Assessing Student Writing: The Self-Revised Essay

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ABSTRACT: In an effort to assess student writing in a way that reflects current views of writing (i.e., as a social process supported by the interaction of a number of cognitive sub-processes), and yet still seeks to determine what students can do independently, it has become a common practice to include timed essays in student portfolios. However, this practice adds to the already heavy cognitive load, identified by Hamp-Lyons and Condon, that the assessment of portfolios places on readers. Here, I suggest an alternative method of assessment—the self-revised essay. The self-revised essay requires that students, at the beginning of the semester, write an essay in response to a prompt that reflects a theme that runs through course texts and discussions. Then, throughout the semester, students revisit, reflect on, and revise their essays three more times, with all reflections and revisions taking place in class. The result is a multi-drafted essay, written independently, but informed by course texts, class discussions, and instructor and peer feedback on other essays written for the class. As an assessment tool, it offers the best of both worlds—like the portfolio, it reflects current views of writing, and, like the timed essay, it allows readers to have full confidence that students are the sole authors of their work. Further, it does both without placing on readers an overwhelming cognitive load that might compromise the assessment process.

KEYWORDS: assessment, timed essay, portfolio, reflection, revision, self-revised

As writing has come to be seen over the past fifty years as a social process supported by the interaction of a number of cognitive sub-processes, and writing instruction has changed to accommodate and address this altered perspective, writing assessment has also evolved. Kathleen Yancey identifies three waves of writing assessment over the course of the last five decades, and views these waves from multiple perspectives. In one view, she describes the waves in terms of a shift in the methods through which writing assessment is defined: objective tests (1950-1970), holistically scored essays (1970-1986), and portfolio and programmatic assessments (1986-present). However, she acknowledges that these waves could be framed in terms of other shifts and tensions, such as between reliability and validity, assessment by testing experts and by faculty, and assessment taking place outside of and within the context of the classroom (484).

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Extending the metaphor, Yancey notes that waves in writing assessment can best be described as "overlapping...with one wave feeding into another but without completely displacing waves that came before" (483). One such overlap can be seen in the practice of incorporating both timed essay exams and portfolios in the assessment, a practice motivated by the complementary information provided by the two assessment methods (White 34). On the other hand, however, as noted by Liz Hamp-Lyons and William Condon, the inclusion of a variety of texts in a portfolio also has a cost, potentially encumbering holistic portfolio assessment to the point of undermining the assessment process (180). Here, I suggest a different model of writing assessment—the self-revised essay—which, I argue, captures the best of both portfolio and timed essay assessments.

Timed Essay Exams

Timed essay exams provide a more valid way to assess writing than did the highly reliable multiple choice tests of grammar and punctuation of the 1950s and 1960s, which, at best, only indirectly assessed writing ability. However, as is often the case, the tradeoff for greater validity was reduced reliability. Yancey notes that this issue was addressed by such scholars as Edward White, Rickard Lloyd Jones, Karen Greenberg, Lee Odell, Charles Cooper, and others, who pioneered essay tests that used writing prompts, as well as assessment protocols that selected "anchor" papers, provided scoring guides, and implemented methods for calculating "acceptable" agreement among readers (490). The practice of "norming" readings not only increased reliability, but also allowed assessment to be done by experts and non-experts to take place both outside and within the context of the classroom (e.g., for program placement and exit).

Edward White, in "An Apologia for the Timed Impromptu Essay Test," argues for the appropriateness of the timed essay in some situations, but notes its limitations. He points out that the timed essay "restricts the world of the student, who must write under time pressure to someone else's topic and scoring criteria" (36). While the timed essay directly measures writing, it can be argued that the writing it measures is somewhat narrowly defined. In fact, White acknowledges that the timed essay "does define writing as first-draft writing" (36). This definition stands in contrast to a more complex, cognitive view of writing that involves the interaction of a number of subprocesses, such as planning and revising (Cho 166), and ignores the current view of writing as a social process. As such, White concedes that timed essay

test conditions, which do not allow for collaboration, preparation, or real revision, are inauthentic (36). It could, however, be argued that timed essays *are*, in fact, authentic, given that many occasions of student academic writing are instances of timed, "first draft" writing (namely, in-class essay exams in courses across the curriculum). But authenticity of writing assessment refers to how well the assessment matches the writing tasks we are preparing students to do *beyond* the test—any test. It seems to me that in teaching writing, we are teaching students how to go beyond the first draft, and it is this that we should be assessing.

Portfolios

The shift in direct assessment—from timed essays to portfolios—was motivated in part by the desire to bring writing assessment more in line with current cognitive and social views of writing, and to tie writing assessment more closely to course curriculum. Instead of assessing student writing on the basis of a single piece produced at a single moment in time, portfolios present multiple samples of a student's work in a variety of rhetorical styles that reflect course curriculum. Furthermore, portfolio pieces are drafted, with each draft benefiting from instructor and/or peer feedback. Finally, portfolios usually include student self-assessment in the form of a piece in which students reflect on their work and discuss the criteria they used in selecting pieces that they chose to include in their portfolios. Such reflective self-assessment invites students to become active participants in their own learning.

As in timed essay assessment, portfolio readers are normed in order to increase assessment reliability, so that assessment need not be done by assessment experts. Finally, portfolio assessment can be used to assess student outcomes at both the classroom and program levels.

Timed Essays vs. Portfolios

White makes that point that, "No assessment device is good or bad in itself, but only in context" ("An Apologia" 34), and what defines that context is the information we need to know and how we will use it (32). With this in mind, we can compare timed essay and portfolio assessment in terms of the information each yields and the contexts in which each would be appropriate.

White argues that there are situations where the information needed is minimal and in such situations, the timed essay is entirely appropriate. He offers, as an example, using timed essays to place students into freshman English, where all we need to know is whether students are *prepared* to learn to write at the college level (33). It is in Freshman English that they will *learn* how to write at the college level; that is, they will learn how "to use sources intelligently to support—not substitute for—their own ideas, discover and revise complex arguments, show some depth of understanding of a topic, and understand the discourse community of a particular field" (34). Timed essays, however, cannot tell us, *at the end* of a college writing course or program, the degree to which students have learned to do this because they do not allow students the opportunity to demonstrate these abilities. On the other hand, portfolios, with drafted essays that allow students to draw from sources and to reflect on and revise their work, can. Therefore, portfolios are the more appropriate measures of student achievement in college-level writing, as defined by White.

If this is the case, why do portfolios often include a timed essay? If White is correct in his view that the timed essay offers only minimal information about student readiness and little about student achievement, what other information could the timed essay possibly contribute beyond the information available through the portfolio? White argues that timed essays assure readers that "the student sitting and writing is the author of the work to be evaluated," and it is this that motivates the practice of including timed essay tests in portfolios (34).

Including Timed Essay Exams in Portfolios

At Kingsborough Community College, developmental English and ESL courses address both reading and writing, reflecting the view that the two are inextricably connected, and course curricula are sometimes focused on a course theme. For example, one semester, my ESL students and I explored the theme of *trust* through reading and discussing stories where a character's trust is betrayed. That semester we read Anita Shreve's *The Pilot's Wife*, which focuses on trust between a husband and wife; Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, where a breach of trust damages the relationship between a teenager with Asperger's Syndrome and his father; and S. E. Hinton's *That Was Then, This Is Now*, where a teenager betrays his best friend's trust to do what he believes is right. Reading and discussing these texts provided the class with opportunities to think about the notion

of trust by exploring breaches of trust motivated by a variety of reasons and through a variety of relationships.

At the end of the semester, reading ability is assessed through short-answer departmental reading exams given at each level, and writing ability is assessed through portfolios. Portfolios consist of two drafted essays with a minimum of three drafts each, a letter or essay in which students reflect on themselves as writers, and an in-class, end-of-the-semester, timed essay exam. One week in advance of the essay exam, students are given a reading, which they are free to discuss, annotate, and bring with them to the exam. The exam asks students to respond to one of two essay prompts based on the reading, and students must cite from the reading to support their responses.

Portfolios are assessed by instructors who are normed in order to increase assessment reliability. Norming is especially important, as the purpose of portfolio assessment is not only to determine whether students' work meets course objectives, but also to inform decisions about students' next placement within the developmental sequence. In addition, when assessing portfolios at the end of each semester, instructors pair up with "portfolio partners" and exchange class portfolios so that instructors' assessments are not biased by background knowledge of their own students.

Although readers respond to a single rubric and are expected to assess the portfolio as a whole, it has been my experience that such holistic scoring is extremely difficult. Hamp-Lyons and Condon, who surveyed portfolio readers at the University of Michigan, discuss the difficulty of holistic portfolio assessment: "Multiple texts, unless texts are so close in kind and quantity that they are virtually identical, inevitably force readers to consider one text in the light of another, to weigh one against the other, and to make a decision that, while representing a judgment about the whole portfolio, is grounded in a weighing of the parts, rather than in a dominant impression of the whole. In such cases, decisions become harder, not easier" (180). As a result, they found that readers may look for short cuts to decision making—short cuts that often involve not considering all parts of the portfolio. Hamp-Lyons and Condon consider this strategy for reducing the cognitive load of holistic portfolio assessment as "a human trait" (183), and not as indicative of a lack of training or professionalism. I found their view comforting, since I have to admit to taking such a short cut, myself. In my case, the short cut was motivated by a lack of confidence in all but the timed essay.

My lack of faith in the drafted essays and reflective writing stems from a number of concerns. First, for none of these writing samples is sole authorship by the student guaranteed. Even if we dismiss, for the sake of

discussion, the very real possibility that students sometimes hand in work that is not their own, sole authorship may be compromised by instructor feedback. Hamp-Lyons and Condon recognized this problem of instructor input, reporting that portfolio readers in their study "were aware of the part they played *as instructors* in improving *their own* students' texts, and that this led them to be suspicious when they saw significantly better revised texts than impromptu writing in portfolios from other classes" (185). Hamp-Lyons and Condon speculated that inclusion of *all* drafts might solve the problem, but, in my case, it was looking at the earlier drafts themselves, that made the problem salient.

I found that, depending on the instructor, feedback on student drafts can range from scant to ubiquitous; it can take the form of questions for students to consider, suggestions for revision, directives for revision, or, in some cases, rewrites in the handwriting of the instructor (though I realize that this last form of feedback does not necessarily reflect the words of the instructor, as it can instead represent those of the student during instructor-student conferencing). Editing feedback is likewise variable, with some instructors suggesting that students review papers for certain mechanical problems, others identifying each problem directly, and still others actually making the corrections for the students. Variability also exists with respect to when editing comments appear; while most English faculty at Kingsborough refrain from editing until the penultimate draft (except in cases where global errors severely impede understanding), others begin editing comments in earlier drafts.

If instructor feedback on portfolio work raises questions about what students can do independently, variability across sections of a course poses an additional problem. Assuming, as is the case at Kingsborough, that faculty are normed for portfolio assessment, they are presumably assessing student work across individual classes taught by different instructors using the same criteria at the same course level. It seems to me that a student's work can be privileged or disadvantaged when compared to the work of other students taking the same course, depending on the nature of the feedback the student received from his or her instructor. Program directors at Kingsborough are currently addressing this issue through faculty development focused on instructor comments, but given the large number of instructors, both full-time and part-time, who teach portfolio courses, establishing a departmental approach to feedback presents a real challenge.

Even in those cases where it is clear that instructor feedback is not compromising assessment, portfolio readers can be confident only that

final drafts do not reflect the work of the *instructor*; they still do not know the degree to which final drafts—or any drafts for that matter—reflect what students can do *on their own*. This is not to say that students who are not the sole authors of their essays are *necessarily* being dishonest. Portfolios reflect a pedagogy that recognizes the social aspect of writing; the notion of "workshopping" essays, and the peer-review and discussion of student papers that is inherent in it, promotes student collaboration. However, students, especially those at community colleges, often need time to become acculturated to the practices and values of academia; they do not always recognize the sometimes subtle distinctions between collaboration and plagiarism. And, unfortunately, I have found that given the high-stakes nature of portfolios and the frustration that often accompanies working through developmental course sequences, some students, in desperation, *do* at times intentionally resort to plagiarism.

So, every time I faced a portfolio, I found myself reading the timed essay first. I thought that if students could successfully integrate and cite source material (a benefit of the practice of giving students a prior reading) and demonstrate some level of analysis in a coherent and well organized essay *under timed testing conditions*, then I had no reason to read any further. My decision to pass them was made. I did read the rest of their portfolios, however, so that I could provide more informed feedback that recognized and encouraged each student's strengths and offered suggestions for addressing weaknesses. But the drafted essays did not inform my ultimate decision.

If a student's timed essay did not merit a "pass" on its own, I truly struggled. If instructor feedback was not very directive, I simply trusted that what I was reading was the student's own work, and assessed it accordingly. If, however, instructor feedback was highly directive, I often resorted to comparing first drafts to each other, hoping that first drafts written later in the semester were stronger than those written earlier in the semester, so that I could identify student progress.

Reflective writings did not offer much help. If these are done well, authorship is not likely to be questionable, but it has been my experience that most students in developmental courses struggle with these pieces. Most of the reflections I have read reflected less on the students' own work and more on the English courses students were taking at the time—an issue that program directors at Kingsborough are currently addressing through faculty development focused on preparing students to write and revise reflective pieces—but I believe that the metacognitive skills needed for reflection and self-assessment make these activities particularly challenging for students in

developmental courses. In other cases, real self-assessments were not always supported by student work. Even White, arguing for grounding assessment in reflective writing in "The Scoring of Writing Portfolios: Phase 2," notes that "the reflective letter is a genre itself, and a difficult one to do well; thus it adds a new burden to both the preparation and scoring of portfolios" (594).

In short, with the timed essay, the two drafted essays, and the reflective piece, I found that portfolios often offered "too much information" and "not enough information" at the same time. Taking to heart White's admonition that "it is wasteful and intrusive to gather more information than we can well use" ("An Apologia" 33) and Brian Huot's call for the development of new procedures for writing assessment that link "instruction and practical purposes with the concept of measuring students' ability to engage in a specific literary event or events" (561), I suggest a method of assessing student writing that captures, I believe, the best of portfolios and timed writing exams—the self-revised essay.

The Self-Revised Essay

The self-revised essay is an essay that students write, reflect on, and revise over the course of a semester *in class* and *without direct feedback*. Students write the first draft in the first or second week of the semester and then revisit it three more times as the semester progresses. Each time they revisit it, they read their prior draft and write a short reflection, discussing the changes they wish to make; they then write a revision. All of this work—both reflection and revision—takes place *in the classroom*. At no time do students take their work home with them. Instead, the instructor collects their work and holds it until the next reflection/revision; he or she may or may not read these drafts, but in any case, does not comment on them. In this way, sole authorship is ensured, and, across course sections, student work that is to be assessed is neither privileged nor disadvantaged by direct instructor feedback. It is important to note that while instructors do not provide direct feedback on the self-revised essay, direct feedback is provided to students on the other drafted essays they write over the course of the semester, allowing instruction to be targeted to student needs and providing students with concrete examples from which they might make generalizations about strengths and weaknesses in their writing.

The Self-Revised Essay Prompt

As noted earlier, developmental English and ESL courses at Kingsborough address both reading and writing, and often a common theme links texts to each other and to writing assignments. Theme-based writing courses foster integrative learning in its broadest sense—that is, deep as opposed to surface learning—a central goal of a liberal education and the impetus for the current review of General Education curricula across college campuses nationwide. From the perspective of writing pedagogy, the practice of adopting a course theme is motivated by an underlying assumption about writing ability; namely, that it is tied to contextual knowledge and should not be defined in terms of isolated skills.

The adoption of a course theme is crucial to the self-revised essay, as it is the theme that connects coursework to the initial writing prompt and offers students the opportunity to develop and support their ideas through readings and class discussions throughout the semester. The self-revised essay prompt is designed with the theme and course texts in mind, and touches on issues that allow students to use their personal experiences as well as course texts as sources.

In this way, the essay can develop over time. When students write their first drafts early in the semester, they will not have read any of the course texts and have not yet explored the theme in class discussions. Since their thinking has not yet been informed by course content, their responses draw only from their current knowledge base—most likely, personal experience. By the next draft, they would be reading or have read at least one of the theme-based texts and will have participated in class discussions around the theme, though not directly related to the prompt. At this point, they will have more to draw from, and at each reflection and revision session, the instructor encourages, *but does not require*, students to consider course discussions and course text(s) in expanding, developing, and supporting their response to the prompt. In fact, in piloting the self-revised essay, my colleague, Ann Del Principe, and I have found that, invariably, students choose to cite at least one of the course texts as they revise without being required to do so. We feel that this choice reflects students' developing understanding of the nature of college writing.

Reflection and revision occur two more times as the semester progresses; at these later revision sessions, students are encouraged to bring in drafts of other essays—those that the instructor has commented on—to look for recurring suggestions for strengthening their work through revision and

editing, and to see if these suggestions might be relevant to their work on the self-revised essay. In this way, students are encouraged to extrapolate from instructor comments and begin to identify aspects of their writing that require particular attention. By the last revision at the end of the course, students should be able to offer a more sophisticated response to the prompt in an essay in which ideas are more elaborated and better supported than they were in the initial draft, and developing internal criteria for college writing are reflected

Ann Del Principe and I field-tested the self-revised essay in her ENG 91 course—our first level of developmental English. In that course, students read a number of texts and saw a film in which the central themes of *The Odyssey* are explored. They began with Homer's *The Odyssey*, and additionally read Tennyson's *Ulysses*, Eudora Welty's *Circe*, and Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*; they also viewed the Coen Brothers' film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* In this way, students saw the story of *The Odyssey* explored in different contexts, thereby encouraging analysis, comparisons, and consideration of the theme from multiple perspectives. In this course, students were given the following prompt for their self-revised essay:

> Many of the texts we will read this semester have a character that grew up without one or both of his or her parents. Before we begin to read these texts, I want you to reflect on your own thoughts and experiences with this situation. What do you think are the effects on a child of growing up without one or both of his or her parents?

As you answer this question, feel free to share and reflect on real life experiences and/or observations. In addition, think critically about the question. Do you think the effects are different if it is the mother, rather than the father, who is missing? Do you think it matters at what age the child loses his or her parent? Do you think there are other environmental factors that influence the effects this situation could have on a child?

The first and final drafts of one student's self-revised essay, written in response to this prompt, appear with permission in Appendices A and B, respectively. In the first draft, as expected, the student draws only from her own experiences in responding to the prompt. However, by the final draft, written at the end of the semester, she references course texts to illustrate her points.

The Self-Revised Essay Process

Ann and I have been working with the self-revised essay in two different courses—ENG 91, as noted above, and ESL 09 (intermediate ESL)—over two semesters. Each time, we have tinkered with the process a bit. Thus far, we have found that it works best when each revisit to the essay extends over two, two-hour class periods, so that students have enough time to read, reflect, and revise. This is especially important as we feel that students need sufficient time for the reflective piece, which allows them to assess their work to date and articulate plans for revision.

While the self-revised essay was initially motivated to improve assessment, I believe the practice of allowing students to reflect and revise in class benefits students and is pedagogically sound. First, offering students a block of class time for reflection and revision has the practical impact of *giving them uninterrupted time to work*. For the many students who work long hours and/or are raising families while pursuing their degrees, quiet time to work is a luxury; these students are often hard-pressed to find such time outside of class, and I have read a number of unsuccessful revisions written by talented students who were clearly just pressed for time. For others, who have not yet developed the study skills necessary to be successful in college, in-class reflection and revision time serves to model the kind of opportunity for sustained writing that students need to create for themselves outside of class.

In addition, by carving out class time for reflection and revision, we underscore, in a very real way, the value we place on *process*. Further, since students work on the self-revised essay over the course of the semester, each new reading and discussion offers the opportunity for further exploration of the theme; fresh ideas and perspectives are continually available to inform each revision. In this way, students may experience revision as a *process of development* rather than, as is often the case, simply seeing it as rewriting, again and again, the same paper, based on texts they have long since read and discussed.

Practically speaking, we have found that it is more efficient for students to write and revise on computers; so, when students are scheduled to work on self-revised essays, the class is held in a computer lab. For convenience, we have found it useful to have students work on a floppy disk that is labeled with their names; disks are then collected at the end of each self-revised essay session and returned to students at the following one.

The Self-Revised Essay: What Information Can It Provide?

I believe that the self-revised essay, as an assessment tool, captures the best of both timed essays and portfolios. Like timed essays, self-revised essays assure readers that students are the sole authors of their work. There is no question of influence from the instructor's direct feedback or of any academic dishonestly due to "over-collaboration," whether intentional or accidental. Self-revised essays are also, in a way, "timed" since all work is done during class periods; they are, however, a more authentic assessment tool because students have multiple opportunities to revise their work and because self-revised essays are informed by course texts, discussions, and instructor and peer review on other essays. Therefore, the self-revised essay does not totally isolate students from any social interaction that may inform the development of their thinking and writing; it only restricts *direct* feedback on the essay itself.

Like portfolios, self-revised essays allow for student self-reflection. However, reflection, as it is practiced in the self-revised essay, is focused and concrete. Although they might consider their work on the self-revised essay in light of instructor comments on drafts of other essays, students are not asked to write a reflection on their writing in the abstract, or across multiple pieces, or on themselves as writers—but on a particular piece at different points in time. This activity allows reflection to be scaffolded—an approach that may be particularly appropriate for students in developmental courses.

Further, like portfolios, self-revised essays offer students opportunities to integrate and cite textual support as they develop their ideas and arguments; in fact a student might completely change his or her thesis in response to course texts and discussions.

On the other hand, self-revised essays differ from portfolios in that they offer readers only multiple drafts of a single essay, while portfolios offer readers a range of genres on which assessment can be based. Hamp-Lyons and Condon, however, challenge this assumption about portfolios by considering two underlying assumptions: "first, that writing will vary from genre to genre, and second, that a portfolio will necessarily contain texts of more than one genre" (181).

Regarding the first underlying assumption, Hamp-Lyons and Condon point out that while the demands on the writer's skills vary from genre to genre, "it does not follow that a student who will do well on one will do poorly on the other. If writing quality does not vary from one genre to another, there is no assessment argument for including multiple genres (though

there may be pedagogical reasons), since they do not actually broaden the basis for the decision. And if writing quality *does* vary from one genre to the other, then the decision is harder" (181). In fact, however, they found that for readers, "the influence of multiple genres, when they occurred, seemed to be minor" (181). Instead, differences were more likely to be found between the revised texts and the timed essays, which were often of the same genre, than between revised essays of different genres.

Turning to the second underlying assumption, Hamp-Lyons and Condon argue that if it is the students who select the contents of their portfolios, "there is no guarantee that genres will vary" (181). They report that at the University of Michigan, they required that one portfolio essay be an argument, and found that most students' second essay was also an argument. It was this practice that prompted them to later require that students include a reflective piece (which is inherent in the self-revised essay as well). Therefore, it is unlikely that the range of genres in portfolios is greater than in the self-revised essay.

Self-revised essays, then, give us information that we can get from portfolios only when they include timed essays—that is, from the two types of assessments *taken together*. In short, self-revised essays can tell us what students can do *on their own* with opportunities to reflect, plan, and revise, and with the support of theme-based discussions and texts.

However, there is some information that timed essays and portfolios offer *separately* that self-revised essays do not. Unlike the timed essay, the self-revised essay does not give us much information regarding what students can do in a timed, high-pressure situation. And unlike portfolio assessment, the self-revised essay does not offer information regarding students' selection of their own best work, nor does it offer information regarding how students respond to direct feedback from a more experienced writer—their instructor.

On the other hand, the self-revised essay might offer information that is not available through either timed essays or portfolio assessment: a glimpse into what students have internalized through the course of the semester. While students are not receiving direct feedback on the self-revised essay, instructors and peers are commenting on drafts of other essays that students are writing for the course. From the first to final draft of the self-revised essay, we can look for evidence that students have taken something from this feedback and the course in general that they were then able to apply to the self-revised essay. I see this information as infinitely more valuable than knowing how students write under pressure, which does not reflect what we

are teaching in our courses. I would also argue that it is more valuable than knowing which pieces they feel represent their best writing, especially since information on student self-assessment is available through the reflective piece. Most importantly, however, I think that assessing a student's ability to take what was learned from the course—that is, from texts, discussions, and instructor and peer feedback on other course essays—and independently apply it to the self-revised essay, is more valuable than knowing how they respond to direct feedback because it represents the flexible knowledge that is the hallmark of critical thinking and writing.

An additional potential benefit of the self-revised essay is that because it asks students to draw from their coursework as they revise their responses to the prompt, it is tightly tied to instruction. By making comparisons between first and final drafts, then, the self-revised essay may be useful for course or program assessment, providing information about student outcomes regarding particular course or program objectives. This type of pre- and post-instruction assessment is not new. For example, both William Sweigart and Willa Wolcott compared essays written for placement with those written at the end of the semester by students in developmental writing programs. However, in these cases, the two essays that were compared were independent pieces on unrelated topics. Here, I am suggesting that comparisons might be made between *drafts of a single piece of writing* that reflects course curriculum. In this way, pre- and post-assessment via the self-revised essay, rather than being behaviorist in nature, instead represents a more complex humanistic-constructivist perspective. In addition, the focus on linking writing assessment to curriculum paves the way for writing assessment that informs teaching, providing the integral link that closes the feedback loop and defines the purpose of the assessment cycle—namely, to improve instruction.

Conclusion

The self-revised essay, like portfolio assessment, reflects current views on writing as a social process supported by interacting cognitive sub-processes, but also, like timed essay assessment, allows readers to have full confidence that students are the sole authors of their work. The self-revised essay is as valid and reliable an assessment tool as portfolios that include timed essays, and it allows for assessment to be done by non-experts at both the classroom and program level. In addition, as I have suggested, the self-revised essay may yield information about student learning that can inform course and program development.

Clearly, research needs to be done to determine whether the self-revised essay lives up to these expectations and what role it might play in the assessment process. I would not wish to see it become another piece added to the portfolio; the problem that readers encounter when facing multiple portfolio pieces does not need to be exacerbated, and, after all, the self-revised essay was motivated to a great extent by the desire to reduce the cognitive load of portfolio readers.

Ann Del Principe and I have compared students' final drafts of the self-revised essay to their timed essay exams and our findings suggest that self-revised essays may offer a good alternative to the inclusion of timed tests in portfolios. However, depending on the purpose of assessment, the independently written, self-revised essay, with its multiple drafts and focused reflections, could potentially replace the portfolio itself. Here I merely suggest it as an alternative assessment practice and as the subject for future assessment research.

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Appendix A
Student's First Draft

Growing up without one or both parents has many bad effects on a child mainly because if theirs only one parent sometimes its hard for that parent to raise on their own and that in some cases might hurt the child for example theirs many single parents that don't have time for their children they have to work twice as hard sometimes to take care of their family being that theirs only one parent and the child might feel neglected and if this occurs the child may act out by in some cases running the streets, getting into trouble just going down the wrong path due to the absence of either mother are father it doesn't make a difference whose missing . A chilled needs both parents just like it took both parents to make that child so that child would still be effected if the mother is around the father is not are vise versa, but in some cases children are with one parent due to losses maybe one parent past away are left before they were born are when they were to young to remember and even in this case the child would still be effected, so it doesn't even matter how old the child is because if their young they'll realize the absence and as they get older they'll have many questions and concerns some may understand and some may not. Myself for example when I was a child my father was always around and my mother was not he used to pick me up almost everyday and take me to the game room so we can play arcades and shoot pool he was good at that. He would sing to me while he played his guitar I had so much fun with him hr was my only parent at the time but my aunt was my guardian then times past and I started seeing less of him I didn't understand why he disappeared and when I asked questions all I got was lies I dint know what to believe but then my mother came back from Grenada and now its just me and her which was kind of hard because I was so used to being with my dad so as I grew my sister and I just wasn't obedient to my mom because she was still a stranger to us but as I matured I'm on the right path but I but I still think of my father. Sometimes I think I'm to old to even care anymore but as I write this essay I know that I still do. Feeling neglected, Disappointed, Betrayed, and Hurt I think are the effects on a child growing up without one or both parents because that's how I feel.

Appendix B
Student's Third (Final) Draft

The Effects on a child growing up without one or both parents

Have you ever wondered how growing up without one are both parents effects the life of a child? If you have please allow me to give you some insight as well as evidence from two novels I've read this semester. The Odyssey by homer and Cold mountain by Charles Frazier which shows the effects on a child growing up without one or both parents.

Growing up without one or both parents has many negative effects on a child. I don't think theirs any positive effects that's my opinion. Mainly because if theirs only one parent sometimes it's hard for that parent to raise a child on their own and this may hurt the child, for example theirs many single parents that don't have time for their children. They have to work twice as hard at times to take care of their family being that their the only parent. The child may feel neglected and if this occurs the child may act out in some cases by running the streets, getting into trouble just going down the wrong path due to the absence of either mother are father it doesn't make a difference who's missing.

A child needs both parents just like it took both parents to make a child. The child would still be effected if the mother is around, the father is not are vise versa, but in some cases children are with one parent due to losses. A parent may have passed away are left them while they were still a baby. In this case the child would still be affected because little girls and boys need to learn about certain things. Even though they can learn from others it's better if they learn from their parent or parents.

The novel Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier for instance mentioned a young girl by the name of Ruby whom lived with one parent her father, Stobrod due to the loss of her mom. In the chapter Verbs, all of them tiring on page 81 the last paragraph shows us the negative effects of this child growing up without one or shall I say both parents because her father was hardly ever around. Instead of teaching her how to read and write he was out drinking with his friends leaving her alone days at a time.

This parent neglected this child were as instead of learning how to read Ruby had to learn to survive on her own at such a young age. On page 85 states that at present Ruby is not sure how old she is, being that her father never kept track of her birthday she believes herself to be twenty-one years

old. I know this child is hurt over the fact of not having her parents, she may not show it like many children as well as adults because we may try to block it out but when were alone and we remember it hurts a lot. It doesn't matter how old the child is they'll realize the absence as they grow and as they get older they'll have many questions and concerns some may understand and some may not.

Myself for example when I was a child my father was always around and my mother was not. My father used to pick me up almost everyday from home and take me to the game room so we can play arcades and shoot pool he was good at that. He would sing to me while he played his guitar. I had so much fun with him he was my only parent at the time, and my aunt was my guardian. Then times past and I started seeing less of him I didn't understand why he disappeared, when I asked questions all I got was lies I didn't know what to believe.

Then my mother came back from Grenada and now its just me and her which was kind of hard because I was so used to being with my dad so as I grew my sister and I just wasn't obedient to my mom because she was still a stranger to us but as I matured I'm on the right path but I but I still think of my father. Sometimes I think I'm too old to even care anymore but as I write this essay I know that I still do. Feeling neglected, Disappointed, Betrayed, and Hurt I think are the effects on a child growing up without one or both parents because that's how I feel.

Also In the book the odyssey by homer shows evidence of my opinion of the effects on a child without a parent in this case the absence of a father figure. Telemachus son of a king named Odysseus who went away to fight in the Trojan War, was effected by the fact that his father wasn't around. In book 1 line 242 Telemachus talks of his father to the war goddess Athene he say's "He has gone were he can not be seen or found and to me has left nothing but sorrow and tears, not is it only on his account that I am sighing and grieving for the gods have gone on piling other troubles on my head". Odysseus never got the chance to show Telemachus how to be a man and stand up for himself so now there were108 men known as suitors that's taking his palace. If the protector is gone who's left to protect the home, meaning if the father is gone who has to protect the home in this case it would be Telemachus he's the only son, but he doesn't know how because his father wasn't around to show him which is causing him a lot of distress.

These are the effects on a child growing up without their parent or parents it may cause a lot of troubles in the child's life as they get older. I believe that both parents need to be in their child's life no matter what or at

least one. Evidence shown from the characters Ruby from Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier, Telemachus from The Odyssey by Homer and myself all proves the negative affects growing up without one or both parents can have on a child. Which I think supports my opinion on why I say a child growing up without one or both parents has negative effects. I don't think a child adult should feel neglected, disappointed, betrayed or hurt. It takes a village to raise a child so imagine a child that doesn't have anyone.