed. New York: American Book. Scholes, Robert. 2001. *The Crafty Reader*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

College English, Volume 70, Number 6, July 2008

Texts of Our Institutional Lives : Studying the "Reading Transition" from High School to College: What Are Our Students Reading and Why?[1]

David A. Jolliffe and Allison Harl[2]

More than our colleagues in other departments, English department faculty members and administrators need to know what, how, and why students read. Most composition programs and assignments are grounded in reading, and, of course, so are English majors' curriculums. English department faculty members are nearly always major players in general education, most of which requires substantial reading. We need to know how students are learning to read before they come to college, how we continue to foster close, critical reading throughout the college years, and how our students develop reading abilities and practices that they will continue to inhabit and improve after college.

If the scuttlebutt about reading is true, the Visigoths are at the door. An array of national surveys and studies suggests that neither high school nor college students spend much time preparing for class, the central activity of which we presume to be reading assigned articles, chapters, and books. Similar studies argue that college students spend little to no time reading for pleasure and that adults in the United States are devoting less and less of their free time to reading fiction, poetry, and drama. Books lamenting the decline in the reading of great literature in our culture[i] find an eager and ardent audience. The water-cooler conversation in English departments and indeed throughout the university seems to confirm the reports and corroborate the end-of-reading treatises and memoirs: legions of students apparently come to class ill prepared, not having done the assigned reading at all or having given it only cursory attention. Professors admit that students can actually pass exams if they come to the lectures and take (or buy) good notes, whether or not they have read the assigned material. In short, careful reading seems have become a smaller blip on the

1 **Citation:** Jolliffe, David A. and Allison Harl. "Studying the 'Reading Transition' from High School to College: What Are Our Students Reading and Why?" *College English*, vol. 70, no. 6, 2008, pp. 599–617.

2 **David A. Jolliffe** is professor of English and of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas, where he also holds the Brown Chair in English Literacy. Currently, he directs a pilot version of a community literacy advocacy program in Augusta, Arkansas, and leads the Arkansas Delta Oral History Project, through which mentors from his university collaborate with students from ten high schools in eastern Arkansas. **Allison Harl** is pursuing a Ph.D. in American Literature and Culture at the University of Arkansas, where her secondary emphasis is rhetoric and composition. Her scholarly interests include frontier American literature, literacy studies, and writing through active citizenship.

higher educational radar screen or dropped off it altogether.

Despite the attention paid to student reading in the national surveys, relatively little scholarship has examined empirically what, how, and whether college students actually do read and how reading thus figures in the transition from high school to college. We set out to address this knowledge gap in a local way during a recent fall semester at our institution, the University of Arkansas. We wanted to know how our first-year students taking college composition, a course in which students mostly write about their reading, perceived and effected the transition from high school to college as readers. Therefore, we studied the reading habits and practices of twentyone first-year composition students during the first two weeks of October, at which time they were in their sixth and seventh weeks of a fifteen-week semester. In some ways, our study provides a remarkably accurate local representation of the data about student reading as reported in the national surveys: first-year students at the University of Arkansas spend just about the same amount of time reading and preparing for class as students at other research universities—probably not as much time as their instructors and institutional administrators think they should. In other ways, however, our study offers insights into the reading environments of first-year college students that neither the national surveys nor the status-quo chatter hints at. We found students who were actively involved in their own programs of reading aimed at values clarification, personal enrichment, and career preparation. In short, we discovered students who were extremely engaged with their reading, but not with the reading that their classes required.

We offer our study as an example of local institutional research, aimed at helping our faculty understand salient aspects of our students' reading experiences and develop key strategies for addressing our students' reading histories. We hope, however, that what we found might help other institutions' faculty members and administrators think more carefully about how they meet and understand their students as readers.

What Do We Know about Reading?: High School, College, and the Transition

Any faculty member who wonders how and whether students prepare for class can probably find sources of consternation and concern in two national surveys. Since its inception in 1999, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), directed by George Kuh at Indiana University, has provided valuable data to college and university administrators and faculties about first-year and senior-year students' practices and beliefs as related to the survey organization's five "national benchmarks of effective educational practice": "level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environments" (12). Although the answers to questions engendered by each of the benchmark cat-

egories might interest faculty members who want to understand their students better, we believe that the questions generated under the rubric of "levels of academic challenge" are most germane to anyone concerned about student reading. The eleven questions in this category ask students about the number of textbooks, books, and book-length packs of course readings that they were required to read; the number and length of the papers that they were required to write; their perceptions of course emphases (for example, analyzing, synthesizing, making judgments, and applying theories or concepts); and the amount of time that they spent preparing for class.

Under the traditional rule of thumb of two hours' preparation time for every one hour in class, this average full-time student should be devoting 24 hours per week to studying, reading, writing, and so on. However, in the 2005 NSSE, taken by about 130,000 first-year students and a similar number of seniors from 523 colleges and universities, 66 percent of first-year students and 64 percent of seniors at all participating colleges and universities reported spending fewer than sixteen hours during a typical seven-day week preparing for class—"studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities."[ii]

If one concludes that college students are spending too little time preparing for class, one would also have to deduce that the situation in high school is even more dire. In 2004, five years after NSSE's debut, the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) emerged from the same organization. In the inaugural HSSSE, over 90,000 high school students from grades 9 through 12 completed the survey, providing information about who is planning to go to college and how well students are prepared for college ("Getting Students Ready for College" 3). Among the seniors completing the survey, 94 percent of all respondents and 90 percent of respondents taking "college credit/prep/honors" courses reported spending six hours or fewer per week on "assigned reading." These data notwithstanding, a large majority of all of the respondents agreed with the statement, "I have the skills and abilities to complete my work." ("What We Can Learn from High School Students" 12). In other words, although the large majority of high school students spend less than one hour a day on assigned reading, they feel as though they are good enough readers to get by—perhaps because their schoolwork does not challenge them very much.

The NSSE and HSSSE data find an ominous counterpart in a study reported by Alvin Sanoff in 2006. Nearly 800 high school teachers and about 1,100 college faculty members were surveyed to determine their perceptions of how well students were prepared for college in reading, writing, science, mathematics, and oral communication, as well as in more attitudinal domains such as "motivation to work hard," "study habits," and "ability to seek and use support services." Only one-quarter of high school teachers and one-tenth of college faculty members thought that entering first-year students were "very well prepared" to read and understand difficult materials.

Consider the NSSE, HSSSE, and Sanoff data alongside two widely hailed studies of adult reading in the United States and the situation seems even more portentous. The 2004 report *Reading at*

Risk from the National Endowment for the Arts found that literary reading among adult readers in the United States declined by ten percentage points between 1982 and 2002, representing a loss of 20 million readers, a decline mirrored, somewhat less precipitously, in the diminishing numbers of adults who read books of any kind (ix).[iii] More recently, the NEA's 2007 report, *To Read or Not to Read*, maintained that "Americans are spending less time reading, reading comprehension skills are eroding," and "[t]hese declines have serious civic, social, cultural, and economic implications" (5).

Although the NSSE, the HSSSE, and NEA studies provide fodder for the perception that college-bound and college students can't and/or don't read extensively, critically, or even sufficiently, the surveys and reports did not provide us with a rich enough perspective as we planned how to engage in conversations with our institution's faculty members about designing, adjusting, and delivering reading-based composition and general-education curricula to our students. Very few scholars have actually investigated the quality or quantity of college students' reading.[iv] We wanted to know more about the reading lives of our students.

How We Studied Student Reading

In that semester, we randomly selected twenty-one full-time freshmen from a volunteer pool of about one hundred students and paid the participants to complete three tasks. First, they filled out a questionnaire about their perceptions of their own reading abilities and habits in high school and college. Students provided information and opinions in response to the following questions:

- Approximately how many hours per week did you spend reading in your senior year of high school?
- Approximately what percentage of those hours were devoted to reading for your courses, in contrast to reading for your own interest or pleasure?
- Did you consider the amount of time you spent reading during your senior year in high school excessively high, moderately high, moderately how, or excessively low? Explain why.
- Did you consider yourself an excellent, above average, below average, or poor reader in high school? Explain why.
- So far this year [as of October 2], approximately how many hours per week are you spending on reading?
- Approximately what percentage of those hours are devoted to reading for your courses, in contrast to reading for your own interest or pleasure?
- Do you consider the amount of time you spend reading this year excessively high, moderately high, moderately low, or excessively low? Explain why.
- Do you now consider yourself an excellent, above average, below average, or poor reader? Explain why.

The second task required them to keep a reading journal for two consecutive weeks. We asked them to write for at least thirty minutes daily, describing in detail everything they read that day, and to produce at least ten full entries over the two weeks. For each entry, we asked the students to provide the title and author and the number of pages of each reading, indicating whether each text was read for a class, for a job, or for their interest or pleasure. Additionally, we asked students to indicate approximately how many minutes they spent reading during each day. Finally, we asked participants to focus specifically on *one* of the texts they read for each day and write about that text, responding to a series of questions. These questions were divided into five major categories: 1.) Focusing on One Specific Text, 2.) Reading Critically 3.) Drawing Relationships: Text to Self, 4.) Drawing Relationships: Text to Text, and 5.) Drawing Relationships: Text to World.[v] The following are the actual questions that we asked students to answer in response to their one "chosen" text:

Focusing on One Specific Text

1. What was the title of the text you read?
2. What was the purpose of reading this text? Why did you read it?
3. Did you choose to read this text or was it assigned? If assigned, who assigned it?
4. If assigned the text, did whoever assigned it give you instructions on how to read it? If so, what were the instructions?
5. If you chose this text for pleasure, why did you choose it?
6. How long did it take you to read the text?
7. Were you engaged in any other activity as you read the text (cooking, watching TV, etc.)?
8. Did you take a break or read straight through?

Reading Critically

1. What was the most important point the text made?
2. What were its most important secondary or supporting points?
3. Did you agree or disagree with the writer on any points?
4. Did you draw any inferences or conclusions that weren't directly stated in the text?
5. How difficult was the text to read?
6. Did you underline, highlight, or make comments in the margins? If so, describe the kinds of things you noted.
7. Did you ask questions of the text as you read? If so, describe your questions.
8. Did you look at headings and subtitles before you began to read? If so, what did they teach you?
9. What part of the reading, if any, did you skip over?

10. Why did you skip over this part, if you did?

Drawing Relationships: Text to Self

1. Did you find that what you read relates to your life in any way? If so, how?
2. Did this work inspire you in any way or stimulate your creativity? If so, how?
3. Did the text relate to your current job or a future job in any way? If so, how?
4. Did you discover anything new about your personal opinions, beliefs, or values in response to reading this text? If so, how?
5. How do you think your life experiences influence the way you read the text?

Drawing Relationships: Text to Text

1. Did you make any connections between this text and other texts you have read?
2. Does this text relate to other texts assigned in your classes? If so, how?
3. Does this text relate to other texts you have read outside of class? If so, how?
4. Did reading other texts help you understand this one? Or do you feel you needed more background information to understand the material?
5. How do you foresee this text helping you understand texts you expect to read in the future?

Drawing Relationships: Text to World

1. Did you discuss what you read with anyone? If so, with whom?
2. Who else read this text?
3. How is others' response similar to or different from your own?
4. How does this text relate to the world, to the 'bigger picture' in general?

For the third task in the study, students participated in an exit interview, in which they provided a think-aloud protocol about a self-selected 250-word portion of a textbook that they were currently reading for one of their classes. In the remainder of this article, after a brief comment on data from the intake questionnaires, we focus on what the students' reading journals taught us.

The data generated by the intake questionnaires did not suggest that the students see the reading transition from high school to college as all that dramatic. The first-year students at the University of Arkansas were reading a bit more in college than they did during their last year of high school, and they were reading a bit less for pleasure than they did during the previous year.

Students characterized the time that they spent reading during their senior year in high school as "moderately low," about 7.6 hours per week, 70 percent of which was for their classes. Nevertheless, their general perception of their reading abilities in high school was in the "above average"

range.[vi] Not much seemed to change for these students when they came to college. According to the intake questionnaires, as first-year students they were still spending what they characterized as a moderately low amount of time reading, about 12.9 hours per week, 84 percent of which was for their classes, and they still perceived themselves as above-average readers.

What We Learned from the Journals, Part I: Toeing the NSSE Line

The students' two-week intensive journals in some ways fleshed out the students' self-perceptions from the intake questionnaires, but in other ways they contradicted them. Above all else, the journals offered a considerably richer picture of the students' reading lives than we had anticipated—the journals turned out to be a bountiful data source. One could certainly drop into them like an anthropologist and find several aspects of the late-adolescent reading culture that are worthy of note and, from an educationally conservative viewpoint, perplexing. For example,

- All of the students spent lots of time reading online documents.
- A substantial majority of them read their Facebook sites almost daily, sometimes for extended periods.
- Most of them read while doing something else: listening to music, checking emails and sending instant messages, watching television, and so on.

But, as fascinated as we were by the minutiae of the students' rituals, we wanted to look for bigger patterns in the journals. Initially, we simply wanted to see how our first-year students stacked up against the national numbers reported in the NSSE.

For each journal entry, we asked the participants not only to list everything they read during the course of each day but also to estimate the amount of time they had spent reading each item. All of the participants provided at least ten full entries, but only half of them were faithful recorders of texts and time. As we made a first pass through the journals of these accurate respondents, we tried to categorize the texts that they read as either "academic"—that is, texts that they read for their courses—or "nonacademic"—that is, texts that they read for pleasure, leisure, personal interest, or work. Given our interest in technologically mediated writing, moreover, we found it interesting to subdivide the "nonacademic" category into "nonacademic/technological"—reading done on a computer screen—and "nonacademic/nontechnological." The students who were faithful recorders of their texts and time spent an average of 1 hour and 24 minutes per day on academic reading, some of which—a surprisingly small proportion—was done using technology. The faithful recorders devoted an average of 54 minutes a day to nonacademic reading involving technology—Facebook profiles, emails, instant messages, Internet sites, and so on. They spent an average of 25 minutes per day on nonacademic reading that did not involve technology—magazines, books, newspapers, and

so on. Thus, the faithful, categorizing respondents reported spending an average of 2 hours and 43 minutes per day on all types of reading, almost evenly divided between academic and nonacademic reading.[vii]

If we assume, however, that the faithfully categorizing respondents and the summative respondents were devoting roughly the same proportion of time to academic and nonacademic reading, their reports place these University of Arkansas first-year students right smack in the middle of that 66 percent of first-year students in the NSSE who spent fewer than 16 hours per week "preparing for class."[viii]

What We Learned from the Journals, Part II: Hints of a Reading Life

In addition to telling us how much and roughly what kinds of reading our students did, the journals also provided a fascinating window into why and how they read. Because we asked students to include in their journal entries everything that they read during the course of a day and gave them the freedom to write their "focusing on-one-specific-text" entry in response to anything they might choose, we were quite interested in the types of texts that they selected. We found an abundant and varied array.

The journals contained a grand total of 210 daily entries. Within this number, about half of the "focused" entries were about texts that students were reading for their classes, and the other half were about texts that we categorized as "nonacademic." Among the nonacademic responses, the large majority were about texts that students were reading for their personal pleasure or interest, such as employee manuals and job instructions. A smaller number were about texts they were reading either for work or for personal "business" as a student, such as documents about academic advising, academic progress, and so on. Another small percentage of nonacademic responses dealt with texts that students were reading as part of a personal program to support and, in some cases, explore their religious faith.

Considering that all of the participants in the study were full-time students, one might expect the reading that they were doing for their courses to occupy the top position in their list of intellectual priorities. Moreover, considering that the participants had reported spending 84 percent of their reading time during the first six weeks of the semester occupied with academic reading, one might expect that their nonacademic reading was done primarily for rest and relaxation.

The journal entries do not support these presumptions. Like the students in the Stanford Study of Writing, who reported having actively "performative" writing lives that transcended the writing they must do for courses (Fishman et al.), many of the students in our study described having regular, steady, full reading lives in which they engaged with a wide variety of texts for reasons both academic and nonacademic. We encountered students who, during the two-week period, were

reading novels (examples: *The Fellowship of the Ring, A Handmaid's Tale,* and *Angels and Demons)*, nonfiction books (*Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Under the Banner of Heaven*), magazines (*Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan* were favorites among the females; exercise and hunting magazines prevailed among the males), and newspapers (both the campus paper and the statewide one*)* for personal interest and pleasure. We found students, perhaps because of our prompting, drawing solid connections between the texts that they were reading and their emerging sense of themselves as adults in the world. One student unpacked her connection to a magazine article about the untimely death of young woman who had had an unresolved argument with her father; the journal entry described the student's own estrangement from her father following her parents' divorce. Another student noted that she connected to *The Diary of Anne Frank* because, as a Jew, she had experienced racial slurs herself. A third student described her memory of training a puppy to help her connect to part of her psychology textbook about behavioral conditioning. A fourth student explained his connection between Plato's *Republic* and Marxist governments: "Karl Marx and socialist and communist societies tried to use many of Plato's ideas in their writings and governments, but they all consistently failed, while democracy thrived and continues to spread today."

The following three brief case studies offer slightly more extended profiles of students who defy the status-quo thinking that portrays first-year college students as incapable of and uninterested in reading. Angela, Pauline, and Corey have come to college as readers of texts that speak to their own exigencies and interests.

Angela Ivy[ix] was taking four courses during the study—Italian, algebra, composition, and sociology—and she devoted some reading time to each of them. But the reading activity that occupied most of her time during the two weeks involved the Bible, plus books and articles from the popular press about contemporary issues of Christian faith. Her reports of reading experiences showed, on the one hand, a young person who was looking for confirmation of religious principles that she grew up with but, on the other hand, questioning how these principles fit into the new culture in which she was immersed at the university.

The number of minutes that Angela devoted to reading for her four courses is interesting in itself. Over the two weeks, she reported spending 325 minutes reading and studying for algebra, 215 minutes reading and studying vocabulary items for her composition class, 175 minutes reading and studying Italian, and 35 minutes reading for sociology. Compare these times with her reports for three other activities: she spent 345 minutes reading the *Bible* and books and articles dealing with Christian faith—texts that she chose to read for "interest/personal benefit." She devoted 330 minutes to reading email messages, websites (at least one of which was related to her coursework), and *Facebook* entries. She spent 210 minutes reading articles in magazines and newspapers for "personal interest," but at least three of these articles were about topics that frequently emerge in contemporary discussions of religion and faith: creationism versus intelligent design, homosexuality and

tolerance, and the legalization of marijuana.

Angela's journal opened with a long, questioning entry on a book called *Show Me, God* by Fred Heeren, a text that Angela says she read "by choice." The main point of the text, she wrote, "was concerning the Law of Cause and Effect—that logic demands a cause for every effect and that world/universe is an effect that demands a very great cause." She added:

> The sun, moon, and stars could not have come from nothing—that's *irrational*. Every observable fact around us can be explained in terms of something else that caused it, but when the question is about the existence of the universe itself, there is nothing in the universe to explain it—no natural explanation. I understood where the author was coming from, but just because we haven't found a natural explanation for creation doesn't mean we should just throw up our hands and say 'God did it.' (Emphasis in original)

Angela's last journal entry provided a fascinating summary of her commentary on reading texts that lead to theological questioning. She read an article entitled "The Bible Is Still Number One" in a magazine called *A Matter of Fact.* She encapsulated the main point of the article: "Prophesy and scientific foreknowledge are repeated in the Bible—giving evidence of its credibility as The Word of God." She drew a powerful connection between this text and herself: "If I could go into apologetics for a career," she wrote, "it [the article] would definitely relate to my future job." Tacitly conceding that she probably won't have this option as a career, she added, "Regardless, it's good to have a rational foundation in what you're trying to put your trust in." She saw possible connections between this text and others she might read for courses or personal interest: "The more I read about this, the more I'll have to implement into other texts I have read. It helps to have a well-rounded approach so you can look at things more objectively."

Pauline Rosario offers a powerful counterexample to those who believe that first-year students don't engage with their reading. Pauline had become fluent in English, her second language, but read regularly in her first language, Spanish, to maintain her fluency in it. She belonged to a book club, undertook a considerable amount of reading outside of class, and showed a strong ability to draw connections between her reading and her growing sense of self, the texts she has previously read, and the larger world beyond academia.

During the two-week journaling period, Pauline spent a lot of her spare time reading for pleasure. For instance, she read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish, her native language, for the book club that she belonged to as an extracurricular activity. She commented that she read it slowly because she had difficulty with reading Spanish now that she was used to reading in English. Apparently, Pauline still valued her first language enough to put forth the effort to read the text in Spanish rather than in its translated form. She wrote, "There is one factor that is hindering my reading speed and comprehension, the book is in Spanish. Spanish was my first language but after 12 years in

school, using English, it has become difficult to understand Spanish as I read it. In total I spent about an hour and a half reading the book and accomplished one and a half chapters."

Pauline even saw possibilities for drawing connections in her reading using technology. Commenting on reading emails and Web logs, she wrote, "This text obviously does not involve any academic reward, but it is very important as far as my social life goes. I did make connections with other texts (e-mails) that I've read, though, mainly because e-mails are an ongoing conversation with friends that I do not see as often. Reading this text did in fact make me understand other e-mails a little better." Pauline did not discredit the value of her personal reading or the use of electronic media because she believes that they help her explore her ideas. "As far as discovering anything about my personal opinions, this text succeeded. Because these e-mails were of a personal subject, they did relate to my life 100%. After reading these e-mails, I called a friend, so I did discuss the reading with someone else."

Finally, Pauline included this note at the end of her journal:

> I am aware that this study is to figure out the "jump" from high school to college reading; however the fact is that most of my required reading (which is not much) has nothing to do with this "jump" because what is different is not the amount of reading, but the level and wording of the text. The college text jumps to a level of reading exponentially higher than high school texts, and this is what causes the struggles for the students.

Corey Essene was enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences Honors Program at the time of our study, and, as such, was the type of student that one might expect to take his class preparation very seriously. A superficial reading of his journal entries might lead one to question that expectation. In short, Corey seemed to blow off his required reading. On the other hand, however, his journal entries show a young man devoted to reading fantasy fiction and learning French—not so much to do well in his French class, but instead to communicate with a friend he met while traveling the previous summer and to fulfill his goal of getting a job working in the American Embassy in Paris.

Corey's first journal entry was one of only two in which he had anything substantial—or positive—to say about his assigned reading. He described his admittedly superficial reading of an essay, "The Genocidal Killer in the Mirror," simply because he and some classmates in his Honors Composition class had to meet and collectively come up with a thesis statement for an essay about it. In his next entry, however, he focused at some length on a chapter entitled "Celbedeil" in a book called *Eldest* by Christopher Paolini, which he chose to spend thirty minutes reading "to break the monotony of studying and doing homework for all of my classes." *Eldest* is clearly mainstream fantasy, the second book in a trilogy, Corey reported: "It's a story about dragons in a mythical setting. It is kind of like books I have read including Tolkien's books because it has many of the same mythical races and similar settings." Corey offered a connection-filled thought to conclude this entry: "This really

relates to the real world because this symbolizes bigotry that still exists across the planet. I think that because I am aware of bigotry in society that I was able to see Paolini's throw back and symbology [sic] of these ancient grudges and beliefs. This text basically reaffirmed my passion against the ignorance of bigotry, whether it be in fiction novels, or real life and history."

In another entry, Corey turned his attention to French and made an explicit text-to-self connection, referring directly to his employment goal. He reported studying his French textbook for "about a half an hour" in his dorm room: "I read this because I am currently learning French as my second language and it is my minor. I read this also for pleasure because I enjoy learning the French language. This relates to me personally because I hope to get a job at the American embassy in Paris." Two entries later, Corey returned to the French project, describing his reading of a "long email from a friend in Paris." He added, "I read the entire text in French and it took me about ten minutes. I understood most of the letter, but I was forced to look up a few words that were not in my French vocabulary." Corey explained that he had struck a deal with Axel, a French friend whom he met traveling last summer. They agreed they would write to each other only in French: "I actually made this arrangement with Axel, most importantly, for educational purposes. Axel is fluent in English, so he is doing this as a favor to me to strengthen my French vocabulary and grammar."

In his next-to-last entry, Corey returned to some assigned reading, this time for his Fundamentals of Communication class: "The text was the basic dry, boring textbook type text, but it was highly informative. I read it in about an hour. This relates to me because I know it will help me give my assigned speech and later speeches I am to give throughout my college career and life."

We don't want to argue that Angela, Pauline, and Corey are necessarily representative of any particular population, but they do evince a strong interest in personal reading, something that status-quo thinking would assert that college students lack. Angela, Pauline, and Corey engage thoughtfully with texts; however, most of the texts that they value and connect with are not those assigned in their courses.

Rethinking Reading in College Courses

Although neither of us had Angela, Pauline, or Corey as a student in class, when we read their journals, we tended to think we might like to. Here were three students, all engaged readers, all capable to some degree of connecting their reading to their own growing sense of self and to the world around them. We venture, however, that, although Pauline might be seen as a successful college student reader, many instructors would find Angela and Corey to represent the kinds of students that they normally encounter in their courses—not very interested in the assigned course readings, not eager to "participate" in a discussion, not inclined to read any more deeply than the assignment requires.

So what did we learn about these kinds of students by reading their journals? What kinds of readers are these randomly selected University of Arkansas students? Let us unpack those questions before turning to the issue of how we urged faculty members and program administrators at our institution to think differently about reading in their courses.

First of all, our students were reading, but they were not reading studiously, either in terms of the texts they were engaging with or the manner in which they read them. Like the high school boys whose literate practices Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm describe in *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys*, the University of Arkansas students often manifested a passion for reading that was not connected to their courses. Instead, they saw the reading that they had to do for school as uninspiring, dull, and painfully required. Here was Angela's response to her sociology text: "I completely agree" with it and it "raises no questions." Corey assessed his Fundamentals of Communication reading as being self-evident, and said that he rapidly perused "The Genocidal Killer in the Mirror" just in order to generate a thesis about it. Although Angela's and Corey's responses to school-based reading, typical of those of many of the participants, were rather neutrally dismissive, other students were more adamantly critical. One student, Jennifer Respighi, described how she took only five minutes to read a sample biology lab report "because it was so boring." Another student, Katherine Quick, characterized her psychology textbook as "a brutally boring overwad" and wrote that she skipped sections "because there was no reason to read a bunch of bullshit." A third student, Walter Hope, simply opined that "my chemistry book sucks."

Many of the participants clearly rushed through their required reading simply to get it done and then move on to reading that they found more engaging. In the journals, we found daily reading schedules such as the following:

- Andrea Less, Day 5: 30 minutes reading an article for an English assignment, 20 minutes reading email and Ebay ads.
- Kathy Gravette, Day 1: 30 minutes total for reading an English assignment and the essay it required her to read, plus her art assignment, and *Cosmopolitan* magazine; Day 5: 30 minutes total for reading her English assignment ("It was difficult to read") plus *Cosmopolitan* and the newspaper.
- Fred Borg, Day 1: 45 minutes reading a selection from Descartes's *First Meditation*, *during* a lecture in a math class; Day 3: 20 minutes reading an essay for English.
- Tony Richardson, Day 2: 30 minutes reading an essay for English; Day 5: 96 minutes reading *The Boater's Handbook*.

In many of these reports, we would be hard pressed to find reading experiences that we would characterize as focused and contemplative.

Second, although the students generally showed some ability to draw the three types of con-

nections that we urged them to create with our leading questions, their reported connections were not evenly distributed among the three categories. Our students seemed quite capable of making text-to-self connections—Lindsey James, for example, related her response to an article about cults to her own religious upbringing—and text-to-world connections—recall Angela's repeated connections between texts that she was reading and campus/community/world events. But it was the rare student who, like Pauline, would draw connections between and among texts that she was reading for her classes, or like William Hope, who described the connections that he drew between *Helter Skelter* and *Under the Banner of Heaven*, two books that he read for his own pleasure and interest.

Third, students are motivated by and engaged with reading, but the texts that they interact with most enthusiastically are technologically based. In addition, students have become proficient in the art of multitasking as they navigate in and out of electronic media. Virtually all of the students indicate in their journals that they spend a substantial amount of time reading online. Although some of the students' academic assignments require online research or reading on the computer, their journal entries indicate that they interact with electronic media primarily when reading for pleasure. The majority of their time reading for pleasure is spent reading and writing emails, instant messaging, or creating and perusing Facebook and MySpace profiles. In these examples, technology encourages reading for personal communication and social networking, and these purposes overlap in many ways that relate to academic study. For instance, Corey became inspired to learn French, so he emailed back and forth with a friend in France to help him acquire and enhance his reading skills. Without this incentive, Corey may not have pursued his study of French with the same enthusiasm. Pauline wrote in her journal that the significant amounts of time she spends blogging and networking with friends may have no academic reward; nevertheless, she values this kind of reading for its ability to help her network and stay connected socially. As a result of the amount of time that students spend with electronic media, their reading practices and habits have shifted with influence of these technologies. Their journal entries consistently refer to the myriad ways in which they multitask as they read. For instance, many students email and instant message their friends while surfing the Internet and reading texts on the computer. Many watch television, listen to music, or talk on their cell phones as they read their textbooks.

Given that our students seem to engage with some types of reading, what did we suggest that faculty members the University of Arkansas do to help their students engage more fully with, and read more critically, the material that they need to read for their classes? Both in campus forums sponsored by our university's Teaching and Learning Center and in internal publications, we suggested three avenues. First, we argued that faculty members need to teach students explicitly how to draw the kinds of connections that lead to engaged reading, particularly text-to-world and text-to-text connections. It's not that we think text-to-self connections are not important. We do think, however, that, as valuable as these kinds of personal connections are for initiating engaged reading,

students ultimately need to be stretched beyond the boundaries of their own personal reactions. As Wayne Booth contended in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent,* one major function of college is to drag students "kicking and screaming, out of infantile solipsism into adult membership in an inquiring community" (13). As they read, students need to be walked through demonstrations of mature, committed, adult readers who draw connections to the world around them, both historical and current, and to other texts. One relatively easy teaching technique, the think-aloud protocol, is particularly useful. The instructor simply focuses on a passage—say, 250 words or so—from the required reading and reads it aloud to students, pausing regularly to explain to the students what connections he or she is making to his or her own life and work, to the world beyond the text, and, most important, to other texts that he or she has read. (For more on the think-aloud protocol, see Daniels and Zemelman, Chapter 5.)

Second, we suggested that faculty members and administrators need to create curriculums, co-curriculums, and extra-curriculums that invite students to engage in their reading and to connect texts that they read to their lives, their worlds, and other texts. Certainly, learning-community programs—in which students are taking two or three courses together, focusing on a common theme—foster this kind of curricular connectivity, as do service-learning and community-outreach programs, in which students accomplish necessary and useful projects that reflect principles and ideas from their reading. But even in the absence of such curricular innovations, instructors can take relatively simple steps to foster students' making connections between their courses. An instructor might ask his or her students to list and offer a one-sentence description on an index card of every other class that they are taking. Perusing the other subjects that his or her students are studying, the instructor could make an explicit effort to show how the class readings might evoke themes, issues, and motifs being raised in the other classes. In addition, the instructor might adapt and follow guidelines developed by Christopher Thaiss for first-year writing courses with a writing-across-the-curriculum orientation ("A Rubric for Understanding Writing in Different Classes and Disciplines"; see also Thaiss and Zawacki). An instructor dedicated to improving connected, engaged reading throughout the curriculum could explain explicitly to students how the documents that they must read relate directly to the aims and methods of learning that are most valued in the course environment, show clearly how the students' reading for the course should be manifest in projects and examinations, and demonstrate specifically *how* students should read the course material.

Third, we urged faculty members to look for ways to incorporate more technology into their reading assignments. It is becoming common knowledge that students engage effectively with reading done in interactive electronic contexts. For example, Gail E. Hawisher and her colleagues point out that all students have different "cultural ecologies" and therefore experience different "technological gateways" for acquiring and developing literacy, but many students have developed literacies

in electronic contexts that instructors overlook or ignore. "As a result," according to Hawisher et al., "we fail to build on the literacies students already have" (676). We suggested that faculty members could enhance student learning through better engagement with reading by incorporating assignments that achieved two primary goals:

- They would provide students with opportunities to interact with electronic hyperlinked texts.
- They would engage student readers through reflection in electronic public spheres.

We urged faculty to consider incorporating such components as discussion forums through WebCT or Blackboard to help students reflect on and respond to reading assignments with their classmates, and we argued that students could also benefit from online conversations with larger discourse communities and professionals in the field of study to enhance their reading about certain topics. Setting up a Web blog or posting to an established Usenet group could help get students interested. In short, we noted that supplementing course instruction with technological materials would allow students to navigate information and to multitask in ways that would ultimately enhance their reading.

Although our study was most useful for motivating and shaping discussions at our own institution, we see merit in faculty members and administrators conducting similar studies on their own campuses; reporting the results to groups of students, instructors, and administrators; and discussing the implications of the results for teaching and learning on the campus. Indeed, we would urge any college or university serious about improving undergraduate composition and general education to examine student reading on its own campus. While the outcomes of such studies would vary according to context and region—some of our conclusions are related to the high number of fundamentalist evangelicals who attend our university—the results would generate very useful intra and inter-institutional discussions about teaching and learning.

Should the English department take the lead in conducting such studies? Not necessarily. Every English department faculty member who has been involved with writing-across-the-curriculum or writing-in-the-disciplines programs knows that they succeed best when faculty members throughout the university buy into the notion of improving learning by increasing the amount and complexity of student writing and by teaching writing consciously and explicitly in all courses. The same must be true in efforts to examine and improve student reading.

There will be resistance to such efforts. People will wonder why colleges and universities admit students who "can't read." Faculty members will opine that they lack time to teach students how to read material carefully in their courses "because there is so much I have to cover already." To anticipate and counter this resistance, any institutional effort to study whether, how, how much, and why students read must be initiated and championed by faculty members and administrators directly

responsible for overseeing curriculum, instruction, and assessment of general education.

There's no need for any college or university to be apologetic about looking at students' reading habits and practices. The transition from high school to college must entail a transition to different types of reading, different amounts of reading, and different approaches to success with reading. If we intend to continue basing assignments, syllabi, and entire academic programs on student reading, then we need to know more about it.

Notes

i. See, for example, Sven Birkerts's *The Gutenberg Elegies* and Mark Edmundson's *Why Read?*

ii. The responses about the "number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings" that students reported reading are also instructive: 64 percent of first-year students and 56 percent of seniors reported reading ten or fewer textbooks, books, or course packs during the academic year (38).

iii. *Reading at Risk* was not without its naysayers. In *Black Issues Book Review*, Wayne Dawkins questions the "dire picture" painted by the NEA.

iv. A 1991 study by Charlene Blackwood and her colleagues examined the pleasure reading habits of 333 college seniors in a small, public liberal arts university. Although 88 percent of the respondents reported that they read for pleasure, they did so for only about two and a half hours per week while school was in session and slightly more during vacations. In 1999, Jude Gallik surveyed the recreational reading habits of 139 first-year and upper-level students at a private, liberal arts college in Texas. Gallik found that 87 percent of the respondents devoted fewer than six hours per week to recreational reading while school was in session, a number that dropped to 75 percent during school vacations. A 1994 study by Ravi Sheorey and Kouider Mokhtari investigated the reading habits of 85 college students enrolled in an elective developmental reading course at a large public university, finding that the students read about hours per week. In a study conducted in 2000 at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, but never published, Richard Haswell and his graduate students examined practices of, and attitudes toward, "self-sponsored" and "school-sponsored" reading among 100 ninth-graders and 100 first-year college students. Haswell found that the two groups spent slightly different amounts of time each week on reading and writing: The ninth-graders reported reading 163 pages and spending 23 hours per week; the first-semester college students read 141 pages and devoted 18 hours per week. However, the ninth-graders reported reading almost twice as many pages per week of self-chosen material than did the college students, although the college students said they read one-fifth more pages of school-sponsored material per week than the ninth-graders (5). Under the auspices of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Victoria Rideout, Donald Roberts, and Ulla Foehr studied the daily media use of more than 2,000 8to 18-year-olds. The researchers found that subjects spent

an average of 6.5 hours daily with "media": 4 hours and 16 minutes watching television and/or movies, 1 hour and 44 minutes listening to music, 1 hour and 2 minutes using the computer, and 49 minutes playing video games. Although three-quarters of the survey participants reported reading something for pleasure every day, the average time spent daily reading books, magazines, and newspapers was 43 minutes.

v. The "drawing-relationships" questions were motivated by the types of connections that Ellin Keene Oliver and Susan Zimmerman teach students to draw in *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*, a widely used resource for teacher-development programs in high schools.

vi. When examining the students' evaluations of how much time they devoted to reading in high school and college, we coded a response of "excessively high" as a 4, "moderately high" as a 3, "moderately low" as a 2, and "excessively low" as a 1. When examining the students' perceptions of their own abilities as readers, we coded a response of "excellent" as a 4, "above average" as a 3, "below average" as a 2, and "poor" as a 1.

vii. Over a seven-day week, therefore, these students devoted about 19 hours per week to reading— in other words, somewhat more than they had reported on their intake questionnaires, perhaps because the act of listing *everything* that they read during a day turned "reading" into a larger activity for these students. In contrast, the students who did not record how much time they spent reading each item, but simply provided a total number of minutes of reading per day, reported spending an average of 1 hour and 41 minutes daily on all types of reading, or about 11.8 hours per week—a bit less than they had reported on their intake questionnaires.

viii. The largest subgroup within that 66 percent is the students who reported spending 6 to 10 hours per week preparing for class—27 percent. Because the participants in our study included *everything* that they read in their daily tallies, we think it's safe to assume that the amount of time that they spent on reading *in preparation for class* probably lies within this 6to-10-hours-per-week category.

ix. By agreement with the participants, all names have been changed to pseudonyms.

Works Cited

Birkerts, Sven. *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. New York: Fawcett, 1994.

Blackwood, Charlene, et al. "Pleasure Reading by College Students: Fact or Fiction?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Lexington, KY, Nov. 1991.

Booth, Wayne. *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1974.

Daniels, Harvey, and Steven Zemelman. *Subjects Matter: Every Teacher's Guide to Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

Dawkins, Wayne. "Is Anybody Out There? A Closer Look at the Dire Picture Unearthed in the NEA's Reading at Risk Study Turns Up Some Hopeful Signs." *Black Issues Book Review* 7.3 (May 2005): 10.

Edmundson, Mark. *Why Read?* New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.
Fishman, Jenn, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and Mark Otuteye. "Performing Writing, Performing Literacy." *CCC* 57 (2006): 224–52.
Gallik, Jude D. "Do They Read for Pleasure: Recreational Reading Habits of College Students." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 42 (1999): 480–88.
Haswell, Richard. Personal correspondence. December 1, 2006.
Hawisher, Gail E., Cynthia L. Selfe, Brittney Moraski, and Melissa Pearson. "Becoming Literate in the Information Age: Cultural Ecologies and the Literacies of Technology." *CCC* 55 (2004): 642–92.
High School Survey of Student Engagement, 2005. *Getting Students Ready for College: What Student Engagement Data Can Tell Us*. 15 Dec. 2007 http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/pdf/college_prep_hssse05pdf.
High School Survey of Student Engagement, 2005. *What Can We Learn from High School Students*. 15 Dec. 2007 http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/pdf/hssse_2005_report.pdf.
National Survey of Student Engagement. *Exploring Different Dimensions of Student Engagement: 2005 Annual Survey Results*. 15 Dec. 2007 http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/NSSE_2005_annual_report.pdf.
Oliver, Ellin Keene, and Susan Zimmerman. *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997.
Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2004. 15 Dec. 2007 http://www.nea.gov/pub/ReadingAtRisk.pdf.
Rideout, Victoria, Donald F. Roberts, and Ulla G. Foehr. *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year Olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005.
Sanoff, Alvin P. "What Professors and Teachers Think: A Perception Gap over Students' Preparation." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 10 Mar. 2006. 15 Dec. 2007 http://chronicle.com/free/v52/i27/27b00091.htm.
Sheorey, Ravi, and Kouider Mokhtari. "The Reading Habits of College Students at Different Levels of Reading Proficiency." *Reading Improvement* 31 (1994): 156–66.
Smith, Michael W., and Jeffrey Wilhelm. *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
Thaiss, Christopher. "A Rubric for Understanding Writing in Different Classes and Disciplines." 15 Dec. 2007 http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/engligh/tc/Thaiss.
Thaiss, Christopher, and Terry Myers Zawacki. *Engaged Writers/Dynamic Disciplines*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006.
To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2007. 15 Dec. 2007 http://ww.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf.

College Composition and Communication, Volume 64, Number 3, February 2013

Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom[1]

Michael Bunn[2]

Drawing on qualitative research conducted at the University of Michigan, this article examines the extent to which composition instructors theorize and teach reading-writing connections and argues that explicitly teaching reading-writing connections may increase student motivation to complete assigned reading. The article also discusses using model texts as an effective means of teaching those connections.

Many college students see writing courses as a chore—a hurdle on the track toward graduation. At the same time, many of these students recognize the value of writing and learning to write. In extensive interviews conducted with Harvard students in the 1990s, Richard Light found that "[o]f all skills students say they want to strengthen, writing is mentioned three times more than any other. Most know they will be asked to write an enormous amount at college. Most expect this to continue after they graduate" (54). Around the same time, Thomas Hilgers and his colleagues interviewed students enrolled in upper-division writing-intensive classes in their majors at a large state university and discovered that these students valued assigned writing tasks for various reasons, most notably as an opportunity to "pursue personal goals" such as "satisfying a burning curiosity about a particular topic" or as a form of "preparation for post-college employment" (Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh 330–32).

In her 2009 book, *The College Fear Factor*, Rebecca D. Cox draws on five years of interviews and observations at community colleges to demonstrate that many of the students she observed value writing and writing classes even if they don't enjoy them. Cox writes that "the distinction between getting an education and enjoying it emerged as a basic theme for the vast majority of students," and among the evidence she offers is the following passage from Joy, who Cox claims "drew an explicit distinction between learning from the class and enjoying it":

> This class, I would say, is an excellent class. I think it's a necessary class that all students should have as a freshman, because it prepares you for writing papers in all different classes . . . It is a necessary evil, pretty much, because I don't know anybody who likes this class, but it is necessary if you want to be successful in your other classes with the papers

1 **Citation:** Bunn, Michael. "Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 3, Feb. 2013, pp. 496–516.

2 Michael Bunn is a full-time faculty member in the University of Southern California Writing Program and co-founder of the CCCC Special Interest Group "The Role of Reading in Composition Studies."

> that you have to write. So I like the class on a learning standpoint. On a fun standpoint, I hate it. (53).

The students Cox followed placed a high value on writing and learning to write, even though at times they may have hated it from a "fun standpoint."

In a 2007 study of composition courses conducted at Purdue University aimed at better understanding the extent to which students transfer knowledge from one context to another, Dana Driscoll found that many students—including "students who are not in humanities-based majors but instead from majors across the curriculum"—not only value writing but also may "share some of our most basic philosophies about writing—that is, that writing is a lifelong skill and that practice with writing is the best way to improve" (89). Driscoll found that many students entered their composition courses already "positive about the value of their writing course," particularly in terms of how the work of those courses might be useful beyond college.

While many students enrolled in composition courses seem to recognize the value of learning to write, it's unclear whether students experience this same level of motivation toward assigned course reading.

Whether writing is perceived as the opportunity to investigate a topic of personal interest or viewed primarily as a "necessary evil" to help with future coursework and career aspirations, there is little doubt that many students— whether enrolled in prestigious liberal arts institutions, large state universities, or community colleges—value writing and learning to write.

But what about reading?

While many students enrolled in composition courses seem to recognize the value of learning to write, it's unclear whether students experience this same level of motivation toward assigned course reading. As Jeanne Henry notes of her own experiences of teaching reading at the collegiate level, "My freshmen were very much *able* to read; they were simply disinclined *to* read" (64, emphasis in original). David Jolliffe and Allison Harl make a similar point regarding their research on student reading at the University of Arkansas: "In short, we discovered students who were extremely engaged with their reading, but not with the reading their classes required" (600). Thus a pressing question for writing instructors is, how can we teach reading in ways that motivate students to engage with assigned course reading? Further, how can we draw upon students' own recognition of the importance of writing as a way to motivate them to read in our classes?

Over the past two decades, a handful of scholar-practitioners have explored the role that reading plays in both collegiate writing courses and composition scholarship.[i] Particularly useful are the ways that these scholars present rationales for including reading instruction in writing courses (Helmers; Horning; Salvatori), suggest reasons that reading isn't being adequately addressed within the field (Harkin; Morrow), articulate challenges that instructors—including graduate instructors—might face when trying to teach reading in the writing classroom (Adler-Kassner and Estrem;

Carillo; Ettari and Easterling; Tetreault and Center), explore approaches to reading promoted in composition textbooks (Huffman), and provide an example of how researchers might utilize qualitative methods to explore the issue of reading (Jolliffe and Harl).

What this article adds to this growing body of research is attention to some of the ways that instructors theorize and teach reading-writing connections in composition courses and how such theorization and teaching practices may affect students' motivation to complete assigned reading. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem note, "Studies that focus on the contexts that *instructors* create for students' reading . . . are few and far between" (36, emphasis in original). This article is intended to help fill that gap. Examining the ways that writing instructors think about and teach reading—how they perceive connections between the processes of reading and writing and attempt to teach those connections to students—provides a more complete picture of what is happening in composition classrooms. These findings can also inform the important discussions we need to be having about which approaches to teaching reading will motivate students to engage with assigned texts and help them to read and write better.

I recently conducted qualitative research at the University of Michigan in order to examine some of the ways that instructors theorize and teach reading in composition courses and to better understand how students perceive and respond to assigned course reading. An online survey (Appendix A) was sent to instructors who were teaching, or had taught, first-year writing at the university, presenting them with a range of questions about the ways they theorize and teach reading. In total, 114 instructors were invited to complete the online survey; these instructors were all graduate students or lecturers teaching for the English Department Writing Program (EDWP) during the semester of data collection, and each of these instructors had taught at least one section of first-year writing in the past or were doing so at the time of the survey. The response rate was exactly 50 percent—57 of the 114 instructors invited to complete the online survey did so.

This article puts instructor survey and interview responses in conversation with student survey responses to shed some light on how both instructors and students think about reading as it operates in the writing classroom.

Next, interviews were conducted with 8 instructors who were teaching first-year writing at the time of our interview and who indicated on their survey that they would be willing to speak with me. Five of the interviewees were graduate student instructors (2 studying literature, 2 studying English and education, and 1 studying linguistics), and 2 were full-time faculty lecturers (who had all earned M.F.A. degrees in creative writing from the university).

After holding these interviews, I observed 4 of these interviewed instructors' classrooms during two different class sessions. In each of these four courses a four-question survey (Appendix B) was distributed to students asking for their views on the reading that they were doing for the course. In total, I received survey responses from all 66 students present during the four class sessions—17

students each in three of the courses and 15 students in the other. Though students were given the option to decline the survey, none did so.

This article puts instructor survey and interview responses in conversation with student survey responses to shed some light on how both instructors and students think about reading as it operates in the writing classroom. Specifically, the article addresses four related questions:

1. To what extent do instructors theorize reading and writing as connected activities?
2. To what extent are instructors explicitly teaching reading-writing connections in their composition courses?
3. What effect (if any) does students' understanding of reading-writing connections have on their motivation to complete assigned reading?
4. For instructors who are explicitly teaching reading-writing connections, what are some of the specific ways they are doing it?

More fully understanding the ways that instructors theorize and teach reading writing connections is important because, as my findings suggest, explicitly teaching such connections can influence the extent to which students find course reading valuable and can affect their motivation to complete assigned reading.

In the remainder of this article I discuss a few lessons we can learn and conclusions we might draw about teaching reading based on my research findings. I begin by proposing a definition of reading that emphasizes the cooperation between readers and writers and stresses the importance of conceptualizing reading and writing as connected processes. I then examine the extent to which participating instructors at the University of Michigan theorize reading and writing as connected activities and document the ways they do (and don't) teach such connections to students. I supplement this section with responses from the student surveys to reveal whether teaching reading-writing connections explicitly seems to have any effect on student motivation to read. Next, I present and discuss the method of teaching reading-writing connections mentioned most often by instructors at Michigan: assigning model texts with the hope that students will read to identify particular techniques to try out in their own writing or read to recognize genre conventions. I conclude the article by offering a few suggestions for ways instructors might teach reading-writing connections effectively in composition courses.

Reading Defined as "Negotiation"

Readers construct meaning (at least in part) by drawing on their own personal experiences (Stein; Lindberg) and by drawing on other types of prior knowledge (Hayes; Lemke). As Deborah Brandt puts it, "readers bring to a text stores of prior knowledge about the world and about the

nature of discourse that allow them to fill in the inferences and make the predictions necessary for comprehension" (119). Such interaction between reader and text suggests that the process of reading is a *negotiation* between the knowledge and purposes of the writer and the knowledge and purposes of the reader. In "A Social-Interactive Model of Writing," Martin Nystrand describes this type of negotiation: "when the respective purposes of the writer and the reader intersect as they must when the reader comprehends the writer's text, the meaning that the reader gives to the text is a unique result—a distinctive convergence or interaction—of reader and writer purpose (74).[ii] The understanding and meaning derived from texts are based not only on the characteristics of the text itself and on the reader's recognition and understanding of those characteristics, but also by a connection between writers and readers that links the knowledge and purposes of the author with the knowledge and purposes of the reader (as well as the properties of the text itself) together into a broader meaning-making activity. This negotiated meaning of texts illuminates crucial connections between the activities of reading and writing. As Nystrand puts it, "*meaning is between writer and reader*" (78, emphasis in original).

In response to this understanding of reading and writing as connected activities, a key focus of my research was to discern whether instructors conceive of reading and writing as connected activities, and the degree to which they are (or aren't) teaching reading and writing as connected processes in the classroom.

Reading-Writing Connections: Instructor Perceptions and Assumptions

Nearly 100 percent of instructors who completed the online survey (56 of 57) report that they conceptualize reading and writing as connected activities (one instructor didn't respond to the related question). Not all of those instructors explain or teach those connections to students, however. This creates a potential disconnect between instructor theorization (recognizing important connections between the processes of reading and writing) and instructor pedagogy (*not* teaching those same connections to students).

In reply to the open-ended survey question Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities? All 56 instructors who answered the question express the belief that reading and writing are connected. Their answers distribute as follows:

Yes	25
Absolutely	15
Of course	6
Yes (or absolutely), but . . .	4

Definitely	2
Certainly	1
It is a fact, not a belief	1
They are fundamentally the same act	1
Often, but not always	1

As this distribution indicates, only 5 instructors express any form of reservation or qualify their answer in any way. For example, 2 of those instructors make a point to note that it's not *always* the case that good readers are good writers, and vice versa:

> Yes. But I have also seen struggling readers write wonderful things and struggling writers read and interpret challenging text.
>
> Yes. They influence each other recursively. However, in my personal life, there are people who challenge this belief for me . . . people I know who write very well, but don't read much . . . .

This type of qualification doesn't really challenge the idea that reading and writing are connected, but offers a useful reminder that, in the words of 1 of these 5 instructors, it's not always an exact "one-to-one ratio."

While all 56 of the participating instructors express the belief that reading and writing are connected activities (with 5 offering some form of qualification), this belief doesn't always translate into pedagogy.

While all 56 of the participating instructors express the belief that reading and writing are connected activities (with 5 offering some form of qualification), this belief doesn't always translate into pedagogy. In response to the question *How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?* 10 instructors report that they *don't* explicitly teach those connections to students. This survey question elicited responses such as the following:

> Good question. I don't think I have addressed this connection explicitly.
>
> I don't draw connections explicitly, but I constantly tell them that the best way to improve their writing in a given genre is to read a lot in that genre.
>
> I'm not sure I teach that connection explicitly, though I believe the connection is made obvious by writing assignments and studies of texts.
>
> I'm not sure that it's something I teach directly. This may be a fault on my part. Instead of telling them the connection is important, I assume they already know or they'll see the connection as we work toward reading texts objectively.

A sentiment expressed in these responses is that instructors don't need to teach reading-writing connections explicitly or that such connections are already clear to students. As one instructor claims:

> This connection is not something necessary to parse. First of all, the students realize that by reading and questioning texts, they will better engage in analysis which will directly translate into their own writing.

This instructor's response not only assumes that students will automatically recognize how certain reading practices influence their writing, but also that such reading practices "directly translate" to student writing—both without any intervention on the part of instructors.

Another instructor discusses the assumption that students will automatically recognize connections between course reading assignments and course writing assignments. During our interview, Sally, a graduate student studying English and education, elaborated on this assumption: "I assumed today, since we're talking about narrative and they're going to be writing narratives, I assumed that [a connection between the course reading and course writing assignments] was evident. But I think we assume a lot of things, and shouldn't."[iii]

The Benefit of Explicitly Teaching Reading-Writing Connections

In our interview, Sally went on to say a bit more about why it's important for instructors to make connections between reading and writing assignments explicit to students. As she makes clear in the following excerpt, Sally believes that if instructors explicitly teach reading and writing as connected activities, students are more likely to complete assigned reading because they recognize its value in relation to the rest of the course.

> **Sally:** The reading, I believe, should always tie into what we're doing.
>
> **MB:** And when you say "what we're doing" you mean the writing assignments?
>
> **Sally:** The writing assignments. I don't think that I always make that explicit to the students? . . . I think earlier on I made it more explicit, but I think that that's something that I should continue to make explicit.
>
> **MB:** Why? Why do you think that's worth doing or important?
>
> **Sally:** . . . Well, one: Buy in . . . I mean student motivation, and in terms of doing the reading, they can understand why it's valuable because I've made that explicit to them. It's not valuable just because I've told them to do it. It's valuable because it's going to be applied.

In other words, students don't have to settle for the instructor's suggestion that reading is worthwhile. When reading-writing connections are made clear, students see that the reading they do will "be applied" in their writing; this helps them "buy in" to the work of the course.

Sally's view that students may be more motivated to complete assigned reading if they recognize how that reading relates to their writing is supported by the survey responses of several students. In response to the question *Are you motivated to read for this course? Why or why not?* 5 students specifically mentioned being motivated to read because the reading helped them with their writing assignments, while 9 other students mentioned that they weren't motivated to read because the texts seemed unrelated to the rest of the course. The following excerpts convey the range of those responses:

> Yes, I am motivated [to read] because all of the readings relate very directly to the essays that we are assigned.
>
> Yes, because I believe the readings really help me with writing my own paper . . . .
>
> Yes, but only to help my writing . . . .
>
> I am not motivated to read for the course because I feel the reading does not relate to what we talk about in class. It does not help me improve my writing so I am not interested in it.
>
> I sometimes know that the reading will not connect to the class, which makes it harder for me to focus and concentrate on the reading.
>
> I am not motivated to read for this course because the readings are unrelated to what we are writing about.

These responses suggest that the degree to which students are motivated to read assigned texts is influenced by whether or not they perceive connections between that reading and other aspects of the course, especially their writing assignments. Such motivation is crucial, for as Jill Fitzgerald, professor of literacy at the University of North Carolina, explains, "People must feel some urge, some motivation, some reason to read or write. If there is no urge, there is no reading and writing" (84). John Guthrie and Allan Wigfield, faculty members at the University of Maryland College of Education whose research focuses on motivation, make a similar point, that "a person reads a word or comprehends a text not only because she can do it, but because she is motivated to do it" (404).

Instructors appear to have a genuine opportunity to motivate students to complete assigned course reading. What this requires, however, is that students believe the assigned readings directly relate to, or will help them to produce, their writing assignments.[iv] If instructors *explicitly teach* reading and writing as connected activities rather than assuming that students will identify such connections on their own, students stand a far better chance of recognizing how assigned course reading relates to and can help them with their writing tasks.

The Use of Model Texts

An important strategy for teaching reading-writing connections surfaced again and again as

instructors answered a range of survey questions, and most notably in responses to the question *How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?* Assigning model texts is discussed by 17 different instructors and referred to a total of 27 times throughout the surveys.[4] These model texts—mostly published pieces, though sample student papers are occasionally mentioned as well—are primarily discussed in two different ways: as displays of writing techniques and strategies that students can identify and then try in their own writing, or as examples of the specific genre that students will eventually be assigned to write.[v] What distinguishes these two types of reading—which both utilize model texts selected and assigned by the instructor—from many other approaches is that they emphasize reading as a means to learn *about writing*, not as a means to better understand a topic, issue, or worldview. These two uses of model texts call on students to study the text with an eye toward their own eventual writing, to read in a way that greatly resembles what I have described elsewhere as *reading like a writer* ("How").

If instructors explicitly teach reading and writing as connected activities rather than assuming that students will identify such connections on their own, students stand a far better chance of recognizing how assigned course reading relates to and can help them with their writing tasks.

Several survey respondents mention the first of these two purposes for assigning model texts: wanting students to identify specific writerly techniques or writing strategies that they can try out in their own writing. Here is a sampling of those responses:

> I ask students to pay attention to various techniques utilized by the authors and "steal" the ones they find helpful for their own writing.
>
> I ask them to engage with the texts they read by responding to them in writing (challenging them, asking questions, etc.) and then to pull out strategies to use in their own writing.
>
> We ask a lot of questions of texts that are relevant to the essay they are in the process of writing to help them ask questions from which they can write. I also focus heavily on the structure and rhetorical approaches used in the published essays we read, pointing out that these are models for them to use in their own essays.
>
> We'll examine the strategies used in introductions and conclusions in the published texts to get students thinking about what strategies they may want to use in their essay. Students should use the published readings as models, essentially looking for things they appreciate and want to use in their own work.

In each of these responses the instructor describes using model texts to demonstrate strategies and structural techniques that students can adopt in their own writing. The idea is that students will recognize elements to which they responded as a reader and use these elements in their own

assigned writings.

> Sally presents a specific classroom activity intended to encourage students to read for what they can use in their own writing:
>
> [W]e've been sort of informally keeping a personal style journal where after we read a text and we've examined it for structure and we've looked at the argument, we also talk about the aesthetic piece. What did they notice that they like, and what can they take from that text to try out in their own writing?
>
> So, if we found a really good example of a parallel sentence, if they have never tried that before, then they make a note of it and they've got it in the text so that they can refer back to it.

This exercise prompts students to read with an eye toward their own writing by locating specific strategies and techniques that they intend to use and reinforces the idea that both texts and reading serve purposes beyond the transmission of content.

Another instructor describes in a survey response how he or she encourages students to reflect upon the specific ways that they imitate assigned texts:

> I have students analyze claims, evidence, organization, metaphors, and language in articles we read. I encourage them to adopt one or two strategies in their papers using imitation in their writing. I ask them to try to make it seamless (to not let me see it). However, I ask them to write a submission note about their writing process, and in this, they are invited to explain how they mimicked a writer we have read and what the experience felt like as well as if they believe the result is rhetorically effective.

By requiring students to reflect on their adoption of techniques and strategies they locate in the model text and compose a submission note in which they assess the effectiveness of this borrowing, this instructor prompts students to identify and consider direct connections between their course reading and writing.[vi] The submission note and student paper serve as tangible proof that the reading done for the course has influenced the student's writing.

The other primary reason that instructors offer for assigning model texts is that they want to provide students with an example of a *genre* in which the students will eventually be asked to write.[vii] This use of model texts asks students to look at the overall structure of the text or the conventions associated with a particular genre, rather than focus on individual writerly techniques and strategies that they can adopt, as we see in the following two examples from the instructors' surveys:

> We read examples of the kinds of essays they would be writing—descriptive narratives, researched arguments, etc. I subscribe to the theory that students should read models of the genre in which they will be writing.

> If I'm teaching prosody, it makes sense to use metered poetry. If I'm teaching the personal essay, it makes sense to use other personal essays as models. The same can be said for the teaching of other genres.

Instructors assign these texts intending for students to read them as models of genre, but it remains unclear whether instructors are actually teaching students *how* to do this. While the majority of instructors who report assigning model texts so that students can adopt techniques and strategies mention taking time in class to show students how to read for them, this is not the case for most of the instructors who reported assigning model texts as examples of genre. This is a potential disconnect in the course: instructors want students to read for genre conventions but fail to explain this to students or teach them how to do it.

During our interview, Don, a full-time lecturer, noted that this is a potential problem because students don't necessarily know how to read for genre conventions or how to use the texts to improve their own writing:

> It can't be like whoa, look at these four models. Let's just do what they're doing. They can't really—can't really see what's happening in those pieces. I think they see an analytical essay and like—I use the word analytical essay because you know it is a kind of genre. You know but to them it's totally *not* a genre, and I think they're kind of blind to most of what is happening.

Don suggests that students are ill-equipped to use model texts effectively on their own. This view is confirmed by at least one student who explained in a survey response, "I am not very motivated to read for this course because I never really know what to look for in the reading." If instructors can teach students how to read and use model texts, they may be able to combat this sort of lack of motivation on the part of students. It's not enough to merely assign certain kinds of texts. After conducting his own study of student writers using model texts, Peter Smagorinsky reached a similar conclusion, warning, "Simply reading a model piece of writing . . . is insufficient to teach young writers how to produce compositions . . . most novices need more direct instruction" (174).

Teaching Model Texts Effectively: An Example

One of the instructors I interviewed and observed, Tawnya, a graduate student studying literature, attempts to provide the kind of "direct instruction" that Smagorinsky recommends by being very explicit with students about potential connections between their assigned reading and their writing assignments:

> **Tawnya:** For both of the papers they've done so far, I've given them readings that do what I'm asking them to do, with the hopes that when they sit down . . . they can re-read it and

> say "Okay, how can I use this as a template for my writing?"
>
> **MB:** And when you say "ask them to do," you mean readings that are demonstrating a genre or something?
>
> **Tawnya:** Right, so the first one was a descriptive analysis, and the second one was the review, due tomorrow. And then for the third one as well, which is more of a standard argumentative paper, I will do the same, so that they can use it as a template . . . .

By encouraging students to use these texts as models and read with an eye toward their own eventual writing—to read them as examples of the specific genre in which they will be writing—Tawnya helps students to connect the assigned reading to their writing tasks.

Her belief that reading in this way helps students improve their writing is a belief shared by many of her students. In response to the question *Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing?* Tawnya had the highest total number (14) and percentage (82 percent) of students who said *yes*. The following three responses represent how nearly every student in her class mentioned the benefit of reading texts that serve as models for their writing assignments:

> The readings are useful because they typically display the style of writing that needs to be utilized in the upcoming paper. For example: in preparation for writing a critique of a live performance, we will read different styles of critiques from various periodicals.
>
> The reading done for this class is helpful because it usually relates to a paper we are going to write. This makes the process of writing papers easier by giving students a reference.
>
> Yes, I do because the readings we do are often the same as the paper we are writing. When we discuss the readings we look at things they have done well and we might want to do in our papers.

By encouraging students to use these texts as models and read with an eye toward their own eventual writing—to read them as examples of the specific genre in which they will be writing—Tawnya helps students to connect the assigned reading to their writing tasks.

This third comment suggests that at least some of the students in Tawnya's course are developing their understanding of specific writerly strategies and techniques in addition to understanding genre conventions: they are locating things in the assigned texts that the author has "done well" and that they "might want to do" in their papers.

A key to Tawnya's success is that beyond simply assigning models of specific genres, she talks with students about how they should be reading the model texts. Tawnya's students get direct instruction in how to read model texts for *both* writerly strategies they can adopt and for genre conventions.[viii] While observing Tawnya's course, I witnessed this kind of explicit instruction firsthand. Tawnya initiated discussion of

the assigned essay by telling students, "I thought maybe we could go through this part-by-part and talk about . . . [how] he is doing an analysis and his use of detail, his ability to state his thesis and what he's thinking. It should hopefully help you." She then directed the students to reread the first paragraph. When they were finished, she asked the class, "What did you think of this introduction? Why was it either effective or ineffective at pulling you in as a reader?"

Throughout the discussion that ensued, Tawnya pushed the students to explain in specific detail why they did or didn't find the introduction effective. She also led students to examine some of the specific choices the author had made. For example, she asked the class to consider the pros and cons of only discussing two areas of the country in an essay dealing with the polarization of America. Two students offered responses to her question:

> I thought the pros were because he only focused on two places he could go into more in-depth analysis of the places, but because he only focused on two places, while maybe fundamentally red and blue states are still there, there are still differences everywhere. So if he wanted to make a more specific essay he should focus on those two, but if he wanted to get a really good grasp of the difference between red and blue he should have covered more ground.
>
> I think it works for his purposes because these places are so polar opposite.

Both of these students responded insightfully to the author's strategy of only covering two locations in the essay, particularly the first student who offered an alternative strategy that the author *might* have used (as well as a rationale for that alternative). In proposing an alternative strategy for composing the essay, this student displays the kind of understanding about writing strategy that can develop when instructors take the time to teach students to read in this way. A bit later in the same discussion, Tawnya asked the students to look at a specific metaphor operating in the text and told them that they too could use a metaphor to help structure their next paper: "This is another kind of strategy you can use in papers is coming up with a metaphor that describes what you're trying to say. So you analyze your performance, and then you come up with a clever way of expressing it to your audience." With this move, Tawnya directs students' attention to a specific technique operating in the model text and tells them explicitly that they can make a similar move in their own writing. It's difficult to imagine a more straightforward way of connecting the reading and writing that students do.

I present Tawnya's approach as a successful example of teaching reading through the use of model texts for a couple of important reasons. First, she assigns students to read model texts with the *dual* purpose of reading for individual writing techniques and strategies that they can try out, and of reading the text as an example of the genre that they will be working in themselves. She prompts students to use the model texts in both ways simultaneously; this means that students get direct instruction in how to use the model texts for both purposes, each of which can be helpful as

they think about their own writing. Second, she demonstrates for her students *how* she would like them to read, and while doing so she emphasizes connections between the reading they are doing and their writing assignments. She has carefully considered how her reading and writing assignments connect and makes an effort to help students recognize those connections.

Conclusion

A few weeks after I finished analyzing my data, I had the opportunity talk about my research with the director of writing from another Midwestern university and one of his faculty colleagues. As I told them about my findings and about the apparent need for instructors to teach reading-writing connections explicitly, his colleague looked over at me and asked, "Let's say we were going to bring you to campus and arrange for you to speak with all of our writing instructors. What would you tell them? What would you say that could help us improve the ways we teach reading?"

"Let's say we were going to bring you to campus and arrange for you to speak with all of our writing instructors. What would you tell them? What would you say that could help us improve the ways we teach reading?"

There are several suggestions I would like to make to a room full of writing instructors about how to teach reading. Here is where I might start:

- I'd think about the extent to which and the ways in which I perceive reading and writing to be connected activities. This pedagogical awareness can help me to design a course in which the reading and writing assignments build upon and reinforce each other. It's clear from the interviews with instructors at Michigan and from several years of working with new writing instructors at three different institutions that many instructors begin designing their course by *first* selecting the texts to be read, often with little consideration for how those texts connect to course writing assignments.
- Selecting the readings first—independent of the course writing tasks—makes it far harder for us to conceive of how the reading and writing tasks connect and increases the likelihood that they won't connect. If instead we select readings and design writing prompts simultaneously, there is a far greater chance that we will be aware of connections between the two and be able to articulate those connections to students.
- I'd talk with students during class about the connections between assignments. Students indicated in their survey responses that they were more or less motivated to read assigned texts depending upon whether they viewed that reading as relevant to their writing assignments. This simple step to explain the scaffolding we've done can help generate motivation on the part of students to complete assigned reading and can help them to understand

that reading and writing are connected activities.

- Assigning students to read model texts isn't enough; students usually don't know how to read for writerly techniques or for genre conventions on their own. We must teach students *how* to read model texts in ways that will inform the eventual writing that they will do and teach them to read in ways that help them to develop their understanding of writerly strategies and techniques *and* that help them to identify genre conventions so that they are better prepared to write in those genres.

Teaching reading in terms of its connections to writing can motivate students to read and increase the likelihood that they find success in both activities. It can lead students to value reading as an integral aspect of learning to write. It can help students develop their understanding of writerly strategies and techniques. Most of us firmly believe that reading improves writing. Let's make sure that we are teaching reading in ways that make this happen for students.

Appendix A: Instructor Survey

1. How many semesters of first-year writing have you taught, including this one?
2. How many total writing courses have you taught, including this one?
3. Do students arrive (at the university) prepared to read at the college level?
4. What kinds of reading do students do for your first-year writing course?
5. Do you teach students to read visual images or nonwritten texts? If so, what do you do?
6. What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?
7. Do you teach students to do a particular kind of reading or adopt a particular reading approach?
8. Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities?
9. How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?
10. Are there any differences between the ways that you ask students to read the writing produced by their classmates and the ways you ask them to read published texts? If so, what are the differences?
11. Are there any classroom activities or assignments that are better suited to use one type of text as opposed to the other—either published writing or student-produced writing? Please explain your answer.
12. Please discuss a few of the factors that have most influenced your ideas about how to teach, or not to teach, reading in first-year writing.

Appendix B: Student Survey

1. Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing? Why or why not?
2. Do you have a preference between reading published writing or the writing produced by your classmates? Please explain your answer.
3. Are you motivated to read for this course? Why or why not?
4. Have you learned about possible connection(s) between reading and writing in this course? If yes, what have you learned?

Notes

i. The topic of reading has received increased attention in the past few years. In 2009, the journal *Open Words: Access and English Studies* devoted its entire spring issue to articles exploring college-level reading—including some discussion of reading's place within collegiate writing courses. In 2010, the journal *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy* devoted its fall issue to exploring disciplinary ways of teaching reading, including attention to some of the ways that reading is taught in composition. Most recently, at the 2012 Conference on College Composition and Communication in St. Louis, a new annual Special Interest Group dedicated to exploring "The Role of Reading in Composition Studies" met for the first time.

ii. Kathleen McCormick prefers an "interactive" model of reading that she believes stresses that "first, both readers and texts contribute to the reading process and second, that both texts and readers are themselves ideologically situated" (69). However, I prefer Nystrand's description of reading as a "negotiation" over other conceptions of reading, including Louise Rosenblatt's notion of "transaction," because negotiation—more than any other term—implies the degree of cooperation and even compromise needed for writers and readers to make meaning effectively from a text. Negotiation implies that two parties—in this case the writer and reader—are approaching the enterprise with the *mutual* goal of creating meaning.

iii. All instructor and student names are pseudonyms.

iv. This emphasis on model texts may be common at other institutions as well. While conducting a comprehensive study of writing in the undergraduate curriculum at the University of Pittsburgh, David Bartholomae and Beth Matway found a similar use of model texts among faculty from a variety of disciplines: "Many of those interviewed use models in their teaching—either examples of student papers or examples of professional writing—in order to give students a point of reference for genre, format, and style."

v. Although they don't specifically mention the use of model texts, Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem

found that writing instructors at Eastern Michigan University had "three relatively clear purposes for reading within the program. *Content-based* reading . . . asks students to summarize and interpret, to consider connections between ideas, and to use reading to develop ideas. *Process-based* reading focuses on the work of the writer/researcher, scrutinizing the text to look at the decisions made by the writer in the process of textual production as a possible model for students' own writing/research work. *Structure-based* reading asks students to focus on the conventions reflected in and used to shape content; the emphasis is on developing genre awareness so that student writers can make conscious decisions about how to use different genres and conventions, and can make conscious choices about how, when, or whether to use them" (40–41). The second two of these purposes—*process-based* and *structure-based* reading—seem nearly identical to the two primary ways that instructors participating in my research describe wanting students to read in conjunction with model texts.

vi. These submission notes are similar to Jeffrey Sommers's "student-teacher memos' in that they are each "intended to take both student and teacher behind the paper, into the composing process which produced the draft" (77). Sommers asks students to submit a memo with each writing assignment aimed at helping students to "describe and comment on their composing processes" (78). This surveyed instructor's "submission note" may actually do more, however, to help students connect the process of reading with the process of writing, since Sommers's questions focus almost exclusively on writing and the student's written text.

vii. Throughout this article I use the term *genre* to indicate a category or type of text (e.g., a review, an opinion column, an argumentative essay) in the traditional literary sense. While I'm aware that other conceptions of genre transcend this limited conception and construct genre as a way to define various situations and social actions, it's clear that instructor participants (such as Don) were using the term exclusively to indicate forms and types of writing.

viii. Although Tawnya shows that these two uses of model texts—as providing techniques to adopt and as examples of genre—aren't mutually exclusive, nearly every instructor who mentions using model texts refers to either one use or the other, but not both.

Works Cited

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Heidi Estrem. "Reading Practices in the Writing Classroom." *WPA* 31.1/2 (2007): 35–47. Print.

Bartholomae, David, and Beth Matway. "The Pittsburgh Study of Writing." *Across the Disciplines* 7 (Oct. 2010). Web.

Brandt, Deborah. "Social Foundations of Reading and Writing." *Convergences: Transactions in Reading and Writing.* Ed. Bruce Petersen. Urbana: NCTE, 1986. 115–26. Print.

Bunn, Michael. "How to Read like a Writer." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing.* Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky. Anderson: Parlor P, 2011. 71–86. Web.
Carillo, Ellen C. "Making Reading Visible in the Classroom." *Currents in Teaching and Learning* 1.2 (2009). 37–41. Web.
Cox, Rebecca D. *The College Fear Factor*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009. Print.
Driscoll, Dana. "Pedagogy of Transfer: Impacts of Student and Instructor Attitudes." Diss. Purdue U, 2009. Web.
Ettari, Gary, and Heather C. Easterling. "Reading (and) the Profession." *Reader* 47 (Fall 2002): 9–37. Print.
Fitzgerald, Jill. "Reading and Writing as 'Mind Meeting.'" *Reading and Writing Together: New Perspectives for the Classroom.* Ed. Timothy Shanahan. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon, 1990. 81–97. Print.
Guthrie, John, and Allan Wigfield. "Engagement and Motivation in Reading." *Handbook of Reading Research.* Vol. 3. Ed.
Michael L. Kamil, Peter B. Mosenthal, P. David Pearson, and Rebecca Barr. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000. Print.
Harkin, Patricia. "The Reception of ReaderResponse Theory." *College Composition and Communication* 56.3 (2005): 410–25. Print.
Hayes, John. "A New Framework for Understanding Cognition and Affect in Writing." Ruddell and Unrau 1399–430.
Helmers, Marguerite, ed. *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003. Print.
Henry, Jeanne. "Cultivating Reading Workshop: New Theory into New Practice." *Open Words* 3.1 (2009): 1–4. Print.
Hilgers, Thomas, Edna Lardizaball Hussey, and Monica Stitt-Bergh. "'As You're Writing, You Have These Epiphanies': What College Students Say about Writing and Learning in Their Majors." *Written Communication* 16.3 (1999): 317–53. Print.
Horning, Alice. "Reading Across the Curriculum as the Key to Student Success." *Across the Disciplines* 4 (May 2007). Web.
Huffman, Debrah. "Toward Modes of Reading in Composition." *Reader* 60 (Fall 2010): 204–30. Print.
Jolliffe, David, and Allison Harl. "Studying the 'Reading Transition' from High School to College: What Are Our Students Reading and Why?" *College English* 70.6 (2008): 599–617. Print.
Lemke, Jay. "Social Semiotics: A New Model for Literacy Education." *Classrooms and Literacy*. Ed. David Bloome. Norwood: Ablex, 1989. 289–309. Print.
Light, Richard. *Making the Most of College: Students Speak their Minds*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001. Print.
Lindberg, Gary. "Coming to Words: Writing as Process and the Reading of Literature." *Only Connect*. Ed. Thomas Newkirk. Upper Montclair: Boynton/ Cook, 1986. 143–57. Print.
McCormick, Kathleen. *The Culture of Reading / The Teaching of English*. Manchester: U. of Manchester P, 1994. Print.
Morrow, Nancy. "The Role of Reading in the Composition Classroom." *JAC* 17:3 (1997): 453–72. Print.
Nystrand, Martin. "A Social-Interactive Model of Writing." *Written Communication* 6.1 (1989): 66–85. Print.

Rosenblatt, Louise. "The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing." Ruddell and Unrau 1363–98.
Ruddell, Robert, and Norman Unrau, eds. *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 5th ed. Newark: International Reading Association, 2004. Print.
Salvatori, Mariolina. "Conversations with Texts: Reading in the Teaching of Composition." *College English* 58.4 (1996): 440–54. Print.
Smagorinsky, Peter. "How Reading Model Essays Affects Writers." In *Reading/Writing Connections: Learning from Research.* Ed. Judith W. Irwin and Mary Anne Doyle. Newark: International Reading Association, 1992. 160–76. Print.
Sommers, Jeffrey. "Behind the Paper: Using the Student-Teacher Memo." *College Composition and Communication* 39.1 (1988): 77–80. Print.
Stein, Victoria. "Elaboration: Using What You Know." *Reading-to-Write: Exploring Cognitive and Social Process.* Ed. Linda Flower et al. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. 144–155. Print.
Tetreault, Diane DeVido, and Carole Center. "But I'm Not a Reading Teacher!" *Open Words* 3.1 (2009): 45–61. Print.

College Composition and Communication, Volume 33, Number 1, 1982

From Story to Essay: Reading and Writing[1]

Anthony R. Petrosky[2]

Most of the work in reading, response to literature, and composition has gone on independently. Few people have crossed the boundaries of their disciplines to examine the relationships between these aspects of human understanding. Consequently, both research and pedagogy are hard pressed to describe and apply integrated notions of these three aspects of language.

As a result of separate instruction and assessment of progress in reading, literature, and composition, curricula in language are fragmented to the point where literature is often kept out of reading, and composition instruction seldom includes reading or study of literary works, except as models of writing. We even train teachers to be one kind of teacher, say a reading specialist, and not the other. Our obsessions with specialization pose unnecessary and artificial problems that have serious consequences for students. How can they learn to play the spectrum of discourse, as James Moffett says, when the spectrum is broken into wholly independent components, and otherwise intelligent people go around claiming that we can not ask students to write about their reading because the writing confounds reading, especially the assessment of reading ability.[i]

Although I do not intend to discuss assessment, the implications will, I hope, be clear. I do intend to focus on the relationships between reading, response to literature, and composition from theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. In order to do this, I need to first draw attention to research and theory in reading, and then show how recent reading research is telling us the same things about understanding that we know from literary and composition research. Essentially, my argument is that our comprehension of texts, whether they are literary or not, is more an act of composition—for understanding is composing—than of information retrieval, and that the best possible representation of our understandings of texts begins with certain kinds of compositions, not multiple-choice tests or written free responses.

I also want to claim that this process of writing in response to reading is heavily subjective, and, as such, depends on the reader's models of reality; the text, and the context in which it occurs. We

1 **Citation:** Petrosky, Anthony. "From Story to Essay: From Reading to Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1982, pp. 19–37.

2 Anthony Petrosky is Associate Professor of English Education at the University of Pittsburgh. A poet and researcher as well as a teacher, he has published essays in *Research in the Teaching of English*, *English Journal*, *The Journal of Basic Writing*, *The Mathematics Teacher*, and *The Science Journal*, among other professional periodicals, and he has published three chapbooks of poetry. With his wife, he edits and publishes fiction and poetry under his own imprint, The Slow Loris Press.

set our expectations and goals for understanding, in other words, according to our personal frames of reference, according to the particular kind of text we face, and according to the group of people we are interacting with. We need, therefore, to share, read, and comment on each other's written responses if we are to understand ourselves as readers and writers and, equally important, if we are to understand the myriad aspects of texts.

Along the way to making these claims, I first review the radical change in thinking about reading that has come about over the past decade—change that goes from seeing reading as straight information retrieval to seeing it as a process dependent on and subject to readers' models of reality (in the technical jargon of reading, "schema"), which are mental configurations or maps built from prior knowledge, feelings, personality, and culture which readers then apply to, or impose on, new experiences. I then tie these notions of reading into the work of Louise Rosenblatt, Norman Holland, and David Bleich in literary study to demonstrate that these three theorists are, basically, making the same claims about reading as the reading people. After making these connections, my attention turns to demonstrating how comprehension of texts—the putting together of understanding—is the same kind of putting together, or composing, that David Bartholomae discusses when he talks about writers, especially basic writers, as people caught within their own worlds to the point where it is difficult for them to see how they must change their private discourse to meet the demands of public discourse. I will argue, like Bartholomae, that there is a way out of these worlds and that comprehension, like composition, means making public what is private—a process dependent on explication, illustration, and critical examination of perceptions and ideas.

Finally, I come full circle and make a very simple claim that in order to help students understand the texts they read and their response, we need to ask them to write about the texts they read. I demonstrate the differences between written free response to texts and a response heuristic taken from the work of David Bleich; and, consequently, I argue that Bleich's response heuristic is a good beginning point for teaching students how to represent their comprehension in writing.

We must begin, I think, by reseeing our language use as a whole, not as discrete pieces. Reading, responding, and composing are aspects of understanding, and theories that attempt to account for them outside of their interactions with each other run the serious risk of building reductive models of human understanding. Yet we continually focus our attention on them as if they exist in isolation from one another. Consequently, we end up with theories of comprehension, for example, that discount any reliance on composition or extended response. In the same vein, reading researchers are careful not to contaminate assessments of comprehension by asking readers for extended written or oral response to texts. Generally, this kind of research looks to memory as if it were an exact and orderly storehouse, identical for everyone, that can account for comprehension. But by eliminating extended written or oral discourse as a representation of comprehension, we box ourselves into the position of equating comprehension with definitions of recall that ignore the constructive roles of

affect and interpretation in remembering. Comprehension can not be simple literal recall for recall is, as F. Bartlett pointed out in 1932,[ii] never simple and hardly literal. Readers recall, either accurately or inaccurately, for reasons, and those reasons are driven by affect, cognitive frameworks (or, in Bartlett's language, "schemata"), and the context in which the reading and recalling are taking place. To put it another way, the process of recollecting usurps the reality that is recollected.

Putting these arguments aside for a moment, there is another problem with representing comprehension through recall rather than through some kind of structured response that leads to a dialectic which represents the interaction of readers with a text. When we tell students that their job is to remember information or details from texts they read, we limit their senses of reading to one narrow slice of the whole domain of reading and, in effect, we tell them that reading is the kind of activity we do when we have to pass tests based on information in textbooks. And whereas this certainly goes on in schools, it is not the kind of reading that teaches how to think—it teaches, instead, how to memorize and regurgitate. The reading that teaches us how to think lets us read without the pressures of recall and then, when we are finished, it begs us to speak our minds about what we have read and, in the process, it asks us to substantiate our interpretations and opinions—our readings—with evidence from our lives and the texts. When we only ask students to recall or engage in quick, easy-answer type discussions about their reading, we do not give them a chance to form interpretations and opinions with documentation from themselves and texts. One of the best ways to begin giving them this chance is, I will argue, to ask them to write about readings, using Bleich's response heuristic.

To pick up the main threads of my argument, let me say that I think there is compelling evidence to support the claim that comprehension is heavily subjective and is a function of the reader's prior knowledge, the text, and the context. I also think we can argue that we compose as we comprehend, and that our composition arises from these same factors: the text, our affective and cognitive frameworks (or prior knowledge), and the context for reading. When we put together our comprehension—however consciously or unconsciously—the "putting together" is more an act of composition than of information retrieval. And if, as I argue, comprehension is heavily dependent on these three factors, then a convincing representation of it must focus on how they enter into our responses as public statements derived from private experience. To see how we do this, we can and should turn to extended written response to texts. If we take this stance toward comprehension, then it is not enough for readers to demonstrate their comprehension by saying what they perceive in texts (as multiple-choice tests and quick, easy-answer type discussions lead them to do);[iii] they have to explain why they see what they do by explicating the forces that drive their discussions, because they often see things differently for legitimate reasons. The authority for their explanations comes, then, from the personal associations (that is, from their prior knowledge)—the thoughts and feelings they generate in response to what they read—that flesh out their connections to the texts and from textual evidence. And just as the believability or credibility of a text comes from these as-

sociations, comprehension arises from an immersion in the particulars of texts, readers' knowledge, and contexts.

These response compositions are best judged, I want to argue, by the standards usually applied to academic essays: adequacy of elaboration, coherence, clarity, and aptness of illustration. This kind of academic discourse derives its validity from examples and illustrations that anchor the explanations and generalizations in readers' knowledge. The knowledge bases, in the case of reading, are readers' prior experiences, the texts, and the contexts for reading. The personal narratives—which are, in fact, illustrations and examples of personal knowledge—that reveal readers' approaches to comprehending link readers to texts in the same way that examples and illustrations link writers to essays by connecting statements, generalizations, explanations, and conclusions to the knowledge or evidence that informs them.

When we see reading, then, as composing, we see also the need for readers to have ways to express and explain the connections between their prior knowledge and the texts they read. Clearly, this kind of meaning-making requires something more than multiple-choice questions or quick, easy-answer type discussions. If we are looking for compositions that begin to represent comprehension, then there are two elements, I would argue, that must be present in the composition. There must be, of course, reference to and reconstruction of the text to some degree; but there must be, also, reference to and reconstruction of the reader's associations—the reader's schema—so we, the reader's public, can see how he or she is putting it all together.

Recent research in reading by people like Robert Anderson,[iv] David Rumelhart,[v] and Robert Schank and Robert Abelson[vi] focuses on readers as meaning-makers in reading and gives us a theoretical base for making connections between reading, response to literature, and composing as similar processes sharing both the dependence on peoples' models of reality (or, schemata) and the essential "putting together" as the act of constructing meaning from words, text, prior knowledge, and feelings. Basically, and although their research differs in large and small ways, they represent reading as a process arising from the interactions of texts, readers, and contexts. As Marilyn Jager Adams and Allan Collins put it, "A fundamental assumption of schema-theoretic approaches to language comprehension is that spoken or written text does not in itself carry meaning. Rather, a text only provides direction for the listener or reader as to how he should retrieve or construct the intended meaning from his own, previously acquired knowledge."[vii] Schemata—frequently referred to as "plans" (Schank and Abelson), "frames" (Minsky), and "scripts" (Schank and Abelson)—are knowledge structures that provide a framework from which we view the world, including texts. What we know and can know, then, is dependent on what we already know and believe. Current thinking along these lines[viii] suggests that schemata consist of categories that control our perceptions of both format and content in our reading. In other words, as our models of reality develop in breadth and depth through our experience, we develop categories for our knowledge that help us

organize what we know, believe, and feel. This organized knowledge, then, influences both the shape and content of our comprehension, and by extension, of our response and writing.

Prior to this work in schema-theoretic approaches to comprehension, researchers tended to see reading as the act of retrieving information from a text with little or no consideration for the reader as a meaning-maker in a relative and interpretive process. In contrast, the schema-theoretic approach says, simply, that readers put together their comprehension from not just the text, but from the interactions of their personal knowledge, feelings, and experiences with the text under the constraints of the context for reading. This is quite a radical change from seeing reading as the straightforward retrieval of information.

Somewhat the same kind of turnabout in our understanding of reading has taken place in literature. When scholars like I. A. Richards[ix] first started to wonder publicly why their students made so many unique interpretations of works of literature, they set in motion the thinking that eventually yielded the notion that readers transact with texts using their personal models of reality to construct meaning and interpretations. Currently, variations on this position are championed by Louise Rosenblatt,[x] who maintains that reading is a transaction between readers and texts; Norman Holland,[xi] who asserts that this transaction is dependent on the reader's personality; and David Bleich,[xii] who contends that reading is essentially and necessarily subjective.

Rosenblatt, unlike Holland or Bleich, makes an important distinction between readers' purposes for reading. She argues for two basic stances towards texts, efferent and aesthetic (actually she sees them as ends of a continuum). When readers approach a text efferently, they look only for information, not an aesthetic experience. When they approach a text aesthetically, their primary concern "is with what happens *during* the actual reading event . . . . In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during this relationship with a particular text."[xiii] And while she argues for close attention to texts by readers as the way of letting them confirm the accuracy of their comprehension, she also argues for equally close attention to "what that particular juxtaposition of words stirs up within each reader."[xiv] Like schema-theoretic approaches to comprehension, Rosenblatt's transactive model—built on the work of John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley[xv]—emphasizes the role of the knower's prior knowledge in knowing. Her distinction between efferent and aesthetic stances, like the current emphasis on context for reading, gives us a way of discussing the problems of students who read everything like textbooks. And while it is certainly true that readers can take these stances towards anything they read, the process of reading is in all cases transactive. Although Rosenblatt does not herself assert the point, writing about reading is one of the best ways to get students to unravel their transactions so that we can see how they understand and, in the process, help them learn to elaborate, clarify, and illustrate their responses by reference to the associations and prior knowledge that inform them.

Norman Holland also views reading as a transaction. Although he does not discuss efferent and

aesthetic reading, nor the contexts for reading, he sees the process as a transaction where comprehension is completely dependent on the reader's fixed, invariant identity—the unchanging core of personality formed, according to Holland, in the early months of life. David Bleich, on the other hand, working from a subjective paradigm of knowledge, a paradigm that assumes knowledge is always relative and unique to the knower, argues that the constraints of the text are trivial because they can be changed by individual, idiosyncratic action. Unlike Rosenblatt and Holland, he is unwilling to admit the constraints of the texts because, as he claims, "they function as any real object functions, since they can be changed by subjective action."[xvi] Bleich's views are radical, and he is, I think, too easily seduced by what he refers to as "subjective action"—the possibilities of people seeing things differently because of their unique models of reality. Even though we can, as he says, change things, including texts, by subjective action, we in fact do not always do this. And, furthermore, we share an enormous set of beliefs and expectations that make it possible for us to understand each other. Bleich argues persuasively, though, for the power of the individual's unique experience to control interpretation and for the power of the community that must then evolve when readers come together to determine reality. He takes the position that texts are symbolizations resymbolized, understood, and interpreted within the context of a community. The community channels and defines reality through the dialectic that ensues when readers get together in various contexts to understand texts and each other. For Bleich, the only way to demonstrate comprehension is through extended discourse where readers become writers who articulate their understandings of and connections to the text in their responses. Response is, then, an expression and explanation of comprehension; and comprehension means using writing to explicate the connections between our models of reality—our prior knowledge—and the texts we recreate in light of them.

Unlike retrieval models of reading, this approach gives readers a way to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and references while making meaning for themselves by writing expressive and explanatory prose in response to their readings. Essentially, *they are asked to write, first, what they perceive in the text, and then how they feel about what they see, and finally what associations—thoughts and feelings—inform and follow from their perceptions.* This "response" heuristic yields an essay that represents comprehension much more accurately than multiple-choice questions, quick-and-easy-answer type discussions, or free responses. This approach to writing about reading is derived from a powerful heuristic—explanation conducted by description and association—that is used widely in philosophical, psychoanalytic, and psychological inquiry. It can tease out structured response and, therefore, encourage respondents to discover their orientations to just about anything. Like all frequently repeated experiences, its effect is paradigmatic, altering the way we "see" and respond, "affecting by analogy much beyond the immediately seen . . ."[xvii] When used as a writing prompt, it yields a first draft of what can, with revision based on comments from a teacher or a group of students, become a sophisticated essay. Within the past ten years, the field of composition has begun

to concern itself with the same heuristic. David Bartholomae, working towards a pedagogy for basic writers,[xviii] has found that writing produced by basic writers relies heavily on the writers' unarticulated knowledge, with little or no exposition of that knowledge through examples, illustrations, and details. He maintains that a characteristic of a sophisticated essay, on the other hand, is the writer's critical examination, through examples and illustrations, of the assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge that inform the writing. In other words, Bartholomae contends that the roots of public academic discourse rest in the writer's subjectivity—that is, in the power of the writer's unique experience and prior knowledge, which control perceptions and interpretations. One of the important distinctions between good and bad public academic discourse is, then, that good public discourse articulates this prior knowledge or individual point of view so that it is accessible to others who need the information in order to understand the writer and his or her contexts. Once a student writer has made this information accessible, he or she can then, with help from the teacher and other students, go back to his or her other essay and begin a critical examination of both the essay and the assumptions underlying it.

Bartholomae's approach to composition asks writers to do what Bleich's heuristic for writing responses asks readers to do: use examples and illustrations as the basis for explanations, generalizations, and critical examinations. The examples and illustrations in a response come from the reader's associations, beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, and perceptions of the text. Writing about reading in this way gives readers a way to make meaning for themselves through a process of discovery rooted in inferential thinking.

Roland Barthes,[xix] discussing writing in a more global sense, extends the metaphor of a writer's "schemata" to help us see the role of personal background and cultural conventions in writing. He expands the notion of personal influences on writing to include not only the "familiar personal past" of the writer but also influences beyond the immediate control of the writer, such as the pressures of history and tradition that limit and define writing and its conventions. So in a narrow sense writers, like readers, are influenced in responding by the exigencies of their familiar personal past, but they are also influenced in responding and writing by pressures beyond their immediate awareness, such as the broad cultural expectations and influences of history and tradition—frames and schemata of much more inclusive proportions.

In summary, one of the most interesting results of connecting reading, literary, and composition theory and pedagogy is that they yield similar explanations of human understanding as a process rooted in the individual's knowledge and feelings and characterized by the fundamental act of making meaning, whether it be through reading, responding, or writing. When we read, we comprehend by putting together impressions of the text with our personal, cultural, and contextual models of reality. When we write, we compose by making meaning from available information, our personal knowledge, and the cultural and contextual frames we happen to find ourselves in. Our

theoretical understandings of these processes are converging, as I pointed out, around the central role of human understanding—be it of texts or the world—as a process of composing.

The pedagogical implications of making these theoretical connections are actually quite simple: readers and writers need help in the form of heuristics and dialogue to articulate their understandings of texts, themselves, and the world. Bleich's response heuristic works to this end by giving students a way to flesh out the models of reality that inform their understandings of texts. Once this happens and students have explained their readings, they can enter into critical discussions with teachers and other students that lead them to examine their readings *and* the assumptions that inform them.[xx]

Let me now turn to an example. Here is a response that a student, Dan, wrote in a free response style with no direction except to write a statement that would represent his understanding of William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily." Prior to this response, he had written in a free response style after reading Donald Barthelme's "The Balloon," and Shakespeare's sonnet 138. It is characteristic of the eight free responses he wrote in a graduate seminar on reading and psychology that I taught at the University of Pittsburgh in 1981. His free responses, like almost everyone else's in the seminar, tended to be sketchy and unfocused.

Upon Reading "A Rose for Emily"

How beautiful:

How otherwise?

The thing's as we expect and Wouldn't, couldn't change.

No blemish Emily But hybrid

Of the stubborn rose

That yields diverse perversity.

That yields perverse integrity And loyalty and spoils

All notion garden walks

Are through once briar and thicket catch to tear.

Maybe that would be enough if I had any confidence in my poetry. The temptation is to say it again, now in prose, but the thing is so fleeting . . . I guess that's why poetry seemed like the right way to express it. I wonder if I can capture how "A Rose for Emily" affects me in any other way? It's almost a violation of something strong and basic in me to pull this wonderful mess of emotion out, so fishnet tangled up, and give it a shape it shouldn't have.

> I love William Faulkner for doing this to me. And he took me so by surprise. I rushed to get the story in the first few pages and suffered reader's doldrums in the next few and was cynical when toward the end I wondered if Estella might appear chasing after a story to hide in. And then, the man himself lay in the bed, and sweetly, no, I can't understand it either, I don't know why it's with such a rush of pleasure that I see it, Emily had joined him there. I thought so many things that were the same thing when Faulkner finished writing. I thought, Yes, that's right, of course she'd done this thing. It's not so hard to understand or even wish it as a romantic and symbolic act. It's those crazy people who are always giving us the symbols. They must be the only ones with any vision.

Links with the text are missing from this response, and it is difficult to see why Dan says the things he does. It is particularly difficult to see why this story moves him as much as he claims it does. And even though I like the poetic sense of his response, I have to admit, finally, that I need more from Dan if I am to understand his understanding of the story.

Before going on to look at Dan's use of the heuristic in his response to *The Great Gatsby,* I think another glimpse at one of his free responses will help me complete the picture of free response that I am trying to paint. For this example, I turn to Dan's response to Robert Frost's poem, "Once By The Pacific." The poem begins with someone looking out at the ocean and seeing waves shatter on the rocks, "forming a misty din." It builds to an awesome foreboding of the sea's destructive power and, finally, in the last stanza God enters to put out the light.

Although Dan wrote this as a free response, it is one of the last such responses and came at a time in the semester when he was growing frustrated with the sketchy, unfocused nature of the free responses. Here he deliberately moves his attention to a central idea and tries to focus his response on the poem—more so than he did on the story in his response to "A Rose For Emily." But, again, it does not work; he begins well enough with a statement defining his attempt to find a central idea, but he finally ends up digressing into what he claims Frost makes him see and, finally, a private association he has with Niagara Falls.

> **Response To "Once By The Pacific"**
>
> What to say. How to begin. What central idea to express and tie in with "Once By The Pacific." I don"t know. I see dusk at all the ocean spots I've stood in—as a boy with jellyfish in the Atlantic, as an adolescent with the black sand and the hucksters in the Mediterranean, as a young man with my insecurities in an inlet, on a peninsula, on the edge of a continent in any water anywhere stretching my imagination out and out.
>
> Great water, I conclude, had life. Frost hasn't surprised that reaction in me. So what has he done? He has made me answer, Yes, that's right—if tales come carried from the tale giver they will reach shore on wing if they are good and on wave if they are ominous and bad.

> He has made me answer, Yes, the word will be too loud to hear, too spendrift to be held for long before, once shattered into bits of night, new words, greater than before, succeed those old. And he has made me answer, Yes, the earth absorbs initial shocks to fall back upon upright earth, but it is *someone* who had best put affairs in order, for what continent will make a man secure?
>
> He makes me see a privileged man alone, exposed, host-like by the door he is standing, privy to a drama played out. And he is not surprised and he does not seem to be afraid. Another, look, another hurries on below, over washing slabs of stone, wraps up his eyes under his coat, about his business, off to supper, and privy to nothing. No eyes, no ears for hearing any noise save the muttering he gives way to—the gust that swallows it.
>
> The caves of Niagara. Creep along the narrow caves, edge along the walls of the caves of Niagara and hear what you can see at the mouths of the caves. Hear the thunder unabated as the water walls explode forever hour upon hour. Come closer to the cruelty, let it last at you. See death in the mouths of the caves of Niagara and ask what sort of man can be here and think his own thoughts, not hear the roar and change.
>
> He makes me remember. He makes me know what I know.

While the first two paragraphs seem, to me, to be the barest beginnings of a response that other readers can understand, he never quite puts the response together with his private associations that drive it so we could see the links he might be making in his mind. We end up with the barest structure of a response that lacks support in the form of explicit connections between what Dan sees in the poem and why he sees what he does. As a reader, my reaction is puzzlement. I am left with a handful of important unanswered questions. Why, for instance, is he so heavy-handed in the second paragraph? Why is there a second man in the third stanza? What does this person represent? And, finally, how is this association to Niagara Falls connected to his reading of the poem? What is it that Dan knows from Niagara that this poem makes him remember?

All in all, Dan's attempt at a more focused response with the free response format is only a little better, a little clearer than his response to "A Rose For Emily," and, as we will see, is nowhere near as clear and explicit as his response to *The Great Gatsby,* where he uses the response heuristic. There is, though, an aspect of Dan's response to the Frost poem that deserves some attention because it highlights the relative uselessness of personal associations in a response unless they are connected in some explicit way to the reader's impressions or interpretations of the text. Dan's first and last paragraphs of this response are free associations very much in the manner of what the response heuristic is meant to produce; but unlike the associations encouraged by the response heuristic they are not connected to statements of perception or interpretation, so they appear to come from and go nowhere.

When Dan began to use Bleich's response heuristic—writing first what he perceived in the text,

then how he felt about what he saw, and finally what associations followed from his perceptions—his responses blossomed into three and four-page single-spaced essays that flip back and forth between sections of the texts and specific personal references. The following selection from his response to *The Great Gatsby* is typical of the way he interrelates the text with his memories and associations. He tells us, in short, how he relates to the text he writes about. This is part of his first response from the heuristic.

> Nick's house. The first thing I remember, having just finished Gatsby, is Nick's house. It sits hidden (mostly by grass) and because it is hidden, it provides Nick with a good private spot for making observations and for making judgements. I like the house. I think its walls are probably white and rough and the rooms crowded with furniture. It is always warm, and it is always a smarter place to be than is Gatsby's. Houses are important to me. I always think of my childhood *in* some house. My favorite house was in Butler, Pa. I spent a romantic adolescence there, writing awful short stories on Sunday mornings while my parents were in church, smoking my father's Camel cigarettes on the sly, feeling very grown up and melancholy. It was in this house that I spent a year convalescing after an operation that straightened my spine from a radical curve into a soft curve. I was encased in plaster from my head to my knees—helpless. Every Sunday morning, after he came back from church, my father, a practical, even rough business man, ministered to my needs. And though my mother spent her time during the week doing the same things and doing them with more finesse and doing them gently, it is with greater fondness that I remember the way my father roughed me up with rowels and brushes and soapy water. My room was on the second floor and looked out over a small reservoir completely surrounded by old trees. I watched the seasons change and start to change again before I was on my feet again. And if it hadn't happened, I wouldn't know the depth of my father's love for me.

Nick's house reminds him of his favorite childhood house where he grew close to his father. Clearly, he has strong feelings about the whole scene that the house brings to mind and, in a direct way, these feelings shape his stance towards the text. Dan's use of his family as a sounding board for characters and events in the text is one of the recurring characteristics of his affective and cognitive framework. In his response to *Gatsby,* he develops every textual reference into a statement about some member of his family. He discusses Fitzgerald's humor, and then begins discussing his father by beginning with his sense of humor. Later on in the same response, he discusses the scene in the hotel room where Tom Buchanan confronts Gatsby with his fabricated story of his life, and then he slips into a monologue on his relationship with his brother by referring to Gatsby's relationship with Tom. The response heuristic teases out these kinds of references and Dan was one of the two people in the seminar who continually returned to their families in their responses.

When Dan wrote using Bleich's response heuristic in response to *Gatsby,* he developed his statements around characters and events that related to recollections of his family, but he also wrote, for the first time during the semester, statements that began with specific retellings of the text, then moved to explanations of his connections to the text *vis a vis* his feelings and associations; finally, he concluded by generalizing from his discussion.

Not everyone in the seminar wrote from family recollections, and not everyone had Dan's initial success with the response heuristic. One student, Bob—a clinical psychologist—managed to double the length of his responses using Bleich's heuristic, but still his responses were not explicit enough to be accessible to others in the class. He relentlessly saw everything in the stories and poems from a clinical perspective. He would not discuss a character or event unless he could frame the discussion as an illustration of a clinical phenomenon. He saw Faulkner's Emily, for instance, as a person who never understood her options in life; and, therefore, she needed therapy to help her see these options. He saw *Gatsby* as a book that "carried some good descriptions of character behavior disorders." He continually placed himself in the role of a therapist and he took great pleasure from treating characters as patients. His responses prompted lengthy seminar discussions—most of which were devoted to fleshing out what he was saying—and he literally recreated every story and poem in light of his clinical experiences.

Millie, another student in the seminar, had a difficult time writing responses that articulated the prior experiences underlying her perceptions and judgments. Here are the first two paragraphs of her response to *Gatsby.* They are typical of her two-page response to this book. Notice how they never quite get off the ground, although the barest bones of the heuristic are evident—perceptions of the text, feelings, and spare associations. She stops short of the depth of explanation that Dan achieves in his response to *Gatsby,* and she did not at all try to interpret texts as we will see Dan doing later in his response to Penelope Mortimer's *The Pumpkin Eater.* Notice, too, how Millie introduces pertinent information about her associations with Nick's sense of powerlessness when Tom and Gatsby begin to fight, but she does not develop that discussion into any kind of elaborated description or explanation that might allow us to get a concrete sense of her perception of the powerlessness that she attributes to Nick.

> Whenever I think over what I remember from the novel, sensory impressions come to mind first. One of the most vivid impressions is dust. The grayness in the valley of ashes between the City and the Eggs depresses me. I can see the bareness and sterility of the landscape and Myrtle's body lying in the dusty road. I can also visualize the grayness of Wilson's face. The valley of ashes reminds me of a depressing strip of highway leading into New Kensington which is littered with shacks, coal tipples, junked cars, and greasy diners. This strip puts the rider in the right frame of mind for entering New Kensington, "a good place to work, trade, and live."

> Another memorable sensory impression is the heat. I can feel the enervating heat the afternoon Nick first visits Daisy and Tom. I am oppressed by the boiling tense environment the afternoon the couples go to the city. It's no surprise to me that violent activity explodes because the oppressive air keeps swelling along with the palpable tension between Tom and Gatsby. I know how the heat enervates me and makes me short tempered. I love summer storms that finally give some relief from oppressive heat. I know how Nick must have felt as the tension built between Gatsby and Tom. I've been in unpleasant situations like the one that afternoon and I was powerless to stop the inevitable progression that led to a violent outburst.

While Millie does *tell* us that she understands the tension and powerlessness that Nick must have felt, she does not give us the description and explanation that would allow us to see or understand her experience with powerlessness so we might know what it means to her. Her narrative is thin compared to Dan's, and as such it is less compelling than Dan's. In short, Millie begins to use the heuristic, but unlike Dan, she stops short and does not make the commitment to description and explanation through association with prior personal knowledge that Dan does. Consequently, I have only a vague sense of the prior knowledge driving her response; in order to have a more concrete sense of her associations with the text, I need more explanation. My response was to ask her to say more—to specifically tell the story of that afternoon she felt powerless and then to tell how her sense of powerlessness is related to Nick's. And although I kept asking her for more explanation and critical examination, she never did write anything nearly as sophisticated as Dan.

Dan's response to Penelope Mortimer's *The Pumpkin Eater* is another good example of how the response heuristic helps him discuss his associations with the story, so that unlike Millie's response to *Gatsby,* his response gives us a good sense of the mental map that is guiding his reactions. But this response also differs in an important way from his earlier *Gatsby* response in that it takes a more critical, speculative stance towards the text. The second paragraph—presented below—goes beyond the description of houses in his *Gatsby* response by exploring "desperation" and commenting on what Mrs. Armitage might have felt in her desperate state. Notice, too, how this paragraph follows a pattern. First, he describes Mrs. Armitage, confused and desperate, awaking in Giles' bedroom (a perception of the text); then Dan recalls the desperation of his brother and he explains that experience as a comment on desperation (a statement of his feelings couched in the associations); finally, he concludes by generalizing from his discussion. Dan cues to this scene because he has strong associations with desperation. He tells us what those associations are so that we can see why this scene is important enough for him to want to discuss it, and then he takes his experience with desperation and turns it into critical speculation on desperation and Mrs. Armitage's situation.

> A awakes. Eleven hours unconscious in Giles' bedroom. Night? Lace day? I can't say, but

were I to film the scene the lights would burn without shades from the sockets and the room would be sick with their paleness. Giles tells A the truth about Jake's calls and she is desperate to go. She is confused with so much sleep, disoriented and not certain about time. She goes, and what is left behind is the room—rumpled, stale, yellow with some bright spots chat turn out to be bare lights. And I am reminded chat what surrounds me when I awake and just before I sleep and as I work has a profound effect upon whether I stay all sane. And I remember how one evening my brother David and I sat arguing in our room, our parents insulated downstairs with their papers from our racket and thumping around. I held my head in my hands and wailed chat he had to clean up the room, for he'd made a mess. He became frightened and set to work without delay. I was calm again before long. But I also had a new kind of memory and one chat had come too early in the life of a boy—I had done something and felt some way without reason and without control and had scared myself and David. Face to face with an altered consciousness chat would test me again in dreams and in wakefulness whenever it was time to be a little crazy. Desperate. David slipped over the edge before any of the rest of us, though, and did it without witness. I could have helped had I known he was nuts because I had seen the ocher side though I hadn't embraced it. I could have helped, and I remember how it isn't good to be desperate all alone.

Dan's last paragraph in the same response is another good example of the same pattern. First, he describes Jake's father in the context of a haunting statement he left behind when he died; then he recalls a boy from his youth and relates a moving story about his death; and, finally, he concludes the response by generalizing about death and memory. Notice, too, how explicit his links are to the text in this response compared with those in his responses to "A Rose For Emily" and "Once by the Pacific." His connections are much more visible and concrete in his responses, like this one, that follow from the heuristic than they are in his responses, like the one to "A Rose For Emily," that are essentially free response. Here too, he goes beyond his earlier *Gatsby* response by making a critical judgment in guessing "that Mortimer is claiming Jake's father purposely held back important things for the reasons A suspects." Once Dan makes the interpretive judgment, he goes on to explore it and its implications by commenting on private and public feelings. We get a good sense of the mental map that directs his explorations because he re creates the experience that bears directly—or, at least, associatively—on his sense of public and private feelings.

I felt close to the strange character of Jake's father. We don't know a lot about him, but he left behind a haunting statement in which the nature of God is examined. A calls it his only great statement and accuses him of leaving his life still uninvolved because the statement came after his death. I guess that Mortimer is claiming Jake's father purposely held back important things for the reasons A suspects. Good. We peer into people's lives

> and make them ordinary by it. Holding portions away from public view seems a small, dignified price to pay, whatever the results. One's children don't know the depths of your feelings toward God. Small price for owning something private, that. I can feel a reaction against the process that we are all currently undergoing rising up in me. We are peering into one another's lives, and worse, we assist one another. Billy Fennick. A boy from my youth named Billy taught me how to set trees on fire and to smoke. He was bad for me. He went to the Navy and never came home because he drowned. His submarine went under and didn't come up. He was as close to me, to my hands, as this typewriter once and then he was under the sea drowning. My friend Billy. And do you know what I wondered when I heard? I wondered if he saw my face and heard me laugh when he talked dirty. Because Billy left nothing. The submarine was lost. Billy never came home, even dead. But, in my little age, I was convinced if he had thought of me, he left me behind. I was his statement and the sign of his involvement with the world. That sort of mystic link with the dead is important to me. It is not ordinary, first of all, and I think the dead deserve being remembered unusually. And second of all, those kinds of memories give the living a chance to make amends for the shortcomings of living so close beside the people we love that the only thing that makes them important to us is their death.

Dan's responses are particularly moving, but then so were almost everyone's in the seminar once we began using Bleich's response format. But the responses were not only moving, they had explanatory power because they used examples and illustrations derived from associations as a way of revealing the readers' mental maps that were guiding their responses. There was very little explaining or illustrating in the free responses and in the responses, like Millie's, that only flirted with the heuristic. Generally, readers free responded in terms of what they liked, and then they drew conclusions or generalizations about the work, about some aspect of it, or about reality. And while it was interesting to see these varied and individual perceptions, they were not compelling as acts of comprehension in the ways essays are compelling when they illustrate with examples to flesh out the knowledge—personal, factual, or textual—that shapes one's comprehension.

Throughout the seminar we duplicated and shared our responses so that at the end of the semester we had complete sets of responses from everyone in the group. We used these as the basis for our theoretical and literary discussions. The final project for the seminar was a self-study paper. The group members were asked to write case studies on their reading. They examined all of their responses in light of the readings and discussions. From this, they wrote case reports of themselves as readers. The papers were interesting for a number of reasons. First, everyone looked for and found consistent patterns in their readings that indicated how they were using their personal knowledge to create both the format and content of their responses. Second, the readers took varied theoretical stances to explain their readings, but regardless of their bent, they were able to explain them. And

third, they recognized that they wrote considerably more sophisticated papers when they used the response heuristic. By having a way to flesh out the personal knowledge that informed their comprehension, they were better able to explain themselves to each other. And while I would be hard pressed to argue that elaboration like this will always lead to more sophisticated response—for I can certainly imagine elaborated but empty responses—I do think that this kind of elaboration and explanation is a necessary beginning to more critical examinations of texts and the assumptions underlying readers' readings of them.

Teaching reading this way means teaching composition as the most compelling and persuasive representation of comprehension. If we are willing to consider that comprehension is more than limited recall and retelling (although it certainly contains these), and if we are willing to see reading as a kind of transaction between readers and texts in specific contexts, then we need to ask readers to represent their comprehension through composition by asking them to follow a sequence of assignments that begins with Bleich's response heuristic and then moves to more critical examination of responses and the assumptions underlying them.

When readers in my seminar used Bleich's response heuristic, their responses began with references to the text and then moved into personal narratives that told the story of their associations with the text. The personal narratives served a function similar to that served by examples and illustrations in essays—they fleshed out assumptions, feelings, and prior knowledge to give authority to what the author had to say. When these examples and illustrations are missing from essays, the writing becomes a set of empty assertions with little or no evidence to give them authority. And like essays that follow conventions but say nothing, they turn into a kind of "themewriting."[xxi] The same is true of the responses the readers in my seminar wrote when they followed the free response format. Like Dan in his response to "A Rose for Emily," they wrote vague statements that were difficult to understand and were like essays without compelling examples and illustrations—responses that lacked evidence and failed to show the essential connections of knower to known.

Statements of comprehension are most compelling, on the other hand, when they make connections between knower and known, text and reader, reading and context. And, equally important, when we ask readers to write about their readings using Bleich's response heuristic, we are asking them to engage in one of the most fundamental intellectual processes. We ask them to use a basic heuristic of inquiry. The process is similar to making interpretations and documenting them; as such, it is fundamental to the beginnings of any dialogue or dialectic that must ensue when people come together to understand reality. Writing plays a crucial role in this heuristic because it can commit and compel the reader to discover meaning by articulating one's responses in extended discourse that is meant to be public within the community of the classroom.

Once readers have used Bleich's heuristic to generate a response, the class can move to a discussion of everyone's responses, and then, using comments from the group and from the teacher, the

readers can begin treating their responses as both critical statements whose assumptions and stances need to be examined, questioned, and discussed, and as pieces of writing that can be revised and edited. By following a procedure like this, students can accumulate experience in reading, writing about their reading, discussing each other's reading, commenting on responses as pieces of writing, and revising and editing. Teachers, on the other hand, need to learn how to read responses with an eye to helping students flesh out the personal knowledge and critical judgments that inform them. In order to do this, I read and wrote along with my students. I am convinced that doing this is necessary if the teacher is to become a member in the community of readers; but, perhaps more importantly, I am convinced that doing it is necessary because it teaches me how to talk about responses in the context of trying to help students do what I am trying to do for myself. The entire process is, I think, one of the most meaningful ways to integrate reading and writing in composition, reading, and literature classes.[xxii]

Notes

i. This argument that we should not ask students to write about their reading because the writing confounds our assessment of their reading is a familiar one in assessment circles. I first encountered it in its most entrenched form when I held a contract to develop test specifications and items for the third national assessment of reading and literature. It resides, I believe, in the notion that reading and writing are discrete mental processes—a notion that I hope this paper begins to dispel.

ii. F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932). The term "schemata" is used by Bartlett to include both affective and cognitive frameworks, but it is often the case that people quoting him use it only to mean cognitive frameworks. The varied use of the term has lead me to prefer "models of reality'" or "frames" in lieu of "schemata."

iii. For decades multiple-choice tests have dominated reading comprehension assessment and instruction. College skills programs have students read short paragraphs and answer multiplechoice questions as comprehension instruction, and classrooms at all levels of education are dominated by quick, easy-answer type discussions of texts. Finally, from the third national assessment of reading and literature, we have empirical evidence indicating that students at ages 9, 13, and 17 do much better on multiple-choice questions than on essays that require them to explain answers to multiple-choice questions. About 70% of all 17-year-olds can do the multiple-choice questions while only 20 to 30% can adequately explain and substantiate their answers. To me, this is a clear indication of the kinds of instruction students are getting in reading and literature classes—a situation that must change if we are going to move beyond superficial reading and literature instruction.

iv. Robert Anderson, "The Notion of Schemata and the Educational Enterprise," in R. Anderson, R. Spiro, and W. Montague, eds., *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1977).

v. David Rumelhart, "Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition," in R. Spiro, B. Bruce, and W. Brewer, eds., *Theoretical Issues in Reading and Comprehension* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1980).

vi. Robert Schank and Robert Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1977).

vii. Marylin Jager Adams and Allan Collins, *A Schema-Theoretic View of Reading* (Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, 1977). It is interesting, I think, to see both the idea of retrieval and construction applied to reading in this quotation. Although the gist of the statement is clearly along the lines of readers constructing meaning, there is still a tension in the author's reluctance to completely give up the retrieval notion of reading. This is, I think, typical of the tensions in the field of reading.

viii. Robert De Beaugrande, "Design Criteria for Process Models of Reading," *Reading Research Quarterly,* 16 (February, 1981), 261-315.

ix. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary judgment* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929).

x. Louise Rosenblatt, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

xi. Norman N. Holland, *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

xii. David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978). Although I have taken the response heuristic from this book, there is much more here for the reader who wants to go beyond the heuristic to critical examinations of responses and texts.

xiii. Rosenblatt, pp. 24-25.

xiv. Rosenblatt, p. 137.

xv. John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949).

xvi. Bleich, p. 112.

xvii. John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977). Fowles talks about reading and writing throughout this marvelous book. His comments are as insightful as the best reading and writing research.

xviii. David Bartholomae, "Teaching Basic Writing: An Alternative to Basic *Skills," Journal of Basic Writing* (Spring/Summer, 1979), 85-109.

xix. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970). This is one of the most helpful books for understanding writing in the contexts of history and tradition, governed by cultural codes and conventions. Even though Barthes changed his position on writing well before his death, his work here seems relevant to reading and writing.

xx. See David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, "Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts: A Basic Reading and

Writing Course for the College Curriculum," in Marilyn Sternglass and Douglas Butturff, eds., *Building the Bridges Between Reading and Writing* (Akron, Ohio: L&S Books, 1981) for a more detailed discussion of a basic reading and writing pedagogy emanating from these notions of comprehension as composition.

xxi. William E. Coles, Jr., *The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978). Coles characterizes writing that says nothing but says it well as "themewriting." He claims, and my experience supports his claim, that students learn how to do this kind of writing in schools where teachers spend little or no time commenting on the meaning and content of papers, but, rather, spend time teaching composition forms and formats.

xxii. A version of this paper was originally presented at the New York University Language and Reading Conference, New York City, May, 1981. I am grateful to my friends and colleagues Arthur Applebee, David Bartholomae, Charles Cooper, and Susan Wall for their careful readings of earlier drafts.

College English, Volume 45, Number 7, November 1983

Reading and Writing a Text: Correlations between Reading and Writing Patterns[1]

Mariolina Salvatori[2]

> The capacity to participate in verbally complex texts is not widely fostered in our educational system, and desirable habits of reflection, interpretation, and evaluation are not widespread. These are goals that should engender powerful reforms in language training and literary education. But none of these are attainable if good literary works of art are envisioned as the province of only a small, highly trained elite. Once the literary work is seen as part of the fabric of individual lives, the gap may be at least narrowed, without relinquishing recognition of standards of excellence.
>
> – Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 143

At present the teaching of literature and composition are characterized by an artificial separation between the activities of reading and those of writing.[3] Although there is no question that a number of conveniences attend this separation, the division can be dangerous if it seems to suggest

1 **Citation:** Salvatori, Mariolina "Reading and Writing a Text: Correlations between Reading and Writing Patterns." *College English*, vol. 45, no. 7, 1983, pp. 656-666.

2 Mariolina Salvatori teaches English and comparative literature and composition at the University of Pittsburgh. She has previously published articles on ltalo Svevo, Cesare Pavese , and the immigrant novel. Her research interests include the modern Italian novel, the literature of aging, and reader response theory, especially its applications to composition.

3 There are some who advocate such a " separatist" view. For example , E. D. Hirsch's argument is based on problematic assumptions about both the teaching of composition (i.e., for Hirsch, "the teaching of writing skills") and the teaching of literature (i.e. , knowledge *about* rather than *through* literature): "Everyone accepts literacy as a goal of schooling, but the planners of school curricula are not always sure just where the *skills of writing* should be taught. *Should it be connected with* literary instruction in classes on poetry and fiction? Or should it be kept with the *humbler language arts* of spelling and punctuation? . . . Everything I have learned from my researches points toward the correctness of the second point of view—that composition is a *craft* which cannot properly be subsumed under any conventional subject matter. . . . In talking with many university teachers of composition, I have become convinced that one reason for the desire to mix composition with other instructional goals is the ignorance that besets us all about effective ways to teach composition. We know a lot more about literature than we know about teaching the craft of prose. In our anxious ignorance on that subject, we commit ourselves to goals that are more 'humanistic' than mere composition." *The Philosophy of Composition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 140 italics mine.

that the processes of the one activity, in theory and in practice, are antithetical to the teaching of the other, and if it implicitly sets up a qualitative and value-laden distinction between the reading of inexperienced and experienced readers.

The exclusion of literary texts from most composition curricula may be seen as the indirect, though not accidental, result of the influence of some literary theories that place their main emphasis on the elaborate analysis of the structures and the meanings of a literary text.[4] While these theories presuppose a highly trained reader—which the beginning writing student is not—they usually neglect to account for, and to explain, the complex activities of that reader's mind as she or he receives, responds to, and generates those meanings.

Paradigmatic of this approach to the reading (and the teaching) of a literary text is Tzvetan Todorov's assertion that "since reading is so hard to observe," and "introspection is uncertain, psycho-sociological investigation is tedious . . . it is . . . with a kind of relief that we find the work of construction represented in fiction itself, a much more convenient place for study [since] a text always contains within itself directions for its own consumption." [5] But to know that a text contains within itself "directions for its own consumption" is already to know how to read and respond to those directions. The reader, in other words, is not only aware of the great variety of activities entailed in the reading of a fictional text, but because of this awareness, has also developed the appropriate skills to perform such reading. How he or she has managed to develop those skills remains, to a large extent, a mystery. The reading of elaborate texts remains the province of knowledgeable critics whose expertise inexperienced students can only vaguely imitate through the memorization of an empty literary nomenclature, achieving at best knowledge *about* rather than *through* literature.

When the reading of literary texts is envisioned in these terms, then there is, and there should be, no use for them in composition classes. But the loss can be considerable because, as Louise M. Rosenblatt points out:

> Literary texts provide us with a widely broadened "other" through which to define ourselves and our world. Reflection on our meshing with the text can foster the process of

4 See Hirsch's specious argument for the separation of literature and composition: "For it can be shown that knowing how to write is different from knowing about literature. The proof is simple. Numbers of graduate students in literature are unable to write well, yet they do demonstrably know a great deal about literature, much more than a freshman could possibly learn in a composition course. Whatever the theory may have been under which the teaching of literature was thought to be closely connected with writing skills, that theory has been shown to be incorrect by this simply empirical test" (p. 141). But it may be argued that the "empirical test" shows something else, i.e., that the teaching of literature as *information* about genres, poetic forms, images and metaphors, etc., rather than *exploration* of how a reader's mind interacts with a text to compose meanings, might be responsible for this arbitrary distinction between the activities of writing and reading.

5 "Reading as Construction," in *The Reader in the Text,* eds. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 67, 77.

> self-definition in a variety of ways. . . . The reader, reflecting on the world of the poem or play or novel as he conceived it and on his responses to that world, can achieve a certain self-awareness, a certain perspective on his own preoccupations, his own system of values. (pp. 145, 146)[6]

For this "self-awareness" to be brought about, literature ought to be taught as a way of exploring, understanding, and reflecting on the strategies by which readers—all readers—generate meanings in the act of reading; only through this approach can the teaching of literature become a useful means for composition teachers to foster in their students those reflective habits of mind that can, and will, contribute to the students becoming better writers.

The advantage of seeing the activities of reading and writing as inseparable was suggested by Andrea A. Lunsford, who came to the conclusion that "the teacher of writing must automatically and always be a teacher of reading as well." The implications of her observations on remedial writers were that

> all language skills are related—[the] level of reading comprehension is related to complexity of sentence formation (or syntactic maturity) and . . . both are related to mature, synthetic thought-processes. Our students were all both poor readers and poor writers, and their gains in these two areas clearly paralleled each other. Furthermore, as our students' ability to manipulate syntactic structures improved so did their ability to draw inferences and make logical connections.[7]

My experience with basic reading and writing students, as well as with more advanced ones, confirms Lunsford's conclusions about students' parallel development in the two activities. But my research suggests that the improvement in writers' ability to manipulate syntactic structures—their maturity as writers—is the result, rather than the cause, of their increased ability to engage in, and to be reflexive about, the reading of highly complex texts. However, if the two language activities

---

6 See also George Dillon's refutation of Hirsch's views in *Constructing Texts: Elements of a Theory of Composition and Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). Dillon's premise is that constructing texts embraces the activities of reader and writer, comprehension and composition. Similar arguments are made by David Bartholomae, "Integrating Reading and Writing: A Research Report," paper read at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, March 1978: and Ann E. Berthoff: "We need research projects in teaching reading and writing together. Because literature tends to crowd our writing, some have exiled it from the composition classroom. This is a solution that creates further problems. We need teachers who know how to relate critical reading to composing—not by finding topics to write about in the assigned reading but by identifying how forming is central to both reading and writing" *(The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models and Maxims for Writing Teachers* [Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook, 1981], p. 10). Finally, see Bruce T. Petersen, "Writing about Responses: A Unified Model of Reading, Interpretation, and Composition," *College English,* 44 (1982), 459-468.

7 "What We Know—and Don't Know—About Remedial Writing," *College Composition and Communication,* 29 (1978), 49, 51.

are indeed related, the important question need not be "what causes what," but rather how to teach composition so as to benefit from the interrelationship of the two activities.[8]

I want to suggest an answer to this latter question by describing the writing of one of my students. Mary was a student in the fall of 1981 in the Basic Reading and Writing Seminar, a course at the University of Pittsburgh that serves students whose test scores place them at the lowest 10% of the freshman class. The course, which is team taught, was designed by David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky.

In response to an early assignment which asks the student to write about a significant event in her life and to explain why she sees it as significant, Mary wrote about the time she, as a lifeguard, saved the life of a child.

> I was watching the kids in my area and there was two kids, around eight or nine, playing around by dunking each other. All of a sudden the one boy started bobbin for air. So I blew a long blast from my whistle, that was a signal that a guard was leaving their chair and going in for a save. I then dove into the water and start swimming over toward the kid. Once I got there, I got him out of the water with some assistance from the other guards. We then took him into the first aid room and he was okay but he was just shook up. . . .
>
> This experience is very significant because, I was able to help someone who needed it. It made me feel good because I carried out my job and responsibilities the way I should have . . . since that was my first save I will never forget it. . . . I will always remember that incident, that I could help someone when they needed me.

Although the teaching of composition is perhaps the least of Wolfgang Iser's concerns, some of his ideas about reading will help us understand what is happening in Mary's writing and what we can do about it. His description of the processes by which readers produce meanings as they interact with a text sheds considerable light on the reasons why students adopt ineffective reading strategies and helps us to discover important correlations between their reading patterns and the writing patterns they use to compose their responses to a text.[9]

In *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) Iser claims that

> central to the reading of every literary work is the *interaction* between its structure and its recipient . . . . The literary work has two poles . . . the author's text . . . and the realization of it accomplished by the reader. (p. 106, my italics)

---

8 See Marilyn Sternglass, "Sentence-Combining and the Reading of Sentences," *CCC,* 31 (1980), 325-328; and "Assessing Reading, Writing, and Reasoning," *CE,* 43 (1981), 269-275.

9 The "interactional" or "transactional" view of reading, vigorously and convincingly advocated by reader response theorists and psycholinguists in the 1970s, was formulated by Louise Rosenblatt in 1938 in *Literature as Exploration* at a time when practitioners and interpreters of the tenets of New Criticism placed absolute emphasis on the technique of literary texts.

The work itself, then, is neither identical with the text nor with its realization, "but must be situated somewhere between the two." In other words, the work is "indeterminate" and "dynamic," or better, indeterminate because continuously dynamic. In the act of its reading the work cannot, nor should, be reduced to one meaning, to one perspective; the reader should not deny the possibility of subsequent revisions of meanings, subsequent modifications of perspectives. Unfortunately it is mostly against the indeterminacy and the dynamism of a literary work that our students defend themselves by reducing it either to the assumed reality of the text (i.e., the message, the information, the main idea, all conceived as stable, finite units), or to their own subjectivity (i.e., "I can relate to this," "I cannot relate to this," which are often spurious judgments based on ephemeral associations or pre-established perspectives). In either case reading becomes a one-way activity rather than a process by which, as Iser suggests, a reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text, relates the different patterns and views to one another, and in so doing "sets the work in motion and himself in motion, too." Iser's language suggests throughout the kinetic, transactional, and participatory nature of the reading process which an excessive emphasis on either pole would annul.

According to Iser the transaction between text and reader is an event brought about and regulated by the reader's simultaneous engagement in the two contrasting and mutually monitoring activities of "consistency building" and the "wandering viewpoint." The activity of the wandering viewpoint tends to flesh out, to reorganize, and to proliferate the meanings a text proposes, and thus it generates a reader's revision of previous perspectives. The activity of consistency building, on the other hand, tends to stabilize ambiguities and to select segments from a text that confirm "familiar" meanings, and thus it generally prevents a reader's revision of perspectives.[10] Apparently, of the two activities, consistency building is the one that readers most instinctively tend to engage in, particularly when the texts they read are characterized by "blanks" or "gaps" of indeterminacy (i.e., when things are implied rather than said) which need to be "filled" with "projections," hypotheses—themselves always subject to revision—about how to "supply what is meant from what is not said" (p. 111). The more a text contains such "gaps," the more a reader may need to engage in the activity of the wandering viewpoint in order to check the stabilizing, and potentially reductive, tendency of consistency building. At the same time he or she must monitor, through consistency building, the potentially excessive "wandering" of the wandering viewpoint. By providing us with a metaphorical language for identifying these otherwise imperceptible activities, Iser helps us to seek ways of modifying them and of thus enabling our students to become reflexive about and to improve their reading patterns.

10 This is how Iser explains the reason for the tendency to confirm familiar meanings: "One of the factors conditioning this selection is that in reading we think the thoughts of another person. Whatever these thoughts may be, they must to a greater or lesser degree represent an unfamiliar experience, containing elements which at any one moment must be partially inaccessible to us. For this reason, our selections tend first to be guided by those parts of our experience that still seem to be familiar" *(The Act of Reading,* p. 126).

The reading process, then, is an extremely complicated activity in which the mind is at one and the same time relaxed and alert, expanding meanings as it selects and modifies them, confronting the blanks and filling them with constantly modifiable projections produced by inter-textual and intra-textual connections. Because of the nature of the reading process, each reading remains as "indeterminate" as the text that it is a response to. But this is precisely the kind of activity—demanding, challenging, constantly structuring them as they structure it—that our students are either reluctant or have not been trained to see as reading. Specifically, it is with the indeterminacy of the text that they have their major difficulties. In their responses to a literary text most students do perform that one action, consistency building, that is central to the reading activity, and they identify what they consider the main idea. They fail, however, to realize that the identification of one idea among many others is only one step toward a more complete and dynamic reading. They perform one synthesis rather than various syntheses and tend to settle too soon, too quickly, for a kind of incomplete, "blocked" reading. Interestingly, the same "blocked" pattern has a tendency to characterize their writing as well; they lift various segments out of the text and then combine them through arbitrary sequential connections (usually coordinate conjunctions)—a composing mode that is marked by a consistent restriction of options to explore and develop ideas. The most telling signal is perhaps the absence of complex sentences and subordinations. As Ann E. Berthoff says in *The Making of Meaning,*

> the most difficult aspect of teaching writing as process and of considering it the result of something that is nurtured and brought along, not mechanically produced, is that our students do not like uncertainty (who does?); they find it hard to tolerate ambiguity and are tempted to what psychologists call "premature closure." They want the writing to be over and done with. (p. 22)

Berthoff's observation stresses the similarity between the essentially dynamic nature of the reading and writing activities. It is then plausible to suggest that by enabling students to tolerate and confront ambiguities and uncertainties in the reading process, we can help them eventually to learn to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities that they themselves generate in the process of writing their own texts.

For example, in Mary's account of her saving a child, her past is like a "text" she is skimming through but not interacting with. (I am obviously suggesting here that in constructing a response, be it to a text or to a personal experience, we employ similar organizational strategies.) By structuring her narrative through an action-reaction, cause-effect pattern she prevents herself from pausing and examining the enormous implications of what she has accomplished. Furthermore in the conclusion Mary does not engage with her text by filling the blanks between " all of a sudden" and a flurry of phrases describing action (' 'so I blew the whistle," "I then dove," "once I got there"). She glosses over these gaps, and thereby reduces the significance of her experience to the blandness of "helping

someone who needed it," the satisfaction of a "job well done." The synthesizing activity through which she should have grouped and modified the phases[11] of the text she has written—thereby enlarging, enriching, and modifying her viewpoint on the save from a "job well done" to a perspective that can include and acknowledge the enormous significance of her action—has been halted by an excess of consistency building. The text merely reproduces a sequence of actions; it does not compose those actions into a pattern that reveals their significance. The wandering viewpoint has not established the interaction between text and reader, because although she is writing about that experience from the perspective of the present, her viewpoint is fixed in the past at the moment when she had to act quickly, without time to think about what she was doing, why, and what it all meant.

The same kind of lack of interaction with the text, the same excess of consistency building, is evident in Mary's response to a later assignment. The students had read and discussed Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* During class discussion, however, Mary was silent and content to account for her silence by saying: "I cannot relate to the story." She was right, of course, although not the way she meant it. In her written response to the in-class assignment that asked her to read a particular chapter of the book and write about what she thought was significant about the narrative, she could not effectively "relate," that is, "synthesize" the various segments of the text. She could not, in Iser's words, set the work in motion, and herself in motion too.

> One of the important points Maya made was even though the workers didn't receive very much for there work they kept on trying. *They would come in dragging* and tried and Maya *said* it *was painful to watch.* Even though they are so exhausted they all said that they was going to the service that was going to be held . . . *This seems important because they didn't have very much* and they ·was all look upon by the white people yet they kept trying. Then they mention about charity which I thought was important because none of them had ever been exposed to it, except within their own town maybe. What I saying is when they would go into town like when Maya and Momma went to the dentist they was look down upon. . . .
>
> Another point *I thought was* important was after service when they was going home and it was mention about the white folks having everything and they said it was better to suffer for a while. than spend eternity in hell. This was important because they felt that after all this was over there would be a better life for them. Which points out the that the white folks would be looking up to them because of how ignorant they was to them.
>
> At the end of the chapter when it was said that reality began its tedious crawl back into their reasoning. After all, they were needy and hungry. . . . *I guess Maya was saying* that we have to go back to this type of living but hoping it would soon change and change for the better. (My emphasis)

11 "Phase" is an Iserian term. I prefer it to the psycholinguistic term "chunk" which suggests too finite a unit and which would contradict the concept of "indeterminacy" and of blending perspectives.

In this reading Mary extracts various segments of the text which she then simply reproduces in the order of their appearance (One of the important points . . . Then they mention . . . Another point . . . At the end of the chapter). Her response is "blocked" in the same way at the consistency building step. The various blocks are connected primarily by means of sentences that restate "what Maya said," or that comment, and only tentatively, on the importance of what Maya said. "I think it is important," "Maya said," "this seems important," and "I guess Maya was saying." The tentativeness is guesswork, not qualification. What Mary is showing is that she doesn't know why anything is said or in what senses it might be important.

Further, in her reading of Angelou's text, confronted with the "unfamiliar" experience of the blacks, Mary has been guided in her selection by those elements in the text that seem "familiar." While she selects the blacks' docility and faithfulness as important points, she fails, for example, to acknowledge Maya's critical view of their passivity. Within the text there are considerable differences—gaps—between Maya's and the other blacks' viewpoint. By not relating these different perspectives to one another, Mary structures herself as a reader and writer who reacts to only one phase of the text (the blacks' positive view of their own docility) rather than interacts with the whole (the blacks' positive view of their own docility and Maya's negative view of it). She thus domesticates the virtuality of the text in terms of what she seems to recognize as a "familiar" notion.

Mary kept writing about herself and the texts she read and we kept responding to the texts she composed, explaining to her the effect of her use of language. Our strategy was to move her from the assumption that reading is the extraction of segments from a text and sequential rearrangement of them, to an awareness that reading is construction, the composing of oneself and the text through interaction with it.

At about mid-term, like the other students, she was required to construct her theory of adolescence through critical "reading" of three significant events in her life. Her text in this case was a composite one, a text made up of what she herself had already written in response to three previous assignments. The exercise took many weeks, many rewritings, and plenty of editing. As she continued to read the three phases of her life, Mary started to see and make connections between them to synthesize segments that earlier had had no relationship for her. No longer was she positioning herself outside the text. She was in the text, moving back and forth, her wandering viewpoint grouping and regrouping the three phases in such a way as to suggest, at least at moments, her involvement in an active process of meaning-making. She was in the process of composing herself as a composer of her own reality. In one sense, the moments are small, but they are vital.

"The day had finally come," says the writer, when "my only sister was getting married." Mary goes on to explain how close she was to her sister who had always taken care of her. Then she goes on to say:

> I was really happy for her that she was getting married, *but* I was also sad because she would be moving away from Pgh . . . two special people were going to be moving away. I felt like they were trying to hurt me by moving, *but* I knew that they had not planned it that way . . . I felt like they didn't want me around; I felt unwanted by them. They said I could go visit them, but I really didn't think they wanted that because I was still thinking that they didn't want anything to do with me. . . . I was used to having them around and now they were gone. I felt like someone had taken a part of me away. (My emphasis)

What is remarkable in Mary's account of her confusion at being left behind is this basic writer's movement, back and forth between her perspective and their perspective on "leaving." As she composes her text Mary passes through the various perspectives and relates them to one another. Her interpretation and their interpretation coexist; the opposing views are acknowledged as such, and structured, through language, as such. It is the *but,* the conjunction of disjunction, that signals this moment of awareness, the writer's acknowledgment of a blank of indeterminacy she refuses to reduce to either one interpretation or another. Although the grammatical present is not in the text, it is now, at the moment of composing, that Mary enacts the beginning of her understanding of the complexity of human relationships, and the complexity of herself as one who is able to embody such complexity. Important also is the way in which, as Mary composes her response to the reading of her own personal text, she branches out to include a segment from a text she had previously read but had not, as she put it, "related to." She is now making not only inter but intra-textual relations.

> For example, in the book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* when Baily said he was going to sea, Maya was *hurt* because she never knew life without him around. This was the same situation. I was close to Lianne as Maya and Baily were. . . . Now it hurts that they are away, because I would like to share with them the *excitement* I felt when I had to save *this little boy* at work. . . . (My emphasis)

From "Maya was hurt," to "now it hurts"; the first hurt, the pain of being left behind, is moved to the second, the regret of not being able to share with them, to give them, part of the "excitement" she felt saving "this little boy." In her previous text Mary simply "felt good"; the boy she saved was just "this one boy." The give-and-take that at this moment marks her relationship to others, the transaction ("Now it hurts that they are away . . . I would like to share with them the excitement . . . "), becomes a correlative of the type of relationship she establishes with the texts she reads and writes (she now is enriched by and enriches Maya's perspective). Mary is decidedly not yet a fluent writer, but she has begun to learn that she produces meaning.

In one of her last in-class assignments Mary had to read a chapter from Margaret Mead's *Com-*

ing of Age in Samoa and write about what she thought was important in the chapter and why. Here are two of the key moments in her essay:

> Margaret Mead's main point *is* that "adolescence is not necessarily a time of stress and strain, but that cultural conditions make it so." Margaret Mead *is saying* that . . . For instance . . .
>
> Margaret Mead *breaks down* her main point in this chapter and *tells* us. . . . (My emphasis)

The tentativeness that had characterized her earlier responses to *I Know Why* has disappeared. For all its clumsiness Mary's writing here conveys the impression that she knows what Margaret Mead is saying, and that she knows, too, that her own view of adolescence can accommodate both agreement and disagreement with Mead's view. She is enacting her realization that reading is construction, a matter of composing oneself and the text through interaction with it. Her reading experience with this text is located in her present moment of consciousness. And once more, Mary's use of *but* marks the gap of indeterminacy that puts into motion text and reader in the meaning-making activity:

> I *agree* with what Margaret Mead is saying about . . . *but I* feel that this could be hard because the American girl is faced with a decision and then from that she is faced with more. *It is like a tree,* the first decision is the trunk and then there are so many branches of decision to make. (My emphasis)

For Mary reading is no longer "distance" from the text, nor reduction of it through a sequential reproduction that fixes its "virtuality." She replaces the former "blocks" in her response with a certain type of confusion, but her confusion is both necessary and meaningful. The tree metaphor, for instance, "inscribes" Mary's presence in her text, as she generates a "reading," the first so far, that is not determined by a specific text. So though the thoughts have not been clearly sifted out, Mary seems to be experiencing a sense of urgency that suggests the need to articulate something discovered at the moment of its discovery. "The most important point to me in this chapter," she writes at the end of her essay,

> is that *if you are able to survive* the choices and decisions that society places on you during adolescence, *society will accept you as a young adult.* For the Samoan adolescents the choices are minimal. . . . But for me, I feel I am accustomed to these decisions in life and I accept them as my way of living. (My emphasis)

There is no such "point" in Margaret Mead's chapter. The point is Mary's, a point she has generated in her reading of the chapter, a meaning she has constructed by enlarging the horizon of Mead's text to include the text she wrote about her life.

Mary may not yet be a fluent writer. Mary may never come to be the kind of fluent writer who consistently "draws the reader into her text." But as we read the whole text she has composed during

the fourteen weeks of the term, we can map the specific moments of a development. Having learned to be the kind of reader who, through the activity of a more dynamic "wandering viewpoint," reorganizes and modifies minimal acts of comprehension ("consistency building") into larger patterns; having learnt to participate in "verbally complex texts" by engaging with the experiences and the views of others, and by applying "desirable habits of reflection, interpretation, and evaluation," Mary has had the experience that moves her from a writer who merely reproduces the texts she reads and writes about, to a writer who more actively interacts with the text she composes as that text composes her.

If Mary had been placed in a composition class in which the only or main focus had been on writing, it is possible that she would have achieved the same kind of proficiency she now shows as a writer. Having improved as a writer, however, would not necessarily mean that she would have improved as a reader. Although it is an open question still how much more one learns about composing one's own texts when reading the texts of others, my current research suggests that although the two activities are interconnected, the activity of reading seems to subsume the activity of writing to a greater extent than most composition pedagogy presumes.

Questions on Chapter 6: Readings on Reading

Reading and Writing to Comprehend

1. **Choose a reading strategy** from Chapter 2 that will help you determine how the essays you read in this chapter define reading. What is reading's relationship to writing?
2. **Rhetorically read and annotate** the essays in this chapter with a particular focus on the purpose of each.
3. **Rhetorically read and annotate** the essays in this chapter with a particular focus on the argument of each, as well as the evidence that each author uses to support this argument.

Reading and Writing to Respond

4. **Develop a synthesis** in which you put at least 3 of the selections from this chapter into conversation with each other. Be sure to find a place for your own intellectual response in the conversation (see Chapter 3 for help with syntheses).

Reading and Writing to Apply and Reflect

5. **Apply and Reflect.** As noted in the introduction to this chapter, many of this chapter's selections focus on students. Choose one of the essays from this chapter and test out its argument about students. Reflecting on your own experience as a student, how accurate is the author's argument about students? In what ways does the argument reflect your own experiences? In what ways do your experiences challenge the argument?

Reflecting on your Reading Strategies and Annotations

Consider the different reading strategies you applied while reading the selections in this chapter. Which were most useful for understanding each text? For determining each text's purpose? For writing a synthesis? For reflecting on your experiences as a student? Anticipate future uses of these reading strategies in this class, in other classes, and in other contexts. Consider previous courses and contexts in which these strategies would have been helpful.