

thinking about what should be done. When clients first begin to use our multi-step process model, they often complain that they don't have the time to devote to planning. The five planning questions we pose, however, only take a lot of time to answer when writers are learning how to use the model. Over time, the planning process becomes semi-automatic and can be accomplished very quickly.

To help writers plan, we pose these five questions:

1. What is the *scope* of the document? Writers must understand the question to be addressed or the message to be presented. If you have ever turned back a paper with the comment, "You didn't understand the assignment," you know that students sometimes do not clarify the scope of the writing task before they begin.
2. Who are the *audiences* for the document? Most writing in offices or agencies has multiple audiences. Some are inside the agency (reviewers or supervisors); others are outside (the client or the public). It is our experience that writers in bureaucratic organizations are highly attuned to the wishes of their internal audiences, but they are often isolated from their external audiences. Similarly, students write to impress their teachers; they seldom have to deal with realistic external audiences. If they were given assignments that had both internal audiences (the teachers) and external audiences (roles played by peers or people outside of school who react to the writing), they might become more sensitive to multiple audiences.
3. What is the *purpose* of the writing? In the world of work, each piece of writing has at least one purpose, perhaps several. A memo may need a different organization and tone if the writers' goal is to persuade someone to act than if that goal is to set forth alternative actions in a neutral fashion, or if it is to preserve a record of a meeting for the files. Unless writers can articulate what they are trying to achieve, they may make inappropriate choices of language or organization and then wonder why the writing didn't succeed.

To be successful communicators, writers have to understand the audiences and purposes of the document, and also

have to tell the readers what the document is, whom it is for, and why they should deal with it. One of the major causes of obscurity in business and government writing is that writers never address readers and do not provide any context-setting statements to tell the readers what the document is about.

4. What is the *readers' task*? In order to make a document useful to the audience, writers must consider how readers will use the document. Many business and government documents are used primarily for reference, but students who are used to writing narratives often continue to use the story-telling approach even when they are writing in work settings. Reference documents require explicit titles, informative tables of contents, headings that pose or answer questions, and a design that allows easy access to different sections of the document. To be prepared to be on-the-job writers, students should have broader experiences than only writing essays that are read like stories.
5. What *constraints* will limit what writers can do? Learning how to balance research time and writing time, how to meet deadlines, and how to keep to page limitations are important skills for students who would be successful employees. Articulating those constraints at the beginning of a writing task forces writers to plan for them rather than allowing the constraints to interfere with final production.

Writing down the answers to the five questions about scope, audience, purpose, readers' task, and constraints at the beginning of a writing assignment makes students think about the *process* of writing. To show students how planning can affect writing, we can present assignments in which students have to prepare the same content material for different purposes and different audiences and discuss the differences in organization, tone, and choice of language called for by different plans. These different assignments would help to prepare better writers who might someday produce business and government writing that is a pleasure to read.

# Thinking: The Reading-Writing Connection

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I now understand the despair felt by the English teacher who is suddenly told that she will have to double as the reading teacher. Only in my case, I am the "reading" person who has been asked to write about reading and writing for an audience of writing teachers. When I accepted the invitation to write for this issue of *forum*, my first thought was: "I really don't know very much about writing." After talking to many of my colleagues, I found that I was not alone with this thought. Reading people often consider themselves to be uninformed about writing, and writing people often feel the same way about reading. Certainly we all recognize the intimate relationship which exists between reading and writing. So, why then isn't there more overlap between the work of reading and writing educators?

I am certain there are many reasons for this, but let me speculate about just one possible source of difficulty. Models for the development of language skills (see Figure 1) which have traditionally served as the basis for instructional practice have viewed reading and writing as part of a hierarchy of skills. One current text states: "For most human beings the acquisition of these skills follows a hierarchy of development: (1) listening, (2) speaking; (3) reading, and (4) writing," (Mackintosh, 1964); another states, "A firm

foundation is required at each level before the next skill level can be effectively added or integrated," (Lerner, 1976). It is likely that models such as this one have played a significant role in establishing reading instruction as the major thrust of elementary education and as a subject of relatively minor importance in secondary and post-secondary education, and writing instruction as the major responsibility of secondary and post-secondary instruction with relatively minor importance in elementary education. This being the case, it is not difficult to understand why reading and writing educators do not have a longer history of collaboration. Those with an interest in investigating problems of reading instruction have been focusing their attention on elementary school students whereas those with an interest in studying problems of writing instruction have been concentrating on older students.

But this situation is changing. Along with the revitalization of the field of psycholinguistics which has occurred over the past 10-15 years, there has been an increasing tendency to view listening, speaking, reading, and writing within a cognitive-linguistic framework. The essence of this view, as put forward by Moffett and Wagner (1976), is that language is a medium of communication which is grounded in thinking. Within this context, emphasis is placed on the superstructure of language use which is formed by the set of relations among sender, receiver, and message, and the reciprocal relationships which exist between listening and speaking and reading and writing (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 1

REFINEMENT of language usage comes last.

WRITING follows as a means of self-expression.  
*(Expressive written language)*

READING comes next with the normal child.  
*(receptive written language)*

SPEAKING develops early in life.  
*(expressive oral language)*

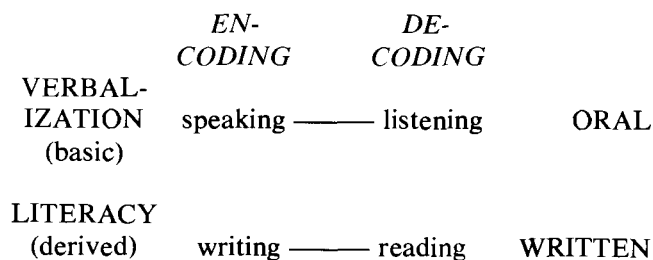
LISTENING is the first step toward maturity.  
*(receptive oral language)*

EXPERIENCE is the foundation of our language development.

Development of the relationship of the elements of the language arts

From Ralph E. Kellogg, "Listening," in Pose Lamb (ed.) *Guiding Children's Language Learning*. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, 1971, p. 118.

FIGURE 2



Nowhere are the far reaching implications of this view of reading and writing so obvious as they are in the collection of articles presented in this issue of *forum*. There are two premises at the heart of the authors' messages:

1. *Thinking is the essence of both reading and writing; and*
2. *Students can be taught to become better readers and writers by teaching them about thinking.*

The first premise has been stated in a variety of forms by the authors in this series of articles. For example, it can be found in Berthoff's references to "forming" or "making meaning" or Kintsch's characterization of comprehension as a "constructive, productive process." Similarly, Sosnoski talks about abandoning the notion that text is an object with determinate meaning — an idea, I might add, which appears to have relevance for White's thesis that writers' have little power to determine how their words will be given meaning.

The second premise, that we can teach students to become better readers and writers by teaching them about thinking, has been given a variety of forms by the authors. Berthoff suggests that if we make students conscious of what they are doing when they read and write, they will learn how to read and write more effectively. She also observes that consciousness in reading and writing is a method of thinking about thinking. Ryan, among others (e.g., Flavell, 1978), uses the term "metacognition" when referring to individuals knowledge about their own thinking activities and about how to regulate these activities. Ryan also discusses the types of metacognitive skills which appear to be related to successful learning and which therefore are likely candidates for instruction.

The topic of metacognition bears further elaboration because it can provide the common base which is needed in a discussion of reading and writing. Generally, metacognition encompasses three broad types of thinking variously referred to in the literature as: **selection, adaptation, and monitoring** (Ryan, this volume); **predicting, planning, and checking** (Brown, 1978); and **evaluation, planning, and regulation** (Paris and Lindauer, in press). Using Paris and Lindauer's terminology, a brief description of each type of thinking follows:

**Evaluation** refers to the analysis of the goals and purposes of a task and an assessment of the range of abilities one has available and which are required to complete the task successfully.

**Planning** refers to the deliberate selection of strategies to fulfill task goals.

**Regulation** refers to the continuous monitoring of progress towards a goal and to the redirection of effort when failure is detected.

Graves provides a rich description of these metacognitive skills at work as children are guided in the process of selecting their own topics for writing. It is clear from the account that, with appropriate instruction, young children can learn to evaluate their choice of topics, plan appropriate writing strategies, monitor their progress and regulate their subsequent behaviors.

The interpretive framework provided by metacognition has been particularly useful to me as I worked to integrate the information presented by the experts in this issue of *forum*. Several of the authors emphasize the need for writers to evaluate their task in an effort to plan more effectively: Bransford focuses on the necessity for writers to analyze what they know about various situations and to ensure that their readers are similarly informed; Redish stresses the need for writers to evaluate their task in terms of scope, audience, purpose, readers' task, and constraints; Meyer admonishes writers to be aware of the effect of different organizational plans on comprehension and to plan accordingly. While each of these authors chooses to focus on the writer, the metacognitive framework permits us to see that comprehension is also enhanced if readers analyze what they know about a subject, determine the scope of the subject, the audience, and purpose for which a text was written, and are aware of different patterns of organization. Similarly, Stander observes that when readers are guided to make a careful analysis of the techniques authors use to achieve their purposes, they become conscious of the techniques available to them as writers.

The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing comes to the fore in the articles by Sosnoski and Torbe. Both authors illustrate quite dramatically how writing about the process of reading improves students' abilities to **evaluate, plan, and regulate** both their reading and their writing. As Berthoff notes, to strengthen one kind of meaning making is to strengthen the other — to see reading and writing as ways of making meaning, is to have no difficulty finding ways to keep them together.

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- Pinckert concentrates on basic skills, such as punctuation, word choice, and grammar, but includes sections on the writing process, persuasion, and style. This book is intended for adults.*
- Ponsot, Marie, "Total Immersion," *Basic Writing*, 1 (Fall/Winter 1976), 30-43.
- Ponsot describes a six week (five hours a day, five days a week) intensive summer course with plentiful writing and substantial reading.*
- Purves, Alan (Ed.), *Cognition and Written Language: A Symposium*, Papers presented at the Symposium on Cognition and Written Language (Pittsburgh, Pa., March 15, 1979), ED 178 918, March, 1979.
- This collection of fourteen papers focuses on methodological issues in writing research (Pradl); acquisition of language skills using computer-based instruction (Caldwell); analogies between written and spoken language (Brause); needed research on processes of invention (Larsen); issues related to cognition and written language among elementary school*



children (Bond); cognitive processes used to evaluate texts (Nold); styles of teachers' responses to written composition (Brienza); influence of prior knowledge on comprehension (Beach); problem-solving strategies in writing (Flower); strategies used in comprehending written stories (Mason and McClure); procedures for studying writers' cognitive maturity (Odell); helping college students develop reasoning skills (Taylor); teaching children to write informally (Sandberg); acquiring and developing mental lexicons (Mayher).

Rumelhart, David E., "Notes on a Schema for Stories," Babrow and Collins (Eds.) *Studies in Cognitive Science*, New York: Academic Press, 1975.

*The article includes description and explanation of Rumelhart's story grammar which is based upon Propp's (1968) analysis of Russian folk tales.*

Ryan, E.B. and G.W. Ledger, "Assessing Sentence Processing Skills in Prereaders," in B.A. Huston (Ed.), *Advances in Reading/Language Research* (Vol. 1). Greenwich, Conn.: J.A.I. Press, in press.

*The authors argue sentence processing skills among pre-readers are an important facet of reading readiness.*

\_\_\_\_\_, "Identifying and Remediating Failure in Reading Comprehension: Toward an Instructional Approach for Poor Comprehenders," G. E. MacKinnon and T.G. Waller (Eds.), *Reading Research: Advances in Theory and Practice* (Vol 3), New York: Academic Press, 1981.

*Ryan reviews the literature concerning differences between good and poor readers.*

Schank, R. and R. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977.

*The authors present a sub-species of schema theory of learning in their descriptions and reports of research into scripts, plans, and goals as cognitive structures of human knowledge and inquiry.*

Shuman, R. Baird, "A Writing Approach to High School Reading," *Reading Horizons: Selected Readings*, Kenneth VanderMeulen, (Ed.), Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 1979, 183-187.

*The author describes ways in which reading difficulties are overcome through writing workshops.*

Smith, Dora V., "Developmental Language Patterns of Children," *Resources in Reading-Language Instruction*, Robert B. Ruddell et al., (Eds.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974, 206-216.

*Smith gives an overview of "research into the significant phases of a child's language development," including a valuable bibliography.*

Smith, Frank, *Reading Without Nonsense*, NY: Teachers College Press, 1979.

*This work is a "A concise, well-written, and clearly stated synthesis of the ideas" in Smith's **Comprehension and Learning** and the two other books cited here. An accessible and readable book with clear, if implicit, ties to Moffett's and Britton's approaches to writing.*

\_\_\_\_\_, (Ed.), *Psycholinguists and Reading*, NY: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1973.

*Smith collects articles by himself and others including two by Kenneth Goodman, "Psycholinguistic Universals in the Reading Process" and "Analysis of Oral Reading Miscues: Applied Psycholinguistics"; two by Jane W. Torrey, "Illiteracy in the Ghetto" and "Learning to Read Without a Teacher"; and Carol Chomsky's "Reading, Writing, and Phonology."*

Steffensen, M.S., C. John-Dew, and R.C. Anderson, "A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Reading Comprehension," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 15 (1979), 10-29.

*Readers from the United States and India read letters about an Indian and an American wedding. The readers remembered the native passage more quickly after they had performed other tasks; and remembered more details in each of the passages which were considered important by other members of their cultural groups. The authors conclude that the perspectives (schemata) which readers bring to texts influence their comprehension of those texts.*

Sternglass, Marilyn S., "Composition Teacher as Reading Teacher," *College Composition and Communication*, 27 (December, 1976), 378-382.

*Sternglass discusses the need to teach students how to read the sentences that sentence combining and generative rhetoric would have them write.*

Sutcliffe, R., *Song for a Dark Queen*, London: Pelham, 1978.

Tierney, Robert J. and James Mosenthal, "Discourse Comprehension and Production: Analyzing Text Structure and Cohesion," Technical Report No. 152 Ed 179 945, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois: Center for the Study of Reading, 1980.

*The authors both describe six different means of examining text - story grammars, event-chain formulations, predicate structure of expository prose, mapped patterns, propositional analysis, and cohesion - and discuss their utility in research and educational practice.*

\_\_\_\_\_, and Jill La Zansky, "The Rights and Responsibilities of Readers and Writers: A Contractual Agreement," Reading Education Report No. 15, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois,

Center for the Study of Reading, 1980.

*The authors argue that implicit contractual agreements exist between readers and writers governing the role of writers as they create texts and the role of readers as they work to understand texts.*

Tompkins, Jane P. (Ed.), *Reader-response Criticism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

*Tompkins' anthology provides the reader with a representative collection of essays by "reader-response" critics. The essays, which Tompkins notes do not represent "a conceptually unified critical position," constitute a useful introduction to criticism focusing upon the role of the reader in the meaning of literary works. The collection includes essays by Walter Gibson, Gerald Prince, Michael Riffaterre, Georges Poulet, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley E. Fish, Jonathan Culler, Norman N. Holland, David Bleich, Walter Benn Michaels, and Jane P. Tompkins.*

Torbe, Mike, (Ed.), *Language Policies in Action*, London: Ward Lock Educational, 1979.

Walmsely, Sean A., "On the Relationship Between Writing and Reading Processes: A Contextual Perspective," ED 174 938, November, 1978.

*Walmsley analyzes the relationship between reading and writing from linguistic, social, schematic, and*

*strategic contextual perspectives. He argues that writers have some control over the clarity or obscurity they provide for readers' contexts; readers have less choice. Walmsley also suggests that research will have to focus on (1) demands which composing places upon writers versus demands comprehension places on readers and (2) writers' and readers' purposes for writing and reading.*

Wilson, Marilyn J., "A Review of Recent Research on the Integration of Reading and Writing," *The Reading Teacher*, (May, 1981), 896-901.

*Wilson reports on research which supports her argument that children learn to read and write as they learn to speak, by forming hypotheses and testing them. She indicates (1) that the processes of reading and writing must be taught integrally because of their mutual dependence upon one another and (2) that children's desire to make meaning must serve as a guide to instruction in those processes.*

Wolfgang, Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

*The author presents his theory of critical reading treated in the article by Patricia Sosnoski in this issue of *fforum*.*

# Evaluating Ninth Grade Essays

Edward T. Hill and Robert Wesolowski  
Churchill High School  
Livonia, Michigan

Many of us are concerned about student writing skills, or the lack of them. We cite verbal scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test which have declined for 18 years; we quote *Readers' Digest* (April, 1981), *Media and Methods* (March, 1980), and the *English Journal* (December, 1980) which call for the improvement of student writing skills. Although we are able to agree that student writing skills have declined, we are unable to agree how to measure those skills whose weaknesses we bemoan. Some of us who are classroom teachers in Livonia, Michigan, shaped our own effort to evaluate student writing samples from 348 ninth graders in an effort to diagnose our students needs and to provide them with meaningful instruction to meet those needs.

Our work began when we read research on the composing process by Moffett, Britton, Emig, Cooper, Odell, and others. From our reading, we developed a comprehensive writing curriculum (remedial, regular, advanced) for tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students. Then we worked to develop a screening process through which all our ninth-grade students would pass before being assigned to an appropriate writing class.

We required each ninth grader to write an essay which was read holistically by two teachers from a pool of six — four English teachers and two social studies teachers. If there were disagreements between scores given by the first two readers, a third reader would read the essay and resolve the difference. Based upon the evaluations of these essays and recommendations to counselors, students were placed in writing classes.

We based our evaluation procedure on the evaluation practices of the English Composition Board (ECB) at The University of Michigan and Paul Diederich's belief that trained readers, spending three or four minutes per paper, can provide reliable decisions when rating student papers as demonstrating low-, middle-, or high-quality writing. (Fig. 1).

We adapted Diederich's scale, using a nine-point scale instead of a five-point scale of evaluation, because it served our needs better. If a student scored 1-3 in several categories on the scale, the student was recommended for placement into a remedial section. With a score of 4-6, the student was recommended for a regular section. Students who scored in the 7-9 range were recommended for advanced writing sections. (Fig. 2).

If one of our raters gave a paper a 5 for organization, and another gave the same paper an 8 for organization, we considered that a disagreement because the scores are more

Figure 1

Diederich's Rating Scale*					
Topic	Reader _____		Paper _____		
	Low	Middle	High		
Ideas	2	4	6	8	10
Organization	2	4	6	8	10
Wording	1	2	3	4	5
Flavor	1	2	3	4	5
Usage	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5

\*Teachers circle one number after the name of each topic. Teachers give double weight to ideas and organization by doubling the numbers representing them on the chart (Diederich, p. 54).

than two digits apart. In cases of disagreement a third rater read the paper, rated it, and assigned the paper to a cate-

Figure 2

Churchill Rating Scale*									
Date _____	Reader _____					Student I.D. _____			
Ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Clarity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Wording, Phrasing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Grammar, Structure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

\*Because we worked with a ninth-grade population, not separated into academic levels, we expanded the rating scale to run from 1 to 9; we added the term "clarity" to help explain Diederich's term "wording." We used the term "style" in place of Diederich's term "flavor." Our teachers were happier with the term "grammar" instead of "usage."

gory determined by the two closest scores. Remarkably, we agreed 80 percent of the time which meant that only 19 percent of the essays had to be read a third time.

We realize, of course, that there are limitations to analytic writing scales. For example, depending on their mental attitudes, students, on any given day, may write well or poorly. In an effort to minimize some of the limitations of our testing, we asked all ninth graders at Churchill to list four or five topics they felt most comfortable writing about. The topics students contributed suggested that they wanted to write in a narrative mode about their own experiences.

Guided by students topics and materials developed at the ECB, we developed a writing stimulus to be administered by every English teacher who taught ninth graders during the second week of February, 1981. We were able to collect about 90 percent of the samples (348) in 12 class meetings. Students did not place names on their papers. Instead, they placed their five digit student identification numbers in the upper right hand corner of the paper so no rater could identify the student during the reading. Later we were able to identify the students for placement in appropriate writing classes by the students' identification numbers. Students and teachers were told that no papers would

be returned to them, but they were invited to discuss their scores, by making an appointment to review their work if they chose to do so.

In our efforts to evaluate student writing as a first step to providing our students the instruction they need, we were strongly supported by our principal, Bill McFarland. He provided us three half-day substitutes at a cost of \$315 so that the six-member team might rate papers and an additional \$192 to compensate teachers for working after school to complete the project. The total cost of the project was \$507, about \$1.45 per student.

What did we discover during the project? We discovered (1) that after brief instruction, it does not take long for experienced teachers to use a rating scale effectively to evaluate students' essays; (2) teachers who are trained will agree 80% to 90% of the time when they read the same paper; (3) 13% of our ninth-grade writing samples were judged low-quality; (4) 72% were considered middle-quality; and (5) 14.6% were considered high-quality.

During the next three years we hope to conduct follow-up studies to discover the effect of assessing student writing at the outset of their high school careers in order to provide students the instruction in writing which they require.

# Strategies For Academic Writing

by Irvin Hashimoto, Barry M. Kroll, and John C. Schafer  
(Ann Arbor, Michigan, Univ. of Michigan Press, 1982).

Grace Rueter and Francelia Clark  
English Composition Board  
The University of Michigan

The aim of *Strategies for Academic Writing* is to teach students how to deal with problems they face when they write academic papers. This short, clearly-written book grew out of the authors' experiences with college students in a writing workshop, and it speaks to real student needs. It is a guide to thinking, to moving through the processes of conceptualizing, focusing, and connecting. We think *Strategies* can be useful in several academic settings: In workshops, in high school and college composition classes, and in subject-area courses that require writing. But although the book is versatile, teachers and students should be aware that it is frankly a book of strategies: Students should be cautioned to be aided, not limited, by these strategies. Moreover, *Strategies* does not pretend to be a self-contained writing course, and it isn't. As students work their way through the book's exercises, they fill in blanks, rewrite sentences, and answer questions, but they do not write. Since the gap between doing exercises and writing papers is wide, students and teachers will need to devise ways of relating the text's exercises to the writing students themselves produce. Yet the value of these exercises is that they do lead students thoroughly through the thinking techniques the book presents. A student struggling with the question "What does a thesis statement do?" can learn what a thesis statement does and how to formulate one here, guided through the formulation experience by the exercises.

The topics *Strategies* treats in its six chapters are presented in the traditional order, step by step. Chapter 1 focuses helpfully on assignments, showing students how to uncover implied plans and create schemes for finding, assessing, and organizing information. Discussing standard formats for four kinds of papers (book review, research report, history paper, and other papers) and two types of assignments (directed and undirected), it shows how to devise plans through four organizational strategies (categorizing, sequencing, comparing/contrasting, and finding causes and effects). Learning to analyze the words in an assignment is useful to students and has been touched in other writing guides, but we have not seen a guide draw the student through the thinking process as effectively as this chapter does. Chapter 2 shows how the four methods for devising initial plans are also methods for developing main points. Chapter 3 shows how to arrange main points along a continuum (best to worst, simple to complex, low to high, old to new, and so forth), and how to decide which arrangement (climax, anticlimax, or extremes first, middle ground last) may suit their purposes. Chapter 4 teaches what should be accomplished by introductions (provide background, state

the thesis) and conclusions (summarize the main points, answer the question "So What?") and how to write them. Chapter 5 shows how to write and sharpen thesis and topic statements that will help make papers coherent, and how to use linking signals that contribute to coherence. Chapter 6 follows a student through the writing of an academic paper to illustrate how the strategies presented in the first five chapters can work together. Throughout the book, the authors include sample student papers and exercises; they answer the more problematic exercises in an end note.

The book's neat classifications and its prescriptivism may be just what some students want, though other students may find them confining. Taking great care through their typologies to show students how to approach writing tasks, the authors have neglected to encourage students to conceive their own approaches. In addition, the step-wise presentation does not make clear to students the non-linear, free-wheeling nature of the writing process. In the sixth and final chapter, the authors do suggest that students may want to devise strategies of their own, and that the writing process is, in fact, non-linear; but these warnings should probably have been woven into the earlier material. The final chapter, illustrating how all the strategies appear as a student prepares a research paper, is an aesthetically pleasing conclusion, but it is less practical than the rest of the book. Students here are simply asked to read the chapter to see how the book's strategies can make their writing better, and, because they are given no closer guidance for using the material, students may lack the patience to deal with it.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the book lies in the authors' efforts to make students think about what they are doing. The authors' pattern is to teach an obvious strategy, and then to sharpen it through exercises and problems which push students toward thinking and refining. In Chapter 2, for example, students are taught to categorize subjects in conventional ways and are then asked to categorize *sports*, *college students*, *pets*, and *rocks* conventionally. The authors then demonstrate that if the results of the categorizing seem dull (and they are sure to), students can create new categories and thereby a fresh focus. As their own strategy, the authors wisely predict excesses and follow many of the basic lessons with an exercise in good judgment. Again, we have not seen a guide so useful in leading students past the oversimplifications that can mislead them.

The first five chapters of *Strategies for Academic Writing* are

highly successful in accomplishing the book's purposes. First, they address problems many students have. Even bright, capable students often have trouble conceptualizing, developing, and organizing academic papers. Second, they provide useful strategies for dealing with the problems. Through these strategies, students can gain control over planning and thinking processes involved in writing a wide range of academic papers. Third, they encourage students to think about what they are doing when they apply the strategies. Throughout the book, the authors warn students that the strategies can produce bad as well as good results,

and they sensibly teach ways of keeping papers from becoming simple-minded. Finally, the book is short, clearly organized, and easy to read. Students should have no trouble understanding the text and making sense of the exercises. We would keep this book on hand as a reference for students who have organizational problems in their writing. The superior student will not need it; the uncertain student, with the teacher's note of caution, will welcome it. According to the authors, "The ultimate test of any textbook is its practicality." For many students, *Strategies for Academic Writing* can be eminently practical.

# Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

Deborah Tannen's stimulating and provocative essay in a recent issue of *fforum* started me thinking about why Plato disliked poetry (and by "poetry" he means imaginative literature). Her thesis is that he objects to the subjective elements which are so characteristic of spoken language. I find myself in disagreement.

First, Plato's philosophic idol, model, and chief spokesman never wrote anything. His entire philosophic method consisted in a mode of spoken discourse: The dialectic. Second, Plato never wrote anything that was not presented in the form of dialogue. If this is the case, why *does* Plato object to poetry?

To answer this question, we must look at not only Plato's attitude toward language, but at the assumptions which determine that attitude. First, and most fundamental, the world as we perceive it is not fully real (allegory of the cave). This is shown by the fact that objects which are clearly related to each other (chairs) are yet different from each other (overstuffed chairs, dining room chairs, etc.). If this is the case, there must be some transcendent reality which informs these disparate objects and enables us to see them as belonging to a single kind. One would think at this point that Plato would have adopted the same schema as St. Thomas Aquinas was to adopt later, that objects are at a first remove from reality since they symbolize that reality, and that words, which symbolize objects are, thus, at a second remove. But Plato sees language as having a special function.

Through its powers of abstraction, language, for Plato, is actually closer to reality than objects since it can discard the accidental characteristics of objects and concentrate on the essential. Thus, language is seen as the special human tool whereby man can come into the closest contact with the real.

Throughout his writings, Plato plays with the idea that there is a special connection between language and reality not fully dependent upon human perception. This is most apparent in the *Cratylus* which takes the relationship between language and reality as its subject. It is true that the tone of the dialogue is wry, but we might expect this from a thinker of Plato's stature trying to support a thesis which has so many difficulties. The dialogue does not shy away from the difficulties (why are there so many words in different languages to symbolize one feature of reality?), but it treats them with a kind of semi-humor. Socrates even argues that there must be some direct connection between sounds (syllables) and reality. He also denies that there can be such a

thing as a lie, since language has a direct connection with reality.

Finally, Plato argues that form and function are co-terminous: A thing's form *is* its function and vice versa. The function of language is accidental and not essential.

Now, let us see if we can put all this together. Since imaginative literature is language not used in the service of truth, but in imitating objects as we perceive them, it is at a third remove from the real and therefore an *eidolon* with the same ontological status as a reflection or a dream. Unlike language which is used in a philosophical way, therefore, language used in a literary way actually obscures truth (reality) and may very well mislead all those who "believe" in the reality of its embodiments.

Interestingly enough, there are still many religious groups which forbid the reading or viewing of literature on these same grounds. Literature, therefore, to them, is a "lie."

Aristotle deals with the matter in a much different way; he divides language function into three kinds: philosophical (in the *Metaphysics*), rhetorical (in the *Rhetoric*), and poetic (in the *Poetics*). Unlike Plato, who believes that poetry has no function of its own, distorting the normal function of language, Aristotle assigns to poetry the function of catharsis. He also gives it a respectable ontological status, proclaiming it "more philosophical than history" since it deals with types rather than with specific persons.

Sincerely,  
Joseph DeMent  
Professor and Chair  
Department of English  
Oakland University  
Rochester, Michigan 48063

# Resources in the Teaching of Composition

Robert Root  
Department of English  
Central Michigan University

Resources in the teaching of composition continue to grow, with new organizations beginning, new journals appearing, and new books being published for both teacher and student which show considerable awareness of the current theories about composition instruction.

## New Books

**Berthoff, Ann E.**, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*, Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.

*"Shows how a theory of imagination can provide an array of 'speculative instruments' – ideas to think with in order to teach forming, thinking, and writing." Her emphasis in these twelve talks is writing as a means of learning. A theoretical companion to her college text, Forming/Thinking/Writing: The Composing Imagination (1978).*

**Cronnell, Bruce** (Ed.), *The Writing Needs of Linguistically Different Students* SWRL Educational Research and Development, 4665 Lampson Ave., Los Alamitos, California 90720.

*Includes six papers presented at a research/practice conference held at SWRL Educational Research and Development on June 25-26, 1981: "Introduction to Black English" by Robert Berdan (National Center for Bilingual Research); "Design and Implementation of Writing Instruction for Speakers of Non-Standard English" by John Baugh (University of Texas at Austin); "Spanish-English Bilingualism in the Southwest" by Maryellen Garcia (National Center for Bilingual Research); "Writing Development in a Bilingual Program" by Carole Edelsky (Arizona State University); "The Writing Needs of Hispanic Students" by Jon Amastae (University of Texas at El Paso); "American Indian Children and Writing" by Lance Potter (University of Southern California).*

**Dawe, Charles W. and Edward A. Dornan**, *One to One: Resources for Conference Centered Writing*.

*A textbook which draws upon conference-centered instruction; while useful as such in a classroom, the book is also a valuable resource for those exploring conferencing and those using it on a part-time basis.*

**Elbow, Peter**, *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981.

*New from the author of Writing Without Teachers, this book is directed at the writing process, including dealing with an audience, getting feedback, and thinking both creatively and critically.*

**Writing Projects**, (Ed.) Margaret Fleming, February 1980, *Arizona English Bulletin*.

*Anthology has two parts – I: Eighteen articles describing writing projects across the nation; II: Twenty-three articles on "Writing Projects in the Classroom," strategies and methods for all levels of instruction. Available through NCTE \$5.00 non-members, \$4.50 members.*

**The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook**, (Ed.) Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981.

*A collection of thirty-two articles on composition, divided into categories of general concern, theory, and practice. Includes well-known pieces by Booth, Kinneavy, Christensen, Shaughnessy, Emig, and Lundsford, among others and provides lists of readings as well as an annotated bibliography on writing and the teaching of writing.*

## New Journals/Organizations

**Conference on Basic Writing Skills (CBWS)**. A new professional organization for teachers, researchers, and administrators in basic writing. Membership includes a newsletter and a subscription to the *Journal of Basic Writing*. Meetings will take place at CCC and special workshops and seminars will be held. Membership: \$12.00 to CBWS % Charles F. Guilford, Department of English, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

**Writing Across Disciplines Newsletter**. A new publication to be published twice a year. Write: Helen Koon, Editor, English Department, California State College, 5500 State College Parkway, San Bernadino, CA 92407.

**The Writing Center Journal**. Two issues per year. Publishes articles on the relationship between tutor and student, methodology and theory, and the administration of writing centers and training of tutors. Write: Steve North, Department of English, SUNY Albany, Albany, NY 12222. Subscription: \$5.00.



**Kirby, Dan and Tom Liner, *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*, Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.**

*"A book for teachers in middle school through college" showing how they can "nurture the rich linguistic resources their students bring to class." Offers activities and strategies. Influenced by Berthoff, Britton, Judy, and Macrorie, among others.*

**Moffett, James, *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum*, Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.**

*A program extending from elementary through college levels, emphasizing use of primary sources and the projects of subject areas. Promises to be rich in ideas for writing assignments and to be flexible for adaptation to different levels of student ability and maturity.*

\_\_\_\_\_, ***Coming on Center: English Education in Evolution*, Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.**

*A collection of Moffett's writing, with connecting headnotes, analyzing forces at work on education and offering recommendations for teaching reading and writing after an assessment of current theories.*

## Anthologies

***Evaluating a Theme*, (Eds.) Rhoda Maxwell and Stephen Judy, Michigan Council of Teachers of English, 1981.**

*Updates an earlier, popular MCTE publication by the same title. Articles on issues and approaches include: "Responding to Student Writing: Historical Approaches," (Rosen), "Evaluation and the Writing Process," (Fulwiler), "Evaluating Toward Revision," "The Tutor as Evaluator," and "The Western Michigan University Writing Proficiency Examination." Part Two compiles the responses of 27 public school and college teachers to student writing samples. Available through MCTE, P.O. Box 892, Rochester, MI 48063. \$4.50.*

***Perspectives on Writing in Grades 1-8*, (Ed.) Shirley Haley-James, Urbana, IL: MCTE, 1981.**

*Eight articles including: "Classroom Teachers' Reports on Teaching Written Composition" (Petty & Finn), "A 'Whole-Language' Writing Program" (Milz), "A Functional Writing Program for the Middle Grades" (Yatvin), and "A New Look at Research on Writing" (Graves). Available through MCTE, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801. \$5.50 non-members, \$5.00 members.*

# Thank You, Bernard Van't Hul

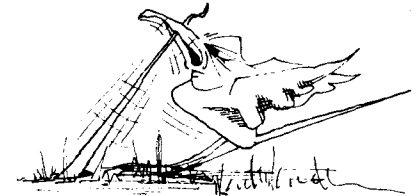
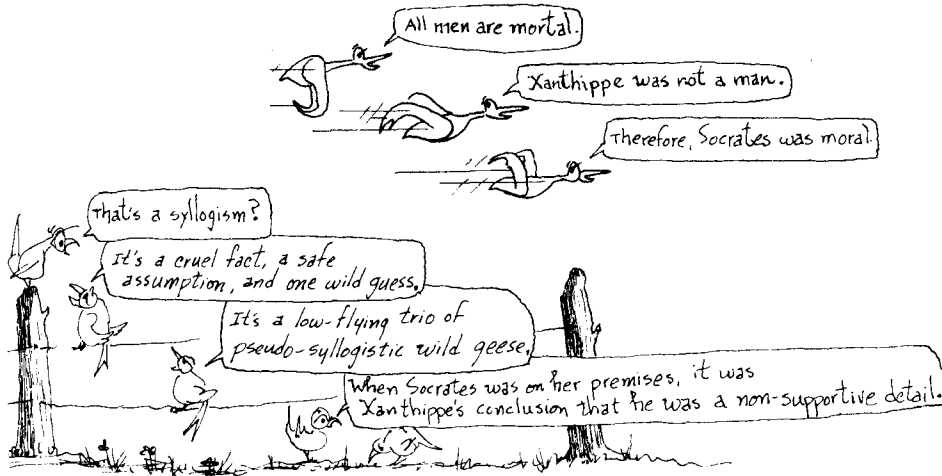
Professor Bernard Van't Hul, known affectionately as Bernie to his students and colleagues at The University of Michigan and to many of *forum's* readers as well, is visiting Hope College in Holland, Michigan this semester. The students and faculty at Hope who will study with Bernie are fortunate indeed, for he is a gifted teacher whose own theory of composition has shaped the teaching of Introductory Composition at The University of Michigan since he began directing that program in 1978.

Many of you may or may not know that at the June, 1979 Writing Workshop sponsored by the English Composition

Board, Bernie proposed that the ECB publish a newsletter. He dreamed the newsletter would serve teachers of writing throughout Michigan as a vehicle for mutual instruction and dialogue. Since 1979, he has given unsparingly of his time and talents to insure this dream: Not only has Bernie contributed his distinctive doodles and literary talents to the project, but he has advised, guided, nurtured, and encouraged its editor.

For all of *forum's* readers and especially for myself, I thank him and wish him well in his new venture.

Patti Stock



## FFORUM

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