

think of passages from Shakespeare he had learned in my course. My God, I wondered, what passages was he thinking of?

When we teach students how to write, we are liberating them to say whatever their world, personal or professional, encourages them to say. We cannot anticipate what they will write, or the successes they will know, or how they will measure those successes. I will close with a piece of student writing that shows how the definition of success can stretch beyond our poor powers to predict it. The passage was the last journal entry produced by a student whose performance in a freshman English class had been — to that point — mediocre. He was getting a "D," richly earned. The only thing he had shown any enthusiasm for all semester was sentence-combining. I had just about written him off, but it turns out he had succeeded as writer despite me, despite school. Here's what the writing course had enabled him to say.

Unlike many of the students going to school here at the University of Texas in Austin, I know exactly what I want to make out of myself in life. I'm going to be one of the world's best carpenters. My school career is coming to an end. I'm giving up this senseless work that has been upsetting me for the last few months.

I will find a place next to my old friends in a free and easy life, easy on my nerves, tough in other respects. I will be the strong, dark-skinned carpenter cutting his rafters in the hot sun, my saw screaming, my helpers nailing the wood together, impressing the inspector who watches, trying to find mistakes. I will drive up to the job site, attracting all the carpenters on the street. My new four wheel drive pickup will back up to my frame package, the wheels tall and wide, the paint clean and shining. I'll travel to Mexico just for fun whenever I feel like it. After saving enough money I'm going to travel all over the states, stopping whenever I find a place I think is beautiful, build a few houses, see the land and lakes, and move on when I get the urge.

He had learned to write his Declaration of Independence.

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TOWARD A TEXT-BASED PEDAGOGY IN THE FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSE— WITH TWO PROCESS-ORIENTED WRITING TASKS¹

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In a recent critique of university-level "remedial writing courses," Mike Rose has argued that these courses, unfortunately, ". . . have little conceptual or practical connection to the larger academic writing environment in which our students find themselves" (109). True enough. Yet, *a fortiori*, most typical freshman writing courses — remedial, "developmental," or standard — fail, themselves, to establish those necessary connections to the reading, writing, and thinking behaviors that will be demanded of students in courses beyond the freshman year. Instructors con-

tinue to assign composition tasks in freshman courses that accentuate the "personally relevant and motivating" (109), that involve and reflect the (sometimes precarious) egos of students,² and that fail, above all, to engage students in what Patricia Bizzell has termed the "ethos of academic discourse" (355).

Whether we are training our students in freshman composition classes to write for academic purposes or (less likely, now, in freshman-level courses) for professional purposes, most students will rarely, if ever, regularly generate *transactional* prose (informative, persuasive, scholarly, or technical) in isolation, out of their own general knowledge base. Rather, students will be confronted with either academic or professional writing tasks that surface in relation to *texts* of various kinds (literary, historical, psychological, legal, managerial) or *data* (computer, laboratory-testing, statistical, chemical).

If we assume, then, that freshman composition is now (or should be) largely a course (or series of courses) in which students are trained to write centrally for a wide range of *academic* purposes, we must incorporate a broad sampling of the kinds of texts students are likely to confront in courses and majors beyond the freshman year. We must introduce full, rich, complete texts — from a variety of disciplines and in a variety of subject areas — into the classroom experience and ensure that student interaction with such texts regularly occurs. In short, we must, as Rose insists in connection with so-called "basic" writers (127-28), develop a freshman composition pedagogy that recognizes the "holistic" nature of the enterprise and integrates continually the complex skills of reading, thinking, and writing that must be taught, learned, and internalized. What we are after, ultimately, is the development in our students of those "integrative" abilities, those intellectual "extensions" — an accrual of the "tacit" knowledge — that Michael Polanyi explores in his discussion of "scientific knowing" and perception (138-58):

When we use a tool or a probe and, above all, *when we use language in speech, reading, or writing*, we extend our bodily equipment and become more effective and more intelligent beings. *All human thought comes into existence by grasping the meaning and mastering the use of language*. Little of our mind lives in our natural body; *a truly human intellect dwells in us when our lips shape words and our eyes read print* (159-60; emphasis added).

Generally, though, in order to immerse our freshman students in the panoply of complex skills necessary to generate good writing, we composition instructors have used densely packed anthologies with hundreds of essays by, usually, scores of celebrated writers — from such traditional volumes as *The Norton Reader* or the updated *Patterns for College Writing* to such current volumes as *The Process Reader* or *Life Studies: A Thematic Reader*. And while these sorts of volumes provide students with a considerable number of putative demonstrations of good, and sometimes powerful, writing, they provide students with only fragmentary, partial reading experiences. In a recent study examining a pedagogy designed to enhance the analytical reading skills of college students, Jan Cooper, on behalf of her co-authors, asserts the following:

We want our students to read *whole* books, to experience the richness and depth of the *whole* journey with a writer, even in a freshman composition class. They need to develop the ability to sustain the process of predicting and comprehending over a lengthy piece of discourse. (6)

Traditional or current essay anthologies do not promote, nor do they allow for, *sustained* confrontation with a writer's "printed" psyche: they fail to provide students—over numbers of pages and chapters in sequence—with the depth of examination, thought, argument, style, rhetorical "angles," accrued positions, experiences (personal, intellectual) that discrete, longer, book-length texts provide. These volumes fail, ultimately, to provide our students with a thorough *treatment*, to borrow Henry James's term, no matter what the discipline, argument, or experience read and examined. And, of course, complete, book-length *texts* will be consulted, read, reviewed, studied, and analyzed throughout the university beyond the freshman year—and beyond the walls of the academy as well.

Given a *text*-based freshman composition pedagogy, then, what kinds of texts might be used and what kinds of process-oriented writing assignments might be implemented? To echo Polanyi, our students must "read print" and "shape words" representative of the reading and writing they will encounter throughout their collective multi-disciplinary university experiences. I believe that it is our responsibility to provide initial access for our students to hear, internalize, and quickly (provisionally) enter what Kenneth Bruffee has called "the conversation of mankind": the "normal discourse" of a "community of knowledgeable peers"; "the kind of conversation college teachers value most" ("Collaborative Learning" 642); but also the conversation that "takes place within us . . . what we call reflective thought" (639). In order to emulate, to begin to produce, "the normal discourse in a field of study" (643), the real ticket for admission to the university, our students must first be exposed to, and begin to digest, some of the central (popular, widely read) texts from the various "communities" of the contemporary university. Students must also read and respond to texts reflecting what Clifford Geertz calls "blurred genres"—works of "intellectual diversity" that both cross and connect traditional disciplinary boundaries: "works of scholarship and literature that drive typologists and librarians berserk by refusing to be either history or philosophy, linguistics or criticism, fact or fiction" (Robinson 490).

I propose, therefore, that we incorporate a wide variety of texts—in some sense seminal or important, widely read or (even) fashionable—from a variety of academic disciplines into the freshman writing course.³ I have used book-length texts, generally either contemporary (non-canonic) works or modern "classics" from, or crossing the "boundaries" of, the following fields: philosophy, aesthetics, psychology (including psychoanalysis and psychotherapy), business (including management), women's studies, cultural studies, holocaust studies, literary criticism, poetry, anthropology, sociology, physics, biochemistry, and computer science (including artificial intelligence).⁴

* * * * *

Having outlined my pedagogy above, I'd now like to offer two sample *text*-based, process-oriented writing assignments—contexts for what I call "major papers"—that I have used successfully in freshman expository writing courses. Each "major paper" (MP) assignment calls for approximately 1,200 words (or about four typewritten pages) of student response to one or more of the required texts; and each MP comprises three (or more) drafts. We write *four* such MPs in the course of a semester.⁵

MP #1—Critical Book Review: Freud and Woolf.

This MP is based upon your reading of Sigmund Freud's *On Dreams* and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. You are to assume that you are a book reviewer ("critic") for a major American newspaper, magazine, or academic/professional journal—the *New York Herald Tribune*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation*, *The American Scholar*—circa 1915 to 1930. Your publication has assigned you to review one or both of these extremely provocative, perhaps seminal or significant, works for a major essay in its book review column or section.

You can, then, choose only *one* of the works for your review or you can choose *both* and undertake some kind of comparison/contrast strategy in your essay. If you choose to examine both works in your review, you *should* find some basis (thematic, potential impact) on which to relate or discuss the two works.

Your *audience* for this MP consists of readers of your selected newspaper's book review supplement or your magazine's (journal's) book review column: readers reading your chosen publication between 1915 and 1930. You choose the date for the appearance of your review essay. You must, therefore, attempt to delimit your audience for this review essay carefully. What kinds of readers might you be writing for in 1916, say, or 1921? What might their interests be? Their preconceptions? Their levels of education? What might the majority of your readers be doing professionally at that time? What might you feel obligated to pass on to them about either (or both) of these potentially important works? Why must you insist that these works are, say, of acutely central import and value to "Western Civilization" and, thus, to readers of your newspaper, magazine, or journal? Or, do you *not* believe this? Have you concluded that these works are *not* of such significance? But rather, in your judgment, are of only marginal or passing interest? (Certainly critics reviewing these texts during the first quarter of this century might easily have failed to recognize their import or long-term significance!)

In order to perform this process of audience delimitation most successfully, you must perform two ancillary tasks: (1) find a complete (elaborated, sustained) review of a *non-fiction* book or books from any major newspaper, magazine, or academic/professional journal published during or near the year you have chosen for your own review essay—and bring a copy of that review to class for discussion; and (2) find and read three articles or essays of interest to you (social, political, aesthetic) from a major newspaper, magazine, or journal of the period—near the publication date you have selected for your own review essay. The first of these tasks should enable you to become more familiar with the form, content, or emphases of book reviews of the period under consideration; the latter task will enable you to, at least to some extent, gain a "feel" for the period (or year) for which you will be submitting your own "copy"—the review essay itself. Thus, a key element in successfully meeting the demands of this MP consists in learning about, examining, and, consequently, writing *for* an early (first quarter) twentieth-century audience.

MP #2—Academic "Argument": Via Primo Levi Texts.⁶

This MP will be a kind of "argument" on the relationship(s) between the two texts we have read by Primo Levi: *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Reawakening*.

You must choose *one* of the following alternatives for your assignment:

(A) You are to isolate a *single portion of one text* (a key phrase, a significant quotation, a paragraph) and explore ("argue") why you believe that this identified section of one text is, in some sense, pivotal to *both* texts — their themes, their power, their place in your memory and/or in the collective memories of Levi's readers. You must argue your "case" (1) justifying why you believe the portion of *text* (phrase, quotation, passage) selected is so utterly significant to your reading and understanding of both texts, and (2) demonstrating how the identified section relates one text to the other.

(B) You are to *compare* and/or *contrast* these two now classic memoirs — according to their styles of presentation, tone, narrative "voice," effect upon the reader, subject matter (themes), degree of power or impact, or any other dimension that particularly interests you about the two texts you have read and their relationship(s), one to the other.

Whichever alternative you choose, be certain that you include sufficient amounts of quoted material from the Levi texts to support your position, your "argument." You must, of course, submit (minimally) a quotation (phrase, brief passage) or clearly identified portion of text for task A; and you must offer brief (where necessary, lengthier) quotations in your compare/contrast examination for task B.

A caveat: Do not present much more than four typed pages for this MP. (Your final product should be a succinct statement: don't submit more than you need to in an effort to impress your reader.) If you find your drafts *swelling* — with information, evidence, points of "argument" or comparison/contrast, quotations from the texts — simply excise whatever seems excessive, repeated, irrelevant, digressive. Naturally, feedback you receive from peer reviewers will aid you in your editorial efforts.

Your *audience* for this MP is a receptive, university educated individual who has, perhaps, heard about the work of this gifted Italian writer but who has *not* yet read either of these two powerful memoirs. In effect, your paper should attempt to educate this hypothetical individual through your "humanizing" examination of the two works. Therefore, choose an appropriate posture, degree of formality, tone.

In the "construction" of all MPs, students participate in a mandatory scheme of process-based activities. My students (1) write (regularly) in "response" journals devoted to informal reactions to, and examinations of, all texts assigned for the semester (at times these responses are personal, emotional, and idiosyncratic; at times, intellectual "musings," outlines of chapters or books, or just annotated quoted material); (2) generate a series of "speculative" pages (pre-draft) for each major paper in order to *discover* what they think or feel about texts and how they will attack a particular writing assignment; (3) revise (regularly) their initial drafts based on the *oral* and *written* commentary of peer reviewers⁷ (generally grouped in dyads, sometimes in triads); (4) revise second drafts based on oral and written feed-

back from "seminar" sessions in which groups of five or six students read (usually in advance of a session), review, and edit copies of student papers; and (5) compile (regularly) peer feedback — accept it or reject it (with defensible reasons if rejecting) — and evaluate their own third drafts on "self-critique" forms prior to submitting their final copy to me (along with journal entries, speculative material, all drafts, and all peer review and self-critique forms). All papers are graded against scoring guides designed for that particular major assignment; all scoring guides are carefully reviewed in class by students and instructor.⁸

Notes

¹Portions of this essay were delivered in a joint presentation, with my former colleague, David Schwalm, to the UT-El Paso Composition Colloquium, fall 1984 series. Both presentations were given under the heading "Upping the Ante in the Composition Classroom." My paper was sub-titled "Text-Based Writing"; his, "Data-Based Writing." Although Schwalm's presentation was directed toward the delivery of our "basic" writing course, aspects of his thinking inform this essay.

²In an article entitled "Let's Not Write About Ourselves," Ronald Shook explores two key reasons why he believes it is "wrong to assign 'personal' essays to students": "first, the healthy ego will resist revealing personal information when *forced* to; and second, mature individuals do *not* need the gradual distancing from the self which a course starting with personal writing and moving toward argumentative writing provides" (203; emphasis added).

³Regarding the freshman composition course and associated literacy skills discussed above — and given the current debate over the definition of "cultural literacy" and what it means to be "culturally *literate*" — I feel obligated, here, to support E. D. Hirsch's statement that "*the contents of cultural literacy are not text-bound*" (120).

⁴Texts I (and department TAs under my supervision) have incorporated into freshman composition courses include those of major or controversial twentieth-century thinkers, creative artists (often poets), personalities, and often reflect current issues, debates, developments. Some book-length texts that we have read, discussed, responded to in journals, and developed various kinds of "formal" papers around include the following (in broad categories):

(1) Business/Management (theory and practice): Weston H. Agor, *Intuitive Management: Integrating Left and Right Brain Management Skills*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1984; Robert Campbell, *Fisherman's Guide: A Systems Approach to Creativity and Organization*, Boston: Shambhala, 1985; Harold Geneen, *Managing*, New York: Avon, 1984; James A. Newman and Roy Alexander, *Climbing the Corporate Matterhorn*, New York: Wiley, 1985.

(2) Computer Science: Roger C. Shank (with Peter Childers), *The Cognitive Computer: On Language, Learning, and Artificial Intelligence*, Reading: Addison, 1984; Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason*, New York: Freeman, 1976.

(3) Holocaust Studies: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Reawakening*, New York: Summit-Simon, 1986.

(4) Literature and Criticism: James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son*, New York: Laurel-Dell, 1986; Edward Hoagland, *The Courage of Turtles*, San Francisco: North Point, 1985; Philip Larkin, *High Windows*, New York: Farrar, 1984; Yukio Mishima, *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories*, New York: New Directions, 1966; V. S. Naipaul, *The Return of Eva Peron*, New York: Vintage-Random, 1981; Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, Third Edition, New York: MLA, 1983; Stevie Smith, *Stevie Smith: A Selection*, ed. Hermione Lee, London: Faber, 1984; William Carlos Williams, *Selected Poems*, ed. Charles Tomlinson, New York: New Directions, 1985; Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, New York: Arbor House, 1955; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, New York: Harcourt, 1957.

(5) Philosophy/Aesthetics/Education: Susanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art*, New York: Scribner's, 1957; Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*, New York: Quill-Morrow, 1984; C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

(6) Psychology/Psychoanalysis: Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, New York: Norton, 1980; Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, Revised Edition, Norton, 1969; Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality Of Our Time*, Norton, 1964; Anthony Storr, *The Art of Psychotherapy*, New York: Methuen, 1980.

(7) Social Science (Other): Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic, 1983; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City: Anchor-Doubleday, 1959.

(8) Science: Roger S. Jones, *Physics as Metaphor*, New York: U of Minnesota P-NAL, 1982; Heinz R. Pagels, *The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics As The Language of Nature*, New York: Bantam, 1984; James D. Watson, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA*, ed. Gunther S. Strent, New York: Norton, 1980.

⁵The following is a typical list of required books for a text-based freshman-level expository writing course (in order of use): MAJOR PAPER (MP) #1: Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. MP #2: Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*. MP #3: Stevie Smith, *Stevie Smith: A Selection of Her Poems*; Philip Larkin, *High Windows*. MP #4: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and The Reawakening*. We also regularly use Roger Garrison's *How A Writer Works* (New York: Harper, 1985) as a central textbook on the "nuts and bolts" of written expression. Garrison's book has been praised repeatedly by an overwhelming majority of my students for its clarity, good sense, and highly instructive chapter on revision.

⁶The term "academic argument" is Rose's. He defines it as "a special kind of argument, . . . not a series of emotionally charged appeals and exhortations, as one finds in oratorical persuasion, but a calculated marshalling of information, a sort of exposition aimed at persuading" (111).

⁷This practice of both oral and written peer review of first and second drafts for all MPs is a central component of my text-based writing course and is consonant with Bruffee's position on peer criticism: "The conversation about writing encouraged by collaborative learning takes two forms. It can be *face to face*, or it can be *displaced into writing*. Peer criticism is an important part of a writing course because it displaces into writing the *conversation* that goes on continually between writers and constructive readers . . ." (*Short Course* 141; emphasis added).

⁸Sample MP assignments (with peer-review and self-edit materials) and scoring guides will be sent to interested readers who contact the author at UT-El Paso, Department of English, PWR Program, Hudspeth Hall, Rm. 319, El Paso, TX, 79968.

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THE VOICE IN THE MARGINS: PAPER-MARKING AS CONVERSATION

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"I feel like my brain is turning to mush," my husband occasionally laments after a stint of marking papers. I know the feeling well — the sense of being awash in a murky sea of words — and it's not a pleasant state for anyone whose livelihood requires an alert mind. When I ask what causes our brain-mush, I find many possibilities: unstimulating assignments, uninvolved students, and unceasing volumes of papers, to name a few. For each of these problems, there's already a wealth of insight in the literature on writing instruction, and it's not my purpose here to review those guidelines. I want to look instead into another facet of the lethargy we sometimes experience when marking papers — our own attitude toward the whole process.

My attitude is that talking with people is more enjoyable, less like work, and yet more productive than writing comments on papers. However, despite extensive use of group work and individual conferences, I still take papers home to read. So, when I get ready to face a batch of papers, I find it helpful to rename what I'm about to do. I'm not just going to mark papers; I'm going to have a series of conversations with some apprentice writers.

This view of paper-marking as conversation expands a comment made by Lawrence Sterne's Tristram Shandy: "Writing, when it is properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but another form of conversation" (II, ii). If there's any truth in that (as you may be sure I think there is), it applies not just to