Section I
An Overview of the Course

BASIC PREMISES: WRITING FOR REASONS AND THE WRITERS' WORKSHOP

The Writer's Way is based on the notion that writers have to know why they're writing before they can write well. There is no point in talking about how to write until students have strong, personal reasons for writing as themselves. Most students won't come to class with those reasons in hand; you'll have to give class time to finding them. Many composition courses and textbooks devote all their time to what good writing is like or how it is done. *The Writer's Way* hopes that those two conversations will be preceded by a conversation about what writing is supposed to accomplish.

A writer's basic skill, in this sense, is not the ability to outline well or cut wordiness from a first draft, but rather the ability to ask and answer questions like "Why am I doing this?" and "What works?" Writers don't follow rules; they make decisions. Those decisions are made by thinking about the writer's purpose, audience, and intended effect. Thus, the text tries to avoid giving mechanistic answers to questions about writing and tries always to lead the student through the decision-making process instead. I'll be encouraging you to do the same in your classroom interactions with your students.

The Writer's Way is based on a workshop model of classroom activity. The book will work in any course structure, but implicit in any description of how one writes or how language is learned is a model pedagogy, and I'll describe the pedagogy that is most harmonious with *The Writer's Way*:

1. Because writing is learned by reading, students should read a lot. Because you learn to write only the kinds of things you read, students should read models of whatever you want them to write. Plain, ordinary reading is good; reading with thoughtful response is better; reading for the craft (discussed in Chapter 1) is best.

2. Because writing is also learned by writing, students should write a lot. They should write whole examples of whatever they're trying to learn to write. Lecture, prewriting exercises, drills, grammar practice, and such things all steal time from real, whole writing and should be avoided.

3. Students do not learn language by having it explained to them, by being bribed, or by being threatened with grades; they learn it for the right reason—they want to accomplish something of personal value to themselves with it. And they learn language by seeing it being reacted to, valued, and used by real audiences. Thus, your primary task is not to tell students how to write or force them to write; instead, put them in situations where the writing is real and meaningful, and provide them with real audiences (outside the classroom or inside) who react in human ways to the writing.

4. Students learn to write best from the top down; that is, by beginning with the most important, most rewarding aspects of writing and letting the less important follow as a matter of course. Children learn to talk by caring about message and communication first; grammar and pronunciation follow willy-nilly. Writers should focus first on the important, fun stuff—the stuff real writers care about—and work on spelling and punctuation last. This is the reverse of the traditional "apprenticeship" approach to writing, which says, "First, you have to master the mechanics; then, when you're ready, we'll let you do real writing." You should let your students do real, important writing from Day 1.

5. People learn to writing inductively, by learning to solve writers' problems in their own writing. Don't go *from* the general lesson (the lecture, the teaching point) *to* writing; instead, let the students' writing raise the questions that lead to the lessons. And don't work with dummy writing samples; work with the students' own text, and focus only on the problems that arise there.

6. Adults profit from feedback when they write, if the feedback is of a certain sort. Feedback that doesn't help much:

   Thinks in terms of good and bad, right and wrong

   Focuses on error

   Focuses on the least important aspects of writing, like punctuation and usage

   Comes to class when the writing is over

   Labels surface features

   Is from a superior to an inferior

   Is in instructor's jargon

   Focuses on features instead of causes

   Focuses on evaluation ("This is good") instead of on future alternative behavior ("I think outlining would strengthen the structure")

   Tries to talk about everything

Actually, feedback needn't be *critical* or *analytical* at all. The most inspirational feedback is simple applause. Some feedback should be analytical and critical, however, and it should do the opposite of our preceding unhelpful list. It should

   Think in terms of the reader's judgment and response

   React to the writing the way human colleagues react to each other in thoughtful conversation

Focus on the most important aspects of writing, like asking, "Is it a pleasure to read?"

Come when the writing is in progress

Practice alternatives with the writer instead of labeling

Be between equals

Be stated in plain English

Focus on causes instead of on features

Focus on alternative behavior instead of on evaluation

Focus on one or two things

Among other things, that means that most of the feedback your students receive should be from each other, in peer-editing sessions.

7. People learn best if they write in a language that's their own — their best language, perhaps, but not someone else's definition of good language.

8. Because people are already afraid of writing and are trying so hard that they're getting writer's block, your job isn't to raise their standards; it's to free them from fear.

9. You can't learn how to do something just by examining the end product; you have to see it being done. Few, if any, of your students will ever have witnessed a writer doing what a writer does: brainstorming, structuring, proofreading, or profiting from peer feedback. Model those behaviors: Let them see you write, and let them see each other write.

10. Writers write well when they think of themselves as writers, not as people trying to write or people who someday will be able to write. The workshop is designed to get them to think that way by replacing the traditional "I tell you what to do; you do it; then I grade it" model with another: colleagues working together, experimenting, discovering, and supporting each other with encouragement and good advice. You'll prevent students from calling themselves writers if you send these kinds of messages:

They can't write yet, but someday they may be able to.

They have to work up to real writing.

You know what good writing is; they don't.

If your students are going to cease being students and become writers, you'll have to cease being a grader and become a writer, too. The collegial approach is impossible unless you write along with your students. You don't have to do all their assignments, but you must be writing something and must share your work with them as they share theirs with each other.

11. Writing is first a creative, then a corrective activity. Students must learn that the two tasks are different and are best done at different times and that during the creative stage, the worst things a writer can have are high standards and a self-critical faculty.

12. Writing is an inherently collaborative activity.

13. Writing is an evolving, recursive process based on rethinking and rewriting.

14. Grading the writing inherently obstructs the process of learning to write because it encourages students to write mechanically, to write to avoid error, and to write without an audience, without any personal purpose.

15. Doing something teaches you nothing. When students do things—write essays, take tests, peer-edit each other's work, outline—no learning takes place. The learning happens afterwards when the students:

     a. Reflect on the experience
     b. Draw conclusions
     c. Apply those conclusions to the new work—by revising the draft, for instance

     Students typically don't do any of these three steps because they don't have the time and because school has been misleading them for years into thinking that the doing produces the learning automatically. So I built time for reflection and conclusion-drawing into the exercises. Typically, an assignment in my class consists of three parts:

     a. Write a draft.
     b. Do something to it (like outline it or write a thesis for it).
     c. Write a paragraph reflecting on the experience—What did you learn in the outlining or thesis writing that you could use in revision?

     And after almost every classroom activity, I ask (usually the next class day), "What was the point of doing that?" And I keep chanting the mantra: "Do, reflect, apply."

16. When you try something new, your performance suffers. When you abandon the old, familiar way of doing something and try something new, you go through a period of clumsiness and awkwardness when your habits tell you, "This is all wrong." And the product suffers because you aren't good at the new yet. Students experience this, and because school has trained them to expect instant success and good feeling from all learning, they conclude that whatever you're teaching them doesn't work. They must be taught to tolerate the period of awkwardness and ineptitude in the same way that a child tolerates the fear and clumsiness that accompanies learning to ride a bike.

     The logical consequence of Principle 2 is that it's unfair to grade the *performance* of a student learning something new. When you ask a student to change the way she writes, her writing should get worse for a time; and if you grade the writing, you are punishing her for venturing outside her comfort zone. As a consequence, I've given up grading my students' writing *at all* and grade entirely on tests, class discussion, and issues like attendance. In a perfect world, we'd grade our students on their skills three years after the course ended.

RUNNING A WORKSHOP: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you're used to the lecture-and-exercise approach to teaching composition, the workshop approach will pose a host of new challenges for you. Let's talk about how to respond to them.

Filling Class Time

Your first question may be: "What are you going to do with all the class time now freed up by abandoning the lectures and the exercises?" Have no fear. The workshop approach, with its emphasis on peer editing, drafting, and redrafting, keeps students busier than the traditional approach, and the time will fly by.

Imagine an archetypal workshop assignment from start to finish:

Step 1   Have students read, from among the student essays in *The Writer's Way*, five or six essays of the type you want them to write. At the same time, tell them about the assignment and ask them to start exploring their lives for essays, in the manner explained in Chapter 3.

Step 2   The class discusses the essays they've read, sharing likes and dislikes, reading them for the craft and reacting to them as thoughtful readers, perhaps formulating short, written personal responses to them. Ask students to come to class next time with seeds or first thoughts about possible essays they might write.

Step 3   The class brainstorms with several students' seeds, generating possible theses, audiences, purposes, and specific content. You ask students to produce first drafts of their own essays by next class.

Step 4   In groups of three or four, students orally present their first drafts to each other. The group gives each writer peer feedback for ten minutes. Ask students to produce second drafts for the next class session, and then ask two students to duplicate their second drafts for class distribution.

Step 5   In small groups, each student reads his or her second draft and gets ten minutes of peer feedback. Distribute the two duplicated essays and ask students to edit each and write a brief paragraph for next class identifying the two best pieces of advice they would give each essay.

Step 6   As a group, the class discusses each essay in the manner of Chapter 10 for fifty minutes. Assign finished essays for the next class session.

Step 7   Students read each other's finished essays. Have students who like what they read ask the author for a command performance by writing "Please read" at the top of page 1; then have the authors read the chosen essays aloud. Everyone enjoys, praises, and briefly discusses the nice touches of the essays.

That process will take at least six class days, and much longer if you want it to. Add to that the game-playing, conferencing, and other activities you'll be doing, and you'll see that you'll be lucky if you have time for five or six essays in the term. Time will always be deliciously short.

Your second question may be: "Are freshmen sophisticated enough and self-motivated enough to make the workshop approach work?" Yes. The workshop model has been used triumphantly with writers as young as eight and nine years old. It's just a matter of learning how. When I started having students peer-edit, fifteen minutes seemed like forever; however, we now peer-edit one essay for an hour, and the class session flies by before we can get to everything we want to talk about.

Your third question may be: "If you don't tell them the right answers, how will they learn them?" The question makes a false assumption. They won't become writers by learning all the right answers; instead, they'll become writers by learning to think like writers, to ask writers' questions and find answers on their own—even if the answers they find aren't yours.

Burnout and the Paper Avalanche

Teaching composition burns out instructors, so take steps to prevent that from happening to you. The workshop model helps. Burnout comes mainly from four sources: The students don't like being there; they write badly, and that makes everybody feel bad; grading essays is exhausting and taints your relationship with your students; and marking student work takes forever, reduces you to a drudge, and seems to do no good. The workshop model offers you an out for every one of these. Students like being there; they write better, so everybody feels good; because they're writing for real audiences, the teacher's grades are simply not what the game is about, so you don't grade the essays; and because the feedback consists of colleagues' suggestions for improvements on drafts, classmates provide the majority of it, without hurting the receiver and without wearing you down to give it.

In the workshop approach, students should write at least once a week, ideally every day, and if you're responsible for reading and commenting on all of the writing, you'll be buried. But you don't and shouldn't have to. For example, artists do most of their practicing without judges watching, and your writers should, too. Also, writers write to audiences, not teachers, so your writers need to know what the other writers in the class think of their work as much or more than what you think of it. Therefore, let much of the writing get by without comment, and let most of the feedback come from colleagues.

This is a hard point for teachers to accept because we believe that reading and marking all student work is proof of our professional integrity. But thinking that way actually hurts students because it means they never get to write free of the judge's eye, and they can write only as much as you can read. Would a coach help a tennis player by ordering her to practice only during the thirty minutes the coach was there to watch?

Finding Alternatives to Line Editing

Chapter 1 talks about why marking errors line-by-line is the worst way of reacting to writing. Among other things, it's overwhelming, it hurts too much, it focuses on the least important things, it's impossible to read or understand, and it labels features without talking about causes or solutions. Perhaps most important, it will kill your love of teaching writing. (In my notes on Chapter 12, I'll suggest how you might do line editing, if at all, but right now I'm suggesting you don't.)

If you don't line edit, there are a host of healthier alternatives. The best is peer feedback, which his the subject of Chapter 10. Next best is instructor's feedback. When you give it, I suggest you follow these guidelines:

1. Do it orally if you have the time. Few students understand written critiques of writing, and many don't read them. My typical drop-in office conferences begins like this:

   "I want to know what's wrong with this essay."

   "Have you read my comments?"

   "Well, not really."

Some teachers spend one class hour every week or two talking to individual students while the rest of the class works on their writing without them. And you don't need to have the student present—you can talk into a tape recorder and give him or her the tape.

2. Begin with the writer's questions—what he or she wants to know from you. (This point is stressed in Chapter 10.) I have students write me three questions at the end of each essay; if they have no questions, I assume they don't want to hear from me.

3. Write whole prose sentences together in one place, in plain English. NO student is going to find and decode "uncl., red." in a margin somewhere. Write, "I'm having trouble following paragraph 2. The style repeats itself a lot" at the end of the essay instead.

4. Don't deface the essay. The text is the student's work; you have no right to deface it by writing all over it any more than an art teacher has the right to deface a student's sculpture by improving the nose or scratching comments on the forehead. Write conversational English at the end of the essay or, better still, on a separate piece of paper attached to the essay.

5. Fry the biggest fish first, and limit yourself to one or two issues. If you could improve a student's writing in two significant ways every time she wrote for you, wouldn't you be satisfied?

6. Address causes and alternatives, not problems per se, and assign specific cures. Don't say, "Your transition is weak"; say, "I think the transition would be stronger if you abstracted— please abstract the next essay, and hand the abstract in with the essay."

7. Acknowledge that you're offering your subjective judgment, not the absolute truth, by using "I" language: "*I think* outlining would help"; "*I have trouble following* the connection between paras. 2 and 3."

8. Focus on what works well. Instructors often feel that the problems are so important that there's no time to mention the virtues, but "Keep doing that" is at least as helpful as "Stop doing that." The moment I remember most clearly from my freshman English class was when I tried something unusual in an essay, and the teacher pointed to it and said, "I like that—that works."

9. Don't tell the student what to do; instead, do it with him or her. Saying, "Write out your audience and purpose" is really not very helpful because if the student knew how to do it, you wouldn't have to say it in the first place. Sit down with the student and shape an audience and purpose together.

You won't have time to do all this with every paper, but that's okay—remember, students don't need it every time they write. Perhaps most important, feedback, from whatever source, is relatively useless if it arrives after the project is psychologically completed. Fit the feedback stage into the writing process *before* the final draft, or ask the student to profit from it on the *next* essay.

Conducting Office Conferences

Instructors disagree about how valuable private office conferences with individual students are. I know courses where the five-minute private conference is a regular part of the weekly activities. I confer with my students only once a term because thirty minutes times fifty students is twenty-five hours of out-of-class time. Whatever style you choose, some tips follow on how to use the office conference well.

1. Do everything you can to destroy the master-pupil, "Here's what's wrong with your writing" approach. Confer with students in twos and threes instead of one-on-one. Write together.

Discuss the virtues of the essay. Discuss the content, like friends would. Chat about writing in general, about school, and about life.

2. Again, begin with the writer's questions. Let the student talk first. Think of the conference as a chance for the student to get whatever he or she wants from you.

3. Practice writing together. The one thing you can do in a conference and nowhere else is hands-on writing work one-on-one. Here's your chance to walk the student through the acts of refining the thesis, defining audience and purpose, cutting wordiness, or refuting the opposition's argument.

4. Deal with only a few points and be specific about the moral of the lesson. Pick one or two skills the writer would most profit from practicing, practice them, and send the student off with a written list of things to do in the next essay or in the revision, as explicit as "#1. Outline. #2 Reread Chapter 8 and start the essay with a 'Read me' opener."

Leading Class Discussions

Chapter 10 talks about what the classroom leader's job in a peer-editing session is, and my notes on the chapter in this manual will address your role in those situations. Your role as teacher is simply an extension of that role. Because you're trying to get students to learn how to communicate, you have to talk in front of them so they can see what communicating looks like, but most teachers talk too much. When you're talking, you're robbing students of a chance to practice their own communication skills. Instead of thinking of the classroom as a place where you talk and they listen, think of it as a place where they produce material (talking or writing), which you then work with as a group. I tell my students that until they say something, there is no "course content."

You can then start them off in a number of ways: Give them a stimulating piece of reading; have them brainstorm for ten minutes on a provocative prompt from you; have them read their writing assignment out loud and ask for reactions; have someone share his or her first thought on an upcoming assignment. Once people are talking to each other, you become monitor, guide, interlocutor, negotiator. Here are some principles to guide you in that role:

1. Talk little. The conversation should be no more than 25 percent you by volume.

2. Keep your comments short. Match the length of your comments to those of your students—two or three sentences.

3. Get them to respond to each other. Say things like "What do people think of what Beth just said?" and "Do you agree with that?"

4. Make connections. Say things like "I think what Andy just said offers us another way of thinking about what Jess was talking about a minute ago."

5. Ask them for reasons. Say, "Why?" a lot.

6. Ask people to commit themselves to whole assertions. Say things like "Does that mean you think we should ban pesticides entirely?"

7. Summarize. Give overviews of the conversation.

Grading

Grading the writing gets in the way of everything the workshop approach is trying to do. If you want your students to write freely (and take risks), write for real reasons to real people, and act like colleagues in a community of writers, you'll have to get grades as far out of sight as possible. However, much as you may soften or rationalize them, grades will make your students write to please you and get grades. If you think that students need grades as motivators, Part I of *The Writer's Way* is devoted to showing you and your students a way out.

Students will press you for grades because they're used to writing for the wrong reasons. When a student tells me he needs a grade, I ask, "Did my feedback help you see how to make the next assignment better?" If the student says, "No," we talk; if he or she says, "Yes," I ask, "Do you think you can do what the comments ask for?" If the student says, "No," we make an appointment to write together in the office; if he or she says, "Yes," I point out that that's all one needs to know.

If you must grade the writing, there are several ways to minimize the damage:

1. Put off grading as long as possible. I give no grades until the very end of the term. If a student isn't doing passing work, I tell him or her in words.

2. Grade by the least discriminating system you can. Grading on three levels (1 = great, 2 = okay, 3 = needs major work) is better than grading on five levels (A through F), which is better than a 0-to-100 scale.

3. Distinguish between writing as experimentation or practice and writing as performance; grade only the latter. Let students write for two weeks without judgment; then judge a final, polished product.

4. Let students choose what they want to be graded. Let them write ten pieces and pick which two represent their work at its best. The portfolio approach (see the upcoming section on this) does this.

5. Let students do the judging. You probably can't let students assign each other actual course grades because peer pressure will force them to give each other As, but you can ask them to rank. At the end of the term, I circulate my students' portfolios and tell my students to rank them—tell me which are the strongest and which the weakest. I convert the rankings into grades. Students may not know what a "B" essay is, but they know when one portfolio is better than another.

6. Explore credit–no credit grading across all writing classes in your department. It may seem like a fantasy, but so do most revolutions at first.

What Is an "A" Essay?

If you must grade the essays, the world will want you to commit yourself to "objective criteria"—a list of the features of the "A" essay. I hope you'll refuse because listing the features of "A" essays and "B" essays denies everything *The Writer's Way* is based on. Instead, when you grade or talk to your students about what they're trying to accomplish, use the same standards you use when judging a novel or a newspaper article for yourself. Were you interested? Did you like it? Was it entertaining? Did it give you want you wanted?

The Portfolio Assignment

The portfolio embodies many of the principles of the workshop. Tell your students at the beginning of the term that at the end of it, they will present a selected body of their work to the public (the other students). From the term's work, they will choose from two to six pieces, which will be rethought and rewritten during the term and presented in impeccable form—excellent printing, good paper, gleaming format—to eager readers. The grader judges the entire portfolio as a single body of work, and the criteria are holistic—for example, how well the writing works, not how many comma splices there are.

Making Assignments

Ideally writers write what's important to them, so you say to your students, "Write me something." In practice, this approach has its drawbacks. But if you direct the writing too much, students end up trying to write your essay instead of theirs. A good writing assignment steers a course between these two extremes. Here are some basic kinds of writing assignments, each with a thousand variations. They are not in order of desirability; my personal favorites are 4, 6, 7, and 8:

1. Assign a topic of general interest. You can legitimately demand that any thoughtful college student have something to say about the current political campaign, sexism on campus, the politics of diversity, or campus parking. This may be the least stimulating of the assignments because it sounds so much like "an essay."

2. Give "human condition" assignments that try to tap experiences everyone has had: "Write about a time you felt betrayed"; "Discuss how you are and are not like your parents."

3. Set up precise rhetorical situations that occasion written action: "Assume you're the president of your university and a student group has just handed you a petition demanding that you give a million dollars of the university's operating budget to help the homeless in your community. Write a position statement." Such assignments can be great fun because they're like play-acting.

You can build the whole course around one large, fictitious, rhetorical writing situation: for instance, a class newspaper on which every member is a staff reporter. The newspaper premise allows you to assign almost every form of expository prose under a different name:

In a Composition Class	*In a Newspaper*
argumentative essay	op-ed essay
character sketch	obituary
narrative	news reporting
research paper	investigative report
personal essay	column

The advantage of the newspaper premise is that it allows students to write in forms they know well. Writers who think they can't write an argument to save their souls can write hilarious "Dear Abby" advice columns.

4. The imitation. Using another piece of writing as a model, have students write essays that imitate it. (This technique is practiced in Chapters 3 and 17.) You can use the book's student essays or bring in a passage by a professional.

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5. The submitted manuscript. Have students write pieces for submission to real-world markets of their choosing, and really submit them. Have them write articles for *Sports Illustrated*, letters to "Dear Abby," or letters to the editor. This is a form of imitating, using the intended market as a model. Chapter 13 ("Publishing") is a detailed guide.

6. The response piece. Give them a prompt—one of the book's essays, a newspaper article, a "Dear Abby" letter and response, a short story, an editorial—and ask them to react. This approach has the virtue of teaching reading and writing as integrated acts.

There are variations on this. If you want your course to be an introduction to literature as well as practice in writing, you'll want to read a lot of literature. In many literature-based composition courses, all of the assignments come from the reading, and they're all of the "make a personal connection with what happens in the novel" sort. If you don't want your students to have to buy another book, you can work with the student essays in *The Writer's Way*. If you want to encourage students to read on their own, make it a part of the assignment that they find their own prompt. The Weeklies (see the following section) do this.

7. You can assign *modes* instead of issues or topics. Have students write informative essays, or reviews, or personal narratives. (Part IV of the text works on this model. It has chapters on the three major modes: personal writing, informative writing, and argumentative writing.) Each mode can be subdivided if you want more essay assignments. Personal essays include personal narratives and character sketches; informative essays include process essays, how-to's, comparison-and-contrast essays, and definitions; arguments can be divided into persuasion, argumentation, review, satire, rebuttal, and so on.

8. The spin-off assignment. The best source of inspiration is previous assignments by other students, which can be serious or frivolous. Have your students write back to each other. Have them write arguments, then exchange with classmates who disagree, then have the disagreers write rebuttals. Or have students write letters to "Dear Abby," exchange letters, and then write Abby's response.

9. Nonessays: letters of complaint to local stores, memos to university representatives, personal ads for dating services, requests for money from home, children's stories, fables, game-show scripts, TV ads, advice columns.

10. Games, sports, and frolics: parodies, limericks, ads for preposterous products, alphabetic sentences (in which the first word starts with *A*, the second with *B*, and so on), rebuttals, scripts, essays trying to defend impossible theses (like "3 should come before 2"), "worst essay in the world" competitions, essays without the word *is* or the letter *e*, and so on.

The Weeklies

My favorite assignment I call "The Weeklies." At the beginning of the term, I tell my students to hand in a half-page to one-page reaction to something they read during the week—hand one in every Monday as a matter of course, in addition to whatever else we're doing. The prompt can be anything that is in print and read within the last seven days. The reaction can be anything at all, as long as it's prose.

This innocuous assignment solves a lot of problems. It keeps students writing often; it keeps them reading; it provides the class with an endless stream of topics and conversation-starters and assures the instructor that the course will be about the students' thoughts and words. It also allows

students to argue and emote without using deadly words like *essay*, *argumentation*, or *thesis*. It provides endless writers' games to play in class because countless things can be done with the Weeklies once they come in. For instance, have people read and write one-sentence responses to each others' Weeklies. It makes revision easy because the Weeklies are short and quick, so they are obviously ripe for further development. It gets you out of the assignment-inventing business. And by the middle of the term, it gives each student a full storehouse of essay-type writing, which you can use for all kinds of reading-for-the-craft assignments. For example, "Look back over your Weeklies and critique their titles to see how well they've done the three jobs of an ideal title."

I don't mark, grade, or critique the Weeklies at all; they're sparks for conversations, class activities, and revision only. As the course goes on, you can put constraints on the Weeklies and ask individual ones to do individual things. For instance, ask that one Weekly have an argumentative prompt or a prompt that is a complete essay, or ask that the Weekly use personal experience in some way.

How Often Should Students Write?

Theoretically, writers should write every day, so you have to find ways to have them write briefly, without fear, and without your feedback. Here are some ways to prompt writing:

1. Have students keep a journal. Use it as a source book for the essays. If you read it at all (and I suggest you don't), remember, you have no right to pass judgment, even in the form of "helpful advice"; it's private.

2. Have students write a paragraph at the end of every class session on one thing they learned that day or one question that seemed to them worth answering.

3. Have students write a paragraph of advice and reaction to a student's work.

4. Begin the class with a ten-minute freewrite on a prompt provided by you. You may, for instance, begin the class discussion on writer's block by asking, "How much does fear play a part in your writing?"

5. Have students read an essay and abstract it, or title it, or define its audience, or state its thesis.

6. Have students pass notes behind your back.

In general, get in the habit of getting the students to commit themselves on paper at the beginning of the hour to whatever the class is going to work on that day so that the day's material ceases to be *what you have to say* and becomes *what they wrote.*

Testing

I've changed my mind about testing. Twenty years ago, I thought it was the anti-Christ. Now I test my students every two weeks, and would every week if I had the time.

I originally avoided testing because it focused attention on information retention and away from writing performance. Now I test a lot for the same reason. I found that my students were so focused on *doing the writing* that they had no attention to give to retaining any of the hard knowledge I was teaching. I now tell my students: "The purpose of this course is not to make you better writers directly; the purpose is to give you mastery of a number of tools writers use, like outlining. If you learn to use them and keep using them, they will make you a better writer, eventually."

SCHEDULING THE COURSE

Using the Text

The chapters of *The Writer's Way* have been written to be as independent of each other as possible, so you should be able to assign them in any order and leave out any ones you wish with a minimum of confusion. There are, therefore, countless ways to structure a term course around the book. Yet there is a logic to the Part divisions:

> *Part I* (Chapters 1 and 2) is an introduction to the whole issue of why people write, how they learn, and what they're trying to accomplish by doing it. Chapter 1 is about learning to write. Chapter 2 discusses writing with a sense of audience. I suggest you assign these chapters first and talk about each in class in an attempt to get your students writing for the right reasons and approaching the task in the right way.

> *Part II* (Chapters 3–5) is on planning and drafting: finding something to write about, getting started, brainstorming, note-taking, making basic decisions about purpose and audience, and first-drafting.
>
> Different students need the materials of Part 2 to greatly different degrees. Creative students don't need Chapter 3 (finding things to write about) at all; other students can't proceed without it. Students without writer's block can skip Chapter 5; students with a bad case will find it the most important chapter in the book.

> *Part III* (Chapters 6–13) leads the writer through the process of revising, from organizing to proofreading and publishing. Together, Parts II and III lead the reader through the mythical steps of the writing process, and the idea is that the student will read them as he or she goes through the process. The process section has eleven chapters, so you can work with Part I for a week, then assign a chapter a week and expect to be through the writing process with three weeks left in a fifteen-week term.
>
> Part III will be the heart of any process-oriented course. But even if you decide to focus on Part III, there's more in it than you can teach in a term, and instructors often focus on a few of the steps, or even one—you can build a course around peer editing or stylistic revision, for instance. I have a colleague who builds the entire course around modeling.

There are three instances in which you might want to have students read ahead: (1) If you are going to have peer-editing sessions, you'll want students to have read Chapter 10 beforehand; (2) if you want to stress line editing and mechanics early in the term, you'll want to read Chapter 12 early; (3) if you care about format (page layout) in early assignments, you'll want students to be familiar with the standard essay format laid down in Chapter 12.

> *Part IV* (Chapters 14–17) is about the there major essay modes. Chapter 14 is on personal writing, Chapter 15 on informative writing, and Chapters 16 and 17 on argumentative writing—Chapter 16 on thinking the argument through and Chapter 17 on selling it to an audience. If you're making model assignments, you'll want students to read each chapter before doing writing in that mode; thus, you'll probably end up assigning the chapters in Part IV and those in Parts II and III concurrently. For example, read Chapter 3, focusing on brainstorming, and read Chapter 14, thinking about personal writing. Part IV doesn't duplicate the information in Parts II and III, so you shouldn't try to teach a course out of Part IV alone. Even if you aren't teaching by modes, you may want to assign these chapters because

they contain some key writing concepts/skills: show, don't tell (Chapter 14); COIK writing (Chapter 15); critical thinking (Chapter 16); and modeling (Chapter 17).

The chapters in Part IV are independent of each other, so you can skip any you don't want to use, but they're in what composition theory generally agrees is the order of difficulty—a personal narrative being the easiest kind of essay to write and an argument being the hardest—so you'll probably want to use them in this order.

Part V (Chapters 18–25) addresses academic writing. Each chapter addresses a specific college writing task, and the chapter titles are self-explanatory: Chapter 18 is a general introduction to writing in school, and it discusses issues like writing for professors and writing to learn; Chapter 19 discusses the literary critical paper; Chapter 20 discusses scientific writing and focuses on the lab report; Chapter 21 discusses written tests; Chapter 22 discusses collaborative writing assignments; Chapter 23 is an introduction to scholarly research methods; Chapter 24 discusses documentation (citations and bibliographies); and Chapter 25 discusses the research paper.

Part V can be used in a number of ways. You can devote the entire course to academic writing, as more and more departmental writing programs are doing these days. You can teach the academic paper as one more mode, like personal writing, with its own audiences, purposes, and methods. You can invite students to bring in assignments—students in literature courses will read the literary paper chapter, and so on.

Even if academic writing per se isn't central to your course, a number of issues or skills come up in Part V that you may want your students to know about: how to take a test, what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, how to work with other students collaboratively, how to find research information on a subject, how to cite a source, and especially, how everything you're teaching in the other sections of the book relates to writing for a grade.

Part VI is a collection of essays by my students. The collection is divided into four parts: personal essays, informative essays, argumentative essays, and academic essays. The academic essay collection consists of one literary critical paper, one sociological book review, and one scientific study of an agricultural issue (rice stubble burning). There is also a sample term paper at the end of the term-paper chapter.

I hope you will not put these essays at the center of your course, for a number of reasons. Reading good stuff is at the heart of any writer's learning process. Reading good stuff is easy, fun, and inspiring. And it's easy on you. You don't have to do anything brilliant with the essays. But if you want to "teach" them, they can be a springboard to dozens of easy and powerful classroom activities, beginning with "Read an essay and tell me what you liked about it." Best of all, the essays are by your students' peers, so they end once and for all the myth that students can't write well yet because they're only students. For all these reasons, I typically begin my work with any new course issue by reading some of the Treasury essays and discussing the issue there—e.g., when we start outlining, we outline the Treasury essays to note that indeed they do have structure.

Choosing a Focus

The Writer's Way offers you more things to do than a class could do in a decade. Each chapter not only raises stimulating questions you could discuss for days but also ends with exercises that, if you did them all, would take you weeks. Each stage of the writing process is worth practice. There are over fifty essays, each worth reading, analyzing, and imitating. So you'll have to choose a focus. There are countless possibilities. I've known instructors who have built courses around peer editing (Chapter 10), stylistic polishing (Chapter 11), publishing (Chapter 13), office conferences, modeling

(Chapter 17), critical thinking (Chapter 16), academic writing (Part V), literary readings, and large social issues like gender.

The Tool Kit

One way to design a composition course is to imagine each student as having a writer's tool kit—a carrying case of skills or techniques with which to make essays. There are hundreds of possible tools to put in such a kit, more than you can possibly teach in a semester, so you must decide: Which tools do you want to make sure the student has? Then you design a class unit for each one. Most of the chapters in *The Writer's Way* focus on one tool, and some on more than one. The main ones are as follows:

Chapter 2:	The reader's dialogue
Chapter 4:	Thesis and purpose
Chapter 5:	Ways to defeat writer's block
Chapter 6:	Outlining
Chapter 7:	Abstracting
Chapter 8:	Lengthening
Chapter 10:	Peer editing
Chapter 11:	Stylistic revision
Chapter 12:	Line editing
Chapter 14:	Show; don't tell
Chapter 15:	Avoiding COIK
Chapter 16:	Critical thinking
Chapter 17:	Modeling
Chapter 22:	Working collaboratively
Chapter 23:	Doing research
Chapter 24:	Making citations and bibliographies

Any one of these tools takes my students two weeks of class time to get the hang of, so if you pick any seven, your semester is filled.

Mastering a Tool: One Model

I have students go through a five-part approach when mastering any revision tool:

1. Write a draft—I never have my students work on a technique without having an essay to apply it to.

2. Use the tool on the draft.

3. Critique the use of the tool.

4. Reflect on the experience—say what you learned about the draft from outlining it.

5. Revise the draft using the insight gained.

Step 5 often takes more time than I have, so I substitute a short version: Tell me what you would do if you revised the draft. For example, when we work with outlining, we (1) write a draft, (2) outline

it, (3) critique the outline to make sure we outlined correctly, (4) gain insights about the draft from studying the outline, and (5) form revision resolutions about the draft from Step 4.

I find it vital to stress that mastering a new tool is a two-step process: First, you must learn to make a tool that works—that is, you must construct an outline that is well made; second, you must learn to use the well-made tool—that is, you must learn to look at an outline and see what it reveals about the draft. Students always want to go to Step 2 before mastering Step 1, which I tell them is like taking their temperature with a broken thermometer. A malformed outline can tell you nothing about a draft.

I typically have students go through Steps 2–4 three times: first using an essay from *The Writer's Way*, second with the student's own essay, and third with a professional essay the student has found in his outside reading. *The Writer's Way* essay allows the student to have an easy success experience with the tool since the essay is guaranteed to be in good shape . His own essay allows him to learn about his own work. The professional essay forces him to notice the essays around him and lets him see that the pros follow the same principles he does. The process takes about two weeks.

Using the Exercises

Most of the chapters end with exercises. They were written with four principles in mind:

1. Exercises should never be an end in themselves. Thus, as much as possible, these exercises are linked to the essays the students are presumably writing.

2. Doing something teaches you nothing. Thus, the exercises strive to go beyond asking students to do something and ask them to examine what they've done and to write out insights gained from the examination.

3. The final goal of most work in a writing class is to produce an improved revision of a draft. Thus, the exercises frequently ask the students to use the insights gained to plan concrete revision strategies. Of course, you can have students actually do the revision if you have the time.

4. Exercises should never be allowed to crowd out the real writing. Thus, I've learned to keep the exercises lean and few.

Where there are no chapter-end exercises, it is because I wanted to offer you no excuse to put off plunging into the real work of the chapter—e.g., peer editing in Chapter 10.

The "Writer's Workshop" Sections

Nine of the chapters end with sections called "The Writers' Workshop." They are described in the Preface, where readers are given advice on how to read them, and they usually end with concrete classroom activities asking students to do for themselves the workshop activity just described. For example, in Chapter 2 the Writers' Workshop section is a transcript of students reacting line-by-line to the opening passage of an essay in order to dramatize the dialogue between writer and reader, and it ends by asking students to create a similar dialogue with a passage from their own work. Each Writer's Workshop is the best large-scale classroom activity I've been able to devise on that

chapter's core material. If you want to "work" with the chapter in activity form, I encourage you to consider starting with the Workshop.

TWO SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINES

Here are two course syllabi for a fifteen-week semester course with and without a term paper. Don't let them close your eyes to the world of wonderful alternatives. I've known composition courses that revised and rethought a single essay for the entire term, and I know an instructor who held no classes at all—just conferred with his writers regularly throughout the semester. Notice also that by no means is the entire book used in either syllabus—there's more in the book than any course can cover. I have listed only major essay assignments; I haven't detailed the daily short writing assignments you'll want to have students do.

A One-Semester Writing Course Without Term Paper

Week 1	*Readings:* Chapter 1 ("Learning to Write"). *Activities:* Using the Writers' Workshop section in Chapter 1, have students talk about how they write, why they write, how they feel about their writing, and how they learned to feel that way.
Week 2	*Readings:* Chapter 2 ("What Makes Writing Good?") and Chapter 14 ("Personal Writing") . *Essays:* Assign essay #1, a personal narrative, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Do the exercise in the Writers' Workshop section in Chapter 2, verbalizing the reader's half of the writer's dialogue and using it to understand transition.
Week 3	*Readings:* Chapter 10 ("Peer Feedback") to prepare for peer editing. *Activities:* Discuss the sample personal essays in the Essay Treasury, asking students why they liked them; peer-edit students' rough drafts of essay #1 in small groups.
Week 4	*Readings:* Chapter 3 ("Finding Something to Write About"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #1—read essays out loud, applaud, and praise their virtues (Do this with each essay when it's collected); assign essay #2, a character sketch, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Do the exercises in the Chapter 3 Writers' Workshop section, where students do essay-finding interviews of each other.
Week 5	*Readings:* Chapter 5 ("From First Thoughts to Drafts") and Chapter 15 ("Writing to Inform"). *Activities:* Peer-edit first drafts of essay #2 in small groups; using the e.e. cummings example in Chapter 3 as a model, write imitations of unconventional writing samples.
Week 6	*Readings:* Chapter 4 ("Thesis, Purpose, Audience, and Tone"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #2; assign essay #3, an informative essay (Exercise 4 in Chapter 15), due in two weeks. *Activities:* Using the exercises in Chapter 4, practice reading essays for the Big Four and using the Big Four to answer "Should I?" questions.
Week 7	*Readings:* Chapter 9 ("Making the Draft Longer or Shorter"). *Activities:* Hold individual conferences with students on their writing so far and set goals for the rest of the term.

Week 8   *Readings:* Chapter 16 ("Writing an Argument, Part I"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #3; assign essay #4, an argumentative essay, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Practice the critical thinking skills of Chapter 16 on assertions taken from students' writing.

Week 9   *Readings:* Chapter 6 ("Organization, Part I") and Chapter 8 ("Beginning, Ending, and Titling"). *Activities:* Peer-edit two students' essay #4 drafts by handing out copies and discussing each draft for an hour; practice mapping and outlining student seeds and first drafts on the blackboard.

Week 10   *Readings:* Chapter 7 ("Organization, Part II") and Chapter 8 ("Beginning, Ending, and Titling"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #4; assign essay #5, a review of a restaurant, movie, CD, or book, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Critique students' writings in the course to date regarding how well their beginnings, endings, and titles meet the criteria of Chapter 8. Practice abstracting students' previous course essays.

Week 11   *Readings:* Chapter 11 ("Rewriting for Style"). *Activities:* Distribute and peer-edit first drafts of essay #5; examine essay passages (projected via transparencies overhead) for the stylistic features in Chapter 11—sentence length, Latinity, and concretion.

Week 12   *Readings:* Chapter 12 ("Editing") and Chapter 18 ("Writing in School"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #5; assign essay #6, an academic essay, due in one week. *Activities:* Line-edit student essay passages projected overhead for grammar and mechanics.

Week 13   *Readings:* Chapter 13 ("Publishing"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #6. *Activities:* Have students prepare a written piece for publication and submit it to the newspaper or magazine of their choice.

Week 14   *Readings:* None. *Essays:* Assign the portfolio, a collection of three pieces written during the term, rewritten for submission to the class as representative of the student's best work. *Activities:* Have individual conferences with students on plans for portfolio revisions.

Week 15   *Readings:* None. *Essays:* Collect, share, and rank the portfolios.

A One-Semester Writing Course with Term Paper

Week 1   *Readings:* Chapter 1 ("Learning to Write"). *Activities:* Using the Writers' Workshop section in Chapter 1, have students talk about how they write, why they write, how they feel about their writing, and how they learned to feel that way.

Week 2   *Readings:* Chapter 2 ("What Makes Writing Good?") and Chapter 14 ("Personal Writing") . *Essays:* Assign essay #1, a personal narrative, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Do the exercise in the Writers' Workshop section in Chapter 2, verbalizing the reader's half of the writer's dialogue and using it to understand transition.

Week 3   *Readings:* Chapter 10 ("Peer Feedback") to prepare for peer editing. *Activities:* Discuss the sample personal essays in The Essay Treasury, asking students why they liked them; peer-edit students' rough drafts of essay #1 in small groups.

Week 4   *Readings:* Chapter 3 ("Finding Something to Write About"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #1—read essays out loud, applaud, and praise their virtues (Do this with each

essay when it's collected); assign essay #2, a character sketch, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Do the exercises in the Chapter 3 Writers' Workshop section, where students do essay-finding interviews of each other.

Week 5   *Readings:* Chapter 5 ("From First Thoughts to Drafts") and Chapter 15 ("Writing to Inform"). *Activities:* Peer-edit first drafts of essay #2 in small groups; using the e.e. cummings example in Chapter 3 as a model, write imitations of unconventional writing samples.

Week 6   *Readings:* Chapter 4 ("Thesis, Purpose, Audience, and Tone"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #2; assign essay #3, an informative essay (Exercise 4 in Chapter 15), due in two weeks. *Activities:* Using the exercises in Chapter 4, practice reading essays for the Big Four and using the Big Four to answer "Should I?" questions.

Week 7   *Readings:* Chapter 16 ("Writing an Argument, Part I"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #3; assign essay #4, an argumentative essay, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Practice the critical thinking skills of Chapter 16 on assertions taken from students' writing.

Week 8   *Readings:* Chapter 6 ("Organization, Part I") and Chapter 17 ("Writing an Argument, Part II"). *Activities:* Peer-edit two students' essay #4 drafts by handing out copies and discussing each draft for an hour; practice mapping and outlining student seeds and first drafts on the blackboard.

Week 9   *Reading:* Chapter 7 ("Organization, Part II") and Chapter 8 ("Beginning, Ending, and Titling"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #4; assign essay #5, a review of a restaurant, movie, CD, or book, due in two weeks. *Activities:* Critique students' writings in the course to date regarding how well their beginnings, endings, and titles meet the criteria of Chapter 8. Practice abstracting students' previous course essays.

Week 10   *Readings:* Chapter 11 ("Rewriting for Style"). *Activities:* Distribute and peer-edit first drafts of essay #5; examine essay passages (projected via transparencies overhead) for the stylistic features in Chapter 11—sentence length, Latinity, and concretion.

Week 11   *Readings:* Chapter 12 ("Editing"). *Essays:* Collect and share essay #5; assign essay #6, an academic essay, due in one week. *Activities:* Line-edit student essay passages projected overhead for grammar and mechanics.

Week 12   *Readings:* Chapter 18 ("Writing in School") and Chapter 25 ("The Research Paper"). *Essays:* Assign a ten-page research paper, due in three weeks; assign a research paper goal statement, due in one week. *Activities:* Using Chapter 25's discussion of sizing the research project, brainstorm research topics to make them bigger and smaller.

Week 13   *Readings:* Chapter 23 ("Research") and Chapter 24 ("Using Sources"). *Essays:* Collect research paper goal statements and critique them for workability; assign a rough draft of the research paper, due in one week. *Activities:* Take a library tour.

Week 14   *Readings:* None. *Essays:* Collect the rough drafts; assign a final draft of the research paper, due in one week. *Activities:* Practice documentation methods using the exercises in Chapter 24. Confer with students individually about the rough drafts and plan revisions.

Week 15   *Readings:* None. *Essays:* Collect the research papers. *Activities:* Have students give brief oral reports on their findings.

Section II
A Part-by-Part and Chapter-by-Chapter Guide

Now let's talk our way through the book. First I'll discuss a part of the book, then I'll discuss the individual chapters in that part.

PART I   INTRODUCTION TO WRITING

(Chapters 1 and 2)

Part I should be read first in the course because it tells students how to think about writing as they work through all the other chapters. Part I is the heart of the text, and I hope you make it the heart of your course. Its goal is to send students into the rest of the book feeling confident and thinking like writers. Assign Chapter 1 on the first day of the term and Chapter 2 soon thereafter, and devote at least the first week to discussing the issues they raise.

Chapter 1   Learning to Write

Chapter 1 attempts to rid students of erroneous notions about how one learns to write. Its aim is to stimulate a conversation about what they've been taught composition courses are supposed to do, with the hope of liberating them from constricting definitions of writing and writing instruction. The Writers' Workshop section of the two exercises at the end of the chapter offer you concrete ways of initiating that conversation.

These three activities all produce marvelous results, and I encourage you to spend time with them. Especially let students see that all writers agree on what is helpful and what is destructive to a writing career—everyone is helped by keeping a journal, writing to noncritical audiences (like loving parents), writing to utilitarian audiences (like readers of newsletters), and being read to by adults, for instance. This is a very comforting message.

These exercises, like almost all the exercises in *The Writer's Way*, are designed to be shared—to be a starting place for a group conversation. Students often want to keep their work private. You must tell them that sharing, performing, is exactly what they're supposed to be learning. If a student

tells you, "I'm just shy," tell her in this class that's exactly like saying, "I don't write" or "I don't take tests."

What goes wrong?

1. Students often enjoy discussing Chapter 1 but stop their conversation short of real benefit in three ways:

   A. They may want to have a free-floating reminiscence session that never draws conclusions. Force them to be specific: "It helped me write when a teacher did *this*—It killed my writing when my father did *this*. . . ."

   B. They may resist summing up. Force them to generalize: "Here are five things we seem to agree help us write. . . ."

   C. They often don't want to take responsibility for their own writing program. The logical end-point of Chapter 1 (often overlooked) is, if we know what helps us write and what hurts us, we can create for ourselves a nurturing writing environment—but most of us don't. Ask your students point-blank: Are you surrounding yourself with these positive reinforcers, and if not, why not?

2. Students who love Chapter 1 often need to be reminded later that it's about how you get started, not about how essays should look when they're finished. Chapter 1 prefaces naturalness, using one's own language, lack of self-criticism, and those are all wonderful . . . in the beginning. But before the essay is finished, there may be stages in the writing process that are unnatural and self-critical, and the final product maybe be in a language quite distinct from the student's daily conversation. This is a recurring problem with the book's liberating message, and you must deal with it by acknowledging the realities: Writing begins in full freedom and ends with legalistic line editing.

Chapter 2   What Makes Writing Good?

Chapter 2 addresses a smaller issue than Chapter 1 does: What makes writing good? The answer is simple—good writing is aware of its audience—and you can assign Chapter 2 and let it do its work without devoting class activity time to it. The issue of audience reappears in Chapter 4, and you may wish to wait to address it there.

The Writers' Workshop exercise in Chapter 2 is one of the best and most challenging in the book. If audience is something you want to work with closely, I recommend it to you. As your students react, you want them to see three things:

1. How busy they are as readers. Push them beyond simply guessing what's coming next—ask for all sorts of responses, like: Do they *like* this writer? How do they feel about reading on? Are they getting angry, or feeling attacked, or formulating a response argument? If they laugh, why? What's the next line? What's a thesis? What's the essay's structure? Show them how much they know, how much they think and feel, and how profoundly sophisticated they are as readers. An especially good question, after you reveal a new sentences is, "How have our predictions and expectations changed you?"

2. How different readers read differently—they want different things, like different things, react to prods differently. It's a fact—ask your students what writers should do about it.

3. How aware of all this the writer is—how successfully the writer hears, predicts, or responds to their reactions and expectations. Ask questions like "Does this new sentence respond to any of

the wants or expectations you had after the previous sentence? Which ones? What do you expect or want *now*?" When it's over, make a summary judgment about how audience-attuned the piece is: In general, how successful is the writer in predicting and controlling the reader's responses?

Chapter 2 commits you to an approach to writing you'll need to stick with throughout the term. If good writing is writing to readers, then your students' work should be reacted to in those terms. Feedback will have to come from readers, not teachers, so you'll have to do peer editing to find out what groups of peer readers think. Assignments will have to have audiences in mind larger than the teacher/grader, and you may find yourself logically compelled to let students have a hand in evaluation and grading as well.

What goes wrong?

1. Audience is one of those lip-service concepts in composition: It's easy to get students to acknowledge how important it is, and very hard to get them to take it into their hearts and think from that pose. *The Writer's Way* stresses audiences in at least four places—Chapters 2, 4, 15, and 17—but it's never enough, and you'll still have students asking you in the tenth week of the term what "the rules" of essay writing are. Audience-based problem solving is something you'll want to do almost daily, the way golfers remind themselves how to putt.

2. Students often oversimplify the lesson of the Writer's Workshop exercise to "Any writing that provokes a reaction in the reader is good." Not so—any sentence provokes response; good writing (1) provokes the response the writer sought to provoke and (2) hears that response, and acknowledges and uses it. To prove this point, do the exercises with a very bad, disjuncted piece of writing, and let students feel how they immediately respond with anger and abuse when their reactions are ignored.

Once students see how various and abundant reader response to an opening sentence is, they often have trouble seeing that the writer must pick one response to honor and ignore or postpone all the others. Until they grasp this concept, the readers' responses will confuse them instead of directing them.

PART II PLANNING AND DRAFTING

(Chapters 3–5)

Part II is the first half of the process section of the book, a series of chapters discussing the mystical stages of writing an essay, from first thoughts to proofreading and publishing. Part II covers from first thoughts through the first draft; Part III covers revising.

Part II offers you more activities than any other part of the book, and if you did them all, they would take you all term. If your students have trouble discovering things to write, or can't loosen up and play when they start writing, perhaps you should. But don't feel you must because you may want to work with just one (mapping is the most popular) in order to catch the spirit of playful, unstructured brainstorming.

We composition instructors work so hard to give students prewriting tools that we sometimes make them feel obliged to use them. Students often apologize to me for diving into a first draft, the same way they apologize for not outlining. Remind them these tools are there to help them, and if they don't need them, it means they're just brainstorming in their head, which is great.

Chapter 3   Finding Something to Write About

Chapter 3 is about finding something to write. You don't want to turn writing tasks into "problems" if students do them effortlessly already. If students already have things they want to say, leave them alone and let them write. If they don't, you may find, as I did, that the problem disappears once you assign the Weeklies mentioned earlier. I don't assign Chapter 3, but I send individual students to it when they have a problem in the area.

If students are stuck for paper topics, I'd encourage you to solve the problem by assigning topics. Discovering things worth writing about is a large part of what students are trying to learn to do; as long as you do it for them, you're robbing them of the opportunity to practice this essential writer's skill.

If Chapter 3 has "a point," it's that things to write are as common as pebbles, not the rare gems nonwriters think they are . To make the point, I spend a lot of time in class simply chatting about issues of the day—what public schools call Current Events. If you ask students to bring in copies of today's newspaper, you can painlessly demonstrate that any daily paper offers sources of wonderment, outrage, hilarity, personal reflection, and intellectual argument to stimulate a dozen essays. Let the conversation wander, then make the point at the end of the class session that the group has been in essence speaking about essay seeds all hour long.

Modeling

Rigid direction-following students often want to know how strictly they have to follow the model. Remind them that there are no rules for gathering ideas except "Do what works." You owe the model nothing, and you're free to use it to inspire writing that looks nothing like it.

Last Resorts

If you have a student who swears she or he is absolutely stuck for something to write, the two most nearly sure-fire quickeners (both in the chapter) are writing from rage and reactive reading. Ask the students to make a list of things that have angered him or her in recent days; then work to turn the anger into a message the student wants to send to an audience. Or have the student read the newspaper or a favorite magazine, keeping track of the pieces that spark reactions; then work to turn those reactions into essays.

What goes wrong?

1. The core of Chapter 3 is the idea that finding things to write begins with reacting to the stimuli bombarding you. Students unused to formulating reactions often equate reacting with purely emotional response or grades: "I liked it," "I was bored," "I thought it was a really good essay." This is especially true in their responding to pieces of writing, like classmates' essays. You have to turn their attention from how much they liked it or how they felt to the question "What do you want to say back to it?" Feelings or ranking judgments can be a starting place, but they never make an essay per se. Talking about audience helps students see why this is— no one wants to read an essay that says only, "I really liked the movie." Chapters 16 and 17 discuss this issue at length.

2. The distinction between seeds and prompts often loses students. Prompts happen to you; seeds are your reaction, which can be turned into an essay. It seems simple, but you'll need to go over it. Several of the exercises draw attention to this distinction. It matters because

students need to see that writing doesn't come from the experience per se—prompts don't make essays.

Chapter 4   Thesis, Purpose, Audience, and Tone

This chapter is a follow-up to Chapter 2, where the audience-based approach to writing was introduced. The chapter is full of lip-service issues. Students will assure you that they grasp them long before they do, and the only way to make the issues real is to work with them throughout the course. Luckily, topic, thesis, purpose, audience, and tone are easy to get at in classroom exercises like those in the exercise section. For instance, have students write Weeklies; then ask each student to write his or her thesis on the blackboard—then critique each thesis: Is it a thesis and not a topic? Does it take risks? Do students want to hear it defended?

There's a real question about when these issues should be raised. With some kinds of writing, like scientific papers, it's unthinkable that one would begin writing while still unsure of one's conclusions; with other kinds, it's a truism that one begins to glimpse the real thesis along about the third draft. So when should this chapter be assigned? There are no simple answers, but I've put it early in the book because I find most instructors want to address these issues early.

Topic

As the chapter says, "topic" is overvalued by students, so you want to de-emphasize it in your classroom. Instead, talk of theses, prompts, kernels, ideas, aims, purposes, goals, seeds.

What goes wrong?

Students tend to think that nouns are single words, so they have a hard time seeing that noun phrases are also topics. They also assume that nouns must be short, so they assume that anything that is long must be a thesis. They have an especially hard time seeing that noun phrases that begin with *why* or *how* (e.g., why we entered World War II, how to change a flat tire) are in fact nouns, too.

Thesis

Thesis is a dangerous word because students have so many old, false, intimidating associations with it. You'll have to do a lot of unteaching here. But thesis is just too powerful a tool not to use, and more and more it is at the center of my teaching.

I've provided an utterly rigid step-by-step approach to writing a thesis. You can use that approach to diagnose students' own theses. Ask them to write a thesis for a draft; then have them go through the process step by step and ask themselves if they did each one: Is the thesis a sentence? Is it a declarative sentence? Does it use the words *should* and *because,* etc.? This approach works, but it's very rigid and controlling, and you may find it oppressive.

What goes wrong?

1. Students identify complex topic sentences as theses. Deal with this by using the templates in the chapter: A topic fits into the blank sentence "This essay is about _____" while a thesis fits into the sentence "In this essay I say,'_____.'"

2. Students insist that a thesis has to be stated in the essay, has to be present as a sentence in the essay, or has to be declared in a particular place in the essay, usually at the beginning. The best way to unconvince them is to show them great essays that don't do it.

3. Students ignore the instruction to have *should* and *because* in the thesis. The best way to catch such technical problems is to have students write their theses on the blackboard and to critique each one with the class.

4. Once the thesis is well formed, students want to quit. You must remind them, as always, that doing teaches them nothing, and making a thesis statement is useless unless you critically examine it and learn from it. Go on to the important questions: Is the thesis interesting? Did it take risks? Will it matter to an audience? And students have to be reminded that things like thesis statement are tools—you use them, not vice versa. So, e.g., if you make a thesis statement like "I love doing laundry," and it has no "should" in it, and you're sure you're okay with that . . . well, fine.

Audience and Purpose

Audience and purpose are at the heart of the book; if you can teach the importance of them successfully, everything else follows. They first appear in Chapter 2, and you may want to refer back to it or use Chapter 2's Writers' Workshop activity here.

Making students realize how much audience and purpose matter proves to be difficult. Students grant that essays have audiences and purposes; what they have trouble seeing is that audience and purpose *tell you how to write*, answer your Writer's Questions, settle all questions about "Should I do *X* or not?" You must do more than ask them to articulate audiences and purposes; you must refer to audience and purpose for answers when peer editing asks whether something in a draft is a good idea or should be changed.

One can never emphasize these concepts enough. I'd guess that on at least half of the manuscripts my students peer-edit in class, somewhere in the talk I say, "I'm not sure who you're talking to and what exactly you want from them."

What goes wrong?

1. Students may argue, "This is a class, so my audience is the teacher, and my purpose is to get an A." Refer any such statements to Chapter 18, where the issue is discussed.

2. By far, the biggest problem with purpose is that students want to make purpose statements that merely paraphrase or quote the thesis (or less commonly, the topic):

   Thesis: Americans should smoke less.
   Purpose: To convince readers that Americans should smoke less.

   Topic: How to change a flat tire.
   Purpose: To tell readers how to change a flat tire.

   Keep stressing that this isn't exactly wrong; it's just useless—it doesn't add to our understanding of the draft. The remedy is simple but difficult for students: Keep asking, "Why?"—Why do you want to tell readers that or convince readers of that? What do you hope to accomplish or gain by doing that?—until you go beyond thesis restatement. And I keep reciting, "Thesis is what you say; purpose is why you say it."

There are three common problems with audience:

1. The self-evident audience: "I'm writing to people interested in my topic," or "I'm writing to anyone involved in this issue."

2. The label audience: "My audience is housewives," or "I'm writing to college professors." Tell your students to go beyond *labeling* and to *describe*: What do we know about housewives or college professors? How do they think? How much money do they have? What do they worry about?

3. The "So what?" response: Students are willing to describe their audience but reluctant to see how a sense of audience directs the writing. The Exercises help with this.

The one aspect of audience that everyone gets the important of is level of expertise/knowledge. Students see that anything one writes assumes that the reader knows some things and not others. You can show students how everything in an essay is based on an assumed level of knowledge, talk about how writing becomes impossible without that assumption, and build from this insight.

Tone

Tone can be a problem to students only because many have learned that school writing isn't supposed to have one—school essays are supposed to read like logic exercises. Destroy that myth through modeling: Show student essays dripping with tone—satires, parodies, essays full of rage or joy. Give assignments that demand tone. Remember that of all tones, the one they know best is an angry tone. You can't give tone to writers just by telling them it's okay; you have to show them tonally strong writing and make it clear that you love it. Again and again I've had students hear a tonally gutsy essay read out in class and tell me afterwards, "I had no idea it was okay to write like that!"

The Writers' Workshop

Although thesis, audience, purpose, and tone are constant problems for college writers, it's very difficult to find sample essays in which the problems are clear and there are solutions. Both of the samples here may cause you problems.

With the first ("No Title Worthy" and its revision), many readers like the "messy" first version better than the "tidy" second—especially because the second is sarcastic. I simply ask students to talk about where their responses are coming from, to make the point that the first version's messiness creates a certain kind of verisimilitude and sympathy the second loses, and that a writer may want those things.

With the second ("Untouchables"), you may meet two problems. First, the essay is so profoundly undirected and unaware of itself that students may be at a loss to help it. Second, they may be so offended that they don't want to help it. I think the second response needs to be addressed. This author is neither hateful nor unkind—he's in a lot of pain and struggling to find a solution. There are some very humane and touching essays lying dormant in the draft, and it would be a charitable experience to help defensive students see that.

Exercises

Exercise 1

> If you're stuck, any topic can be made into a thesis by adding a verb: Bananas > Bananas are good for you.

Exercise 2

Students love to gloss over Part C by saying, "The thesis is in the end of the essay." Pin them down since it's vital they see if the thesis is an actual sentence, spread through a paragraph, or just felt. They also gloss over Part G by saying, "The tone fits the essay perfectly." Ask how and why.

Exercise 4

A. This is conventional bureaucratic pretentiousness, discussed in Chapter 11 as "PP." Its aim is to impress the reader with its academic and intellectual credentials and to make the reader feel powerless. Its audience is parents of schoolchildren, and it's saying that the parents' child is being invited into the accelerated learning program. If it has a thesis, it's something like "We are important educationalists." It's a good passage to rewrite into more colloquial English.

B. This is from an anonymous flier I found posted on a telephone pole. It's easy for students to talk about because it is so obviously working hard to control the reader's judgment of the writer. The writer wants to be liked and thought well of in a special way. Students will be able to talk easily about what he or she wants from the reader, especially what kinds of wrong responses are being avoided. Every detail is there for rhetorical effect and can be discussed.

C. This is from a student essay critiquing a film course and its instructor. Its thesis is that the course appears to be "Mickey Mouse," but that, in fact, students who take it do learn to watch movies with a more sophisticated eye. Its tone is casual "I'm one of you" and gently satirical. The audience is almost as specific as in Exercise B, with the author working to establish rapport with not-too-serious students who, afraid of academic standards, want their education to be nonthreatening and entertaining. There's an implied thesis behind the primary one: "You don't have to be afraid of this course (or of me)." He or she also wants to entertain, since course reviews aren't inherently exciting, so the author injects a lot of personality, drama, and wit.

Exercise 5

A. No *should* or *because.*
B. No *should* or *because.*
C. More than one sentence. No *should.*
D. Implied *because*—state it directly.
E. Not declarative sentence. Both *should* and *because* implied but undeclared.
F. Not a declarative sentence.
G. Topic (noun phrase).
H. No *should* or *because.*
I. Topic.
J. No *should* or *because.*

Possible rewrites:

A.   We should stop arresting people for pot selling because you can't legislate morality.

B.   (I have no idea how to turn this into something purposeful. JR)

C.   We should ban boxing because it's brutal.

D.   You should give me a *B* because my parents will kill me if you don't.

E.   You should loan me your car because I loaned you $10 last week.

F.   You should get in shape because it will improve your life.

G.   We should never repeat the events that caused World War II because it was unnecessary.

H.   You should try Ben and Jerry's new flavor because I love it.

I.   Everyone should exercise regularly because X, Y, and Z.

J.   I shouldn't be blamed for hitting him because he started it.

The process of critiquing and revising the theses should produce an interesting discussion about how well these essays are going to fly. Keep stressing that the point of doing all this work is to have that conversation.

Exercise 6

In many cases, it will be hard to distinguish between purpose and thesis here. If that's the case, let it be so, acknowledge it, and discuss it. Keep asking, "Why?" to see if any good answers come. For instance, I say, "You should loan me your car" not only for the purpose of getting the car, but also so I can drive to San Francisco this Friday so I can interview for a job, get hired, earn a lot of money, buy a yacht, etc.

Chapter 5   From First Thoughts to Drafts

Like Chapter 3, Chapter 5 gives you enough prewriting and brainstorming strategies to keep your students busy for the entire semester, and like Chapter 3, it may be something many students need in massive doses and others don't need at all.

Writer's Block

This section on writer's block is one of the most highly prized sections of the book, by corporate executives as well as by freshmen. Blocked writers find that it really does some good. Of course, discussing writer's block with unblocked writers is as unwise as discussing car sickness en route with children who were feeling fine until you brought it up, so you might want to ask who has the problem and direct only them to those pages. The strategies for overcoming writer's block—purposely doing what frightens you, lowering your standards, sidestepping the thing that blocks you, quitting when you're hot—are all easy and fun to practice in in-class writing or to talk about You can begin with Exercise 3; collate the results in a class discussion; then do in-class free writes in which students put the strategies into practice. For instance, if students say they fear messing up and blotting the clean page, have them do a free write in which, whenever you ring a bell, they scribble all over the page, then go back to writing. If they're afraid of sounding dumb and having nothing to say, assign a free write where the object is to write the dumbest, most clichéd, vacuous essay ever written. You're working with fear here and, as with all fears, offering solutions is less

important than doing two other things: (1) providing an opportunity to talk about it and get acceptance and affirmation from other sufferers, and (2) providing lots of playful, joyful, silly activities where the requirement is to have fun and the risk level is zero—the writer's equivalent of romping and cavorting.

If you're conferring with a blocked individual, be sure to ask two questions: First, when does the fear set in? Most people can prewrite without fear up to a moment when the writing "gets serious." Once you identify that moment, you can help the writer plot strategies that avoid it. If fear sets in when one starts the first draft, point out that one never needs to do a first draft—one can prewrite until it's time to revise, and in fact revision can simply be more prewriting. Second, is the student blocked in his or her speech, too? If not, attack the writer's block via talking, and get him or her to talk out the drafts. If he or she is blocked in speech, the blockage is an ego problem having to do with being before the public; then you'll have to work on easier tasks like talking to the teacher before attempting to write.

Mapping

Students often thrive on mapping, so I suggest you put it at the center of your brainstorming activities even if you don't thrive on it yourself. Mapping models most of the basic lessons of prewriting—it's fast, unconscious, without right answers, messy, and most important, it's not cursive prose; it's drawing pictures. It gets students out of their paragraph mindset. As always, you want the map topics to come from students, not you. It can be hard to find topics so generally known that all can join in, but there are some: places to eat in town, courses to take and to avoid, rules of dating.

You can model good mapping techniques by making it a regular part of your class discussion practices: As the conversation unfolds or after ten minutes of talk, casually map the results on the board for them, with no more fuss than one takes notes.

Journals

I don't have good luck requiring journals, for two reasons. First, journal-keeping seems to be a rare skill. Those who have it don't need you to teach it to them, and those who don't, if forced to journal, only convince themselves that writing is pointless and boring. Second, even good journals rarely produce good essays because journaling is for the writer, and essays are for the reader. That difference turns out to be an almost unbridgeable gap. Interestingly, the splendid journal writer whose journal I sample in this chapter could write for no one but herself.

If you want to expose students to journals but don't want to require they keep one, ask the two or three journal-keepers in your class to bring their work in, share it, and be stars for the day. If you do require it, start your students on it from Day 1, read it rarely, and never critique, correct, or grade it. An exciting alternative to solo journals are team journals, where a group of classmates all contribute to the same journal, reading and reacting to each other's entries. This is logistically trying on everyone because the journal must be kept in some central, physical location so everyone can get at it, but the results can be worth it.

PART III   REVISING AND EDITING

(Chapter 6–13)

Part III covers the revising stages through proofreading and publishing. Part III is large because that's where the real work lies. Whereas most beginning writers think the hard part to writing is

saying it, in fact the hard part is rethinking and resaying it once it's said. For every fifty students who can write a good first draft, I've got two or three who can rethink the first draft into something fundamentally different and significantly better. I often tell students it takes three acts to be a writer: finding something to say, saying it, and resaying it better. The first two are really pretty easy and can be learned and taught, but the third is truly difficult and takes a lifetime of practice. And the third is the only one that matters because no one can first-draft so well that he or she doesn't need to rewrite it, yet if one can learn to rewrite, it doesn't matter how badly one prewrites and drafts.

Rewriting in General

Rewriting and structuring are the hardest things for student writers to do. For most novices, rewriting means cleaning things up, tidying, polishing, and repairing. It will be your biggest challenge to get them to see rewriting as something bigger: as redefining, reconceiving, expanding, growing, enlarging. I often tell my students that they'll know they're really rewriting when in their second drafts they discard a third of the material from their first draft yet end up with one twice as long.

Real revision can't be taught by lecture or discussion; it has to be modeled in the classroom. You have to take short, narrow first drafts and turn them into complex, wide-ranging, long revisions in front of the students. Two basic tools exist. The first is free-floating conversation: Let the group use a first draft as a launching pad for a conversation about related issues, watch the talk roam over a dozen topics, then point out that the rewrite can address all of them. To make this work, you often must instruct students to not be English teachers—tell them you don't want to hear what's good and bad about the draft or the writing; you want to hear what thoughts about the *issues* the draft has sparked in them. The second tool is other students' written reactions: Let a student read out a draft, have every person in the room write whatever he or she is prompted to write in response, then give the responses (in any form) to the original author, with the idea that every response is a guide to a more wide-ranging rewrite. Again, you may have to direct students away from critiquing the writing.

The common thread in these two tools is *outside input*. Real revision begins when you give the draft to a reader and ask what he or she thinks.

Chapter 6   Organization, Part I: Mapping and Outlining

Organization is only one thing, but I've divided it into two chapters, 6 and 7, because it seems like too much to read at one sitting. Organization is the hardest part of writing and deserves the most in-class time, especially if your students are loose freewriters who won't get writer's block by scrutinizing structure.

Students can't learn to organize simply by observing the organization in other people's essays; you have to take their own essays apart and put them back together in class. Luckily, structure is easy to work with in the classroom: mapping, outlining, and abstracting all translate into tidy blackboard activities.

The three main structuring tools—mapping, outlining, and abstracting—are presented in the book in order of sophistication, mapping being the easiest and abstracting the hardest, and students may not need to practice all of them. If students can abstract well, in essence they're mapping and outlining in their heads and don't need to practice those skills.

I suggest you do all your early structural work with writing samples that aren't personal essays. Obviously, all good writing has structure, but some structures are more accessible than others, and personal writing often thrives on the appearance of first-draft free-associative disorder. Imposing rigid structures on such writing often makes it look worse, convincing students that

structure is a spirit-killing evil. This is especially true with abstracting, which can take a great personal essay and make it look like garbage.

Mapping

Mapping appears in Chapter 3, and if you worked with it there, you may only need to refresh students' memories. A student needs mapping if he or she (a) literally can't bring bits together—paragraphs are a hodgepodge—or (b) has rewriter's block and can't consider alternative structures once the first draft has got him or her committed to one sequence. But you should map a lot in the classroom, whether students "need" it or not, because it's great fun, loosens everyone up, and lets your students watch you be messy with the chalk. Don't strive to make the mapping "go well"—the bigger the mess you make, the happier the students will be.

What goes wrong?

The only mistake mappers can make is to be too controlled. Typical forms of this are maps of only nouns, maps in one dimension, tidy mapping, and slow mapping. Model the reverse of these when you map on the board.

Outlining

Outlining is one of those areas where you do more unteaching than teaching. Many students already outline too carefully, and your goal should be to teach them to loosen up and be less obedient to the outline. If you doubt this, just ask your class how they feel about outlining and how many of them feel it helps their writing. They'll tell you they write the essay first, then dry-lab the outline to fool the teacher, and they hate doing it.

     Outlining is a curious mix of rules and freedom. You want to outline quickly and loosely, but you must insist that you're outlining full sentences, for instance. Thus *The Writer's Way* forbids Roman numerals but includes a strict diagnostic set of rules to be followed. If this bothers students, admit it and discuss it.

     Students often like to point out that the outline of the "Tony" essay breaks a lot of the chapter's rules—e.g., it uses Roman numerals. Smile and congratulate them for noticing.

     The new and difficult part of my approach to outlining is the function outline. Students find this very challenging, but all the problems it poses are old ones because they're exactly the problems that purpose statements caused in Chapter 4, so refer to that work to assure students they've already confronted this stuff. You can ignore the entire function thing, but I think that's where the growth potential lies.

What goes wrong?

1. Students will continue to outline topics instead of sentences. Use the thesis-sentence frame: "In this paragraph I say, '_____.'"

2. Students will insist on using more than five parts, using Roman numerals, or indenting subsections. Insist they don't.

The stubborn problems come on the function side of the outline.

3. Students will form function statements that restate content ("to tell the reader about my weekend, "to explain why we should legalize pot"). Point out to students that any function statement that ends with a quotation or paraphrase of the content side of the outline tells us nothing new and is therefore useless.

4. Students will use generic labels that tell us little or nothing about the real function: conclusion, introduction, explanation, narrative, capture reader's interest. Keep asking, "Why?" and "How?" to go beyond these.

5. Most troubling, students will form function statements that simply misidentify the function—they'll write a paragraph, for instance, that assuages readers' fears and say in the function statement they're "supporting the thesis." There's no easy way to fix this; all you can do is put examples on the board and discuss the issue. I tell my students the aim isn't to make a legal function statement but to make the best, most insightful function statement.

6. With outlining, and with abstracting later, students often conclude that the tool is useless because they can *see* the essay's structure without it. I congratulate them, agree with them, and assure them that these tools are often needless in one- to three-page essays but become essential when you're writing the twenty-page term paper in someone else's class.

Exercises

Exercise 1

The map doesn't circle the items; it uses a narrow range of items; it's linear.

Exercise 2

Outline A has too many parts, uses indentations and Roman numerals, outlines nouns, and has no function side. Outline B describes instead of summarizes in #1 and #3, function #2 restates content, and functions #1 and #3 are generic labels.

You could revise Outline A by translating the nouns into sentences and reducing the items to five or fewer:

1. There are two causes of racism in the U.S. – Whites hate Blacks and Blacks hate Whites, etc.

A revision of Outline B might look like this:

Function	*Content*
1. Provide evidence.	1. My brother tried to drown me.
2. Draw conclusion.	2. He's a real jerk.
3. State thesis.	3. But I still love him.

Transition

I teach transition as another way of talking about the reader's dialogue we encountered in Chapter 2, which is an excellent reason for working with Chapter 2's Writer's Workshop.

Chapter 7   Organization, Part II: Abstracting

The Writer's Way is clear about my love of abstracting and its power. But abstracting isn't easy—it takes more on-task time than anything else in *The Writer's Way*. Ultimately, I want abstracting to be something my students just do when they write, like titling, so I tell my students, once we've worked with abstracting, to attach an abstract to every large essay they write for the rest of the term as a matter of course.

I suggest you start your students abstracting short, very good essays like the ones in Chapter 14 to 17 so that the abstracting goes smoothly and the abstracts reveal only virtues. Only then move to abstracting problematic drafts, using the abstracting to diagnose problems, and ultimately to abstracting their own drafts as a guide to revision.

What goes wrong?

1. Despite the chapter's instructions, students get the abstracting methodology wrong so often that I spend the first abstracting assignment cruising the classroom looking over shoulders and correcting problems. Watch for
   A. Abstracts that are columns of sentences or a series of very short paragraphs—abstracts must be one or at most two paragraphs.
   B. Abstracts that are too short or too long—first abstracts should be one sentence for every normal-size paragraph in the original.
   C. Abstracts that are descriptive ("In this essay, the author says that we should . . . ") instead of informative ("We should . . . ").
   D. Abstracts that copy sentences out of the original instead of composing summaries of paragraphs.

2. Students are often confused about "how many sentences" an abstract should be. Remind them the chapter explains how, as connectors are added, the sentences combine until ideally you have one long, clear, unawkward sentence.

3. By far the hardest part of abstracting is not making the abstract but looking at the product and learning about the draft. This is where the art is, and I know of no way to make it easy. All you can do is look at a lot of abstracts together and practice drawing conclusions about drafts for them. Keep forcing students to absolutely specific, concrete revision strategies: Ask them to list three things they would do to the draft after examining the abstract, for instance.

4. Since abstracting is first and foremost a diagnoser of transition or logical flow between paragraphs, students often confuse themselves by taking a perfectly transitional draft, writing a series of choppy abstract sentences from it, and concluding that the draft has problems. To distinguish between the *draft* with transition problems and the *abstract* with transition problems, try to load the abstract. Demanding a connector between every pair of sentences, and discussing when connectors work and when they don't, should help.

The concept of the false connector can be hard for students. Again, I know of no magic pill to make it easy—just keep critiquing student abstracts and discussing false connectors when they appear.

Paragraphing

Most students paragraph effortlessly, in which case leave them alone. With the few who don't, I find all I need to do is to order them to. With the rare exception who really can't, I have them read the material in the book and work with them individually.

Exercises

Exercise 1

The abstract breaks the following rules: abstract in one paragraph only, abstract complete sentences, summarize instead of describing, have connectors between all sentences, avoid false connectors ("so"), highlight connectors.

Exercise 2

A. This abstract is a good example of how abstracting diagnoses things beyond structure—style and tone, for example. The abstract has no apparent audience, is trying to do too many things, and is in dead, pretentious language. Once you decide exactly who you're writing to and what you want to do to them, and say it in human language, the essay should be strong because it has important things to say.

B. This abstract is largely OK, and it's a good example of an abstract taking an OK essay and showing a few concrete things it needs to be much better. It has strong, clear language, a pretty clear sense of audience, and a strong thesis. It begins by stating a thesis, then gives an example, which makes sense, but it might be more energetic to reverse the order and begin with the anecdote. At "An important factor," the abstract splits and takes up a second thesis that seems to begin a new essay. Does the essay want to argue that prevention is the key, or that keeping your head in the moment of crisis is the key, or both? The author has to make up his mind, then be clear about it from the essay's opener. There's also some doubt as to whether his last example, of getting lost while hunting, supports his second thesis.

C. These sentences are in no logical order, so connectors are almost impossible to add. It's a classic exercise in resequencing. Have students try starting in one place, then another, until something works.

Possible rewrites might go like this:

A. If you want your students to remember something, sing it to them—because what you learn in conjunction with music sticks with you. Learning through music also has the benefits of promoting students' creativity and revealing the beauty of knowledge. But there's a danger: Music is close to the ego; and if you rate, grade, or critique students' musical performance in any way, you can produce enormous stress, self-doubt, and fear.

B. I read one of those survival articles in which a deer hunter who got snowed in couldn't start a fire, couldn't retrace his steps, etc. All well and good as far as it goes. Articles on surviving in the back country tell you how to live off the land, but they ignore something even more important: prevention. This guy should never have gotten himself into this situation in the first place. With a little forethought, it would never have happened. (Examples of preventive thinking follow.)

   C. Last summer I got to know a friend of my sister's named Iris. She admitted she was bulimic, but she couldn't make the problem go away. Lots of young women, and a few young men, share Iris's problem, and advertising is causing the epidemic. Every company spends a fortune teaching us to hate our bodies. I too have been a victim—I've never been fat, but once when I tried to get job, I was told I'd have to lose 15 pounds before I would be "presentable." Advertising has gone too far. We need to reduce it until we become accustomed to imperfection again.

Chapter 8 Beginning, Ending, and Titling

Chapter 8 addresses three subtopics of organization. There are three reasons why you might want to address them separately:

1. Some students have a very hard time with them and feel bad about their ineffective efforts.

2. Beginnings, endings, and titles "teach well": They're fun to play with in class, and they give you lots of quick, hands-on activities with high success rates.

3. Beginnings, endings, and titles are great telltales: They tell a writer if the essay is sound or not. If the essay begins, ends, and titles easily, the essay is probably doing lots of other things right as well.

This last point is especially true of titles. If students ask me why I care about a little thing like a title so much, I respond, "Because I'm afraid that if you're willing to be boring, vague, or pointless right up front, you're willing to be those things in the essay as well."

I've always encouraged you to work with your students' own writing, but this chapter might be a good place to break that rule because beginnings, endings, and titles are wonderful places to practice reading the professionals of the craft. Ask students to bring samples of professional writing of all sorts into class and critique them: How did the authors manage to begin the piece? How did they end it? Which of the three jobs of an ideal title did the title accomplish?

This is also a good time to ask students to get an overview of their writing in the term so far. Ask them to look at all the titles they've written or all their conclusions and then generalize: Which concluding gambits have you used? How often have you been guilty of the summarizing conclusion? Pick two titles that didn't do all three of a title's jobs and rewrite them so they do.

Exercises

Exercise 1

  A. This opener is in typical, popular journalism style. It stresses "Read me" and is highly dramatic. It's intentionally *not* stating topic and purpose, making us wait, but the end of the paragraph provides a clue—the driver was drunk, and we're going to get horror stories about the failure of the law to punish drunk drivers severely.

  B. This opener is in quieter language, but it too dramatizes because it tells the story of Big Money buying an election. The topic is clear, both the specific topic (the recycling initiative) and the larger issue (how special interests sway elections with money), and we can guess what thesis is coming: that this is a perversion of democracy, and something must be done about it.

Exercise 4

Here's what's missing in each title: (a) "read me"; (b) topic; (c) topic, thesis; (d) thesis; (e) nothing (title has all three); (f) specific topic, thesis, "read me."

Chapter 9   Making the Draft Longer or Shorter

This chapter addresses a specific writing problem that hobbles beginning writers: What do you do when you've written a page and you've run dry? Some writers are gushers and don't have the problem, but most do, and for them it is such a consummate stumbling block that it's worth devoting class time to practicing strategies to combat it. The solution to the problem lies in an application of the principles of brainstorming and text production that are throughout the book. (See Chapters 3, 5, and 16.) So, in theory, students should have already figured it out, but life isn't like that.

This may be the most important writing skill you give your students. If you can teach them to produce a lot of text, a host of writing problems will solve themselves. They'll be productive and bright, they'll stop trying to fake and hide, they'll be able to pick the best of their work and save the rest for another day, paragraphs will get longer, structuring tools like outlining will suddenly seen helpful and necessary, and so on.

Your students are much more likely to find their drafts too short than too long, but work in class with shortening anyway because lengthening is the same logic in reverse. Seeing that anything can be made smaller is a step toward seeing that it can also be made bigger. In addition, it's easier, and students get a success experience while you can demonstrate with pictures, like maps, or use other graphic tools.

In-class text-lengthening activities can be formal, like the exercises in the Writers' Workshop section, or informal: Read a draft, kick around the issues it raises, and see where the conversation goes.

Keep reminding students that making a text longer comes down to the writer's core act of revision: Give what you've written so far to a colleague, ask what he or she thinks, and let the new input spark more output from you. You can have a student read an argumentative draft, have classmates write argumentative responses, then discuss incorporating or responding to some of the responses in the revision—but you often must order students to do something beyond rubber-stamp agreement (see Chapter 17).

Working graphically helps to illustrate expansion. I draw pie charts ("If the original draft is the slice, what's the whole pie consist of?"), faces ("If the draft is this simple cartoon face, how could we add facial detail, like mustaches and moles?"), and road maps ("If the draft has gone this far down the road, where can we drive tomorrow?"). The exercise in the chapter locating the draft on a traditional outline also works well.

Conventional peer editing like that modeled in Chapter 10 usually won't help students lengthen their work because almost all student peer editors think in terms of improving what's on the page—restructuring, improving sentence-level style, deleting waste—and not in terms of what the essay might go on to become but isn't yet. Traditional peer editing, focused on repairing and polishing, rarely entertains the question "What's next?" That's why I always distinguish for my students the goal of the conversation: Are we critiquing the writing, or are we sharing thoughts on the issues?

Exercises

Exercise 6

A. Filling in: Tell narratives of actual instances when students were late and were disciplined, or give factual evidence to support the idea that students "paid for" the class.

Larger canvas: What are students' rights in college? What are the powers and responsibilities of instructors? What is the logic of rules, grading, and discipline in a classroom? In what ways are students "customers"?

Next questions: How can we proceed to make sure that students aren't punished when they're late and it isn't their fault? In what other ways should we protect students from unreasonable punitive rules in school?

B. Filling in: Give examples of politicians doing these bad things. Discuss why they do this, and why it works.

Larger canvas: What's wrong with American politics; what's wrong with the campaign process; ways the media, and advertising in particular, teach us to oversimplify our view of the world.

Next questions: What can we do about it? How can we fix it? After we fix it, what should we fix next?

Chapter 10 Peer Feedback

Peer editing is the heart of *The Writer's Way* and its student-centered, reader-centered approach to composition. I hope it will be an ongoing activity in your classroom.

Leading a peer-editing session is a real teacher's art, one you'll have to practice if you're new to it. It's one area of composition instruction where you may be more frightened and unsure of your role than the students are. You're out of control; you go into class not knowing what's going to happen, and you have to make the class session out of what the students do and say. That's exciting, and it's what you want your class to be—in a composition class, the course material should always be *what the students say and write*—but it's scary, too.

Deal with the fear in three steps. First, remind yourself that people don't learn to write by being told how. (Rereading Chapter 1 may help.) Read the discussion leader's jobs in Chapter 10 to remind yourself that you're not there to know the answers, get students to say the right things, or show them what's wrong with the essay; you're there to help them talk to each other. Go into class determined to *get out of the students' way* and let them talk. If they're new to the game, they'll try to outwait you. Consider leaving the room and coming back at the end of the hour to hear what they decided.

Deal especially with the fear that they won't "do it right" and won't spot the real problems in the draft. Remember that your goal isn't to fix the essay; rather, it is to give them practice in thinking like writers. If they can't critique a manuscript and map revision strategies and so coerce you into doing it for them, you're simply preventing them from discovering how. Telling them what to do only teaches them to follow orders. Instead, make a contract with yourself to share the time. They tell each other what's important to them; then you tell them what's important to you. Often I take the last five minutes of a peer-editing session to address my concerns, but I remind students these aren't the "right" issues—they're just *my* issues.

Second, after you've gotten the right spirit, prepare so you can control the session if you like, to assure yourself that you won't face thirty minutes of silence. You can do this in many ways.

1. Prepare two leading questions about the manuscript—like "What's the one thing you liked best about the draft?"—so you can begin class by hearing students' responses.

2. Ask students to work with the draft ahead of time in some way: For instance, have them abstract the draft and make two analytical comments about the abstract before class. Then begin the class session by sharing those comments.

3. Pick a feature of the work—structure, dead verbs, wordiness, concluding technique, the title, the implied audience—and resolve to have students work on that if and when they run out of things to say on their own. The exercises throughout the book offer you hundreds of possibilities. Don't assume you must focus on errors or weaknesses; you can play with alternate audiences or practice titling on drafts that are perfectly sound.

4. Have the author ask the class three questions he or she would like answered about the work and begin the class by sharing answers to the questions.

Generally, I like to go into an editing session knowing I have numerous ways to help the essay and many worthwhile activities for the students to engage in, but assuming I'll never get a chance to use any of them.

In practice, your students will benefit if you offer them a range: Have classes where you're very directive, classes where they are entirely in charge, and classes in between. Some days you may say, "Today I want to use the draft to practice abstracting"; some days you may walk in, say, "In fifty minutes hand me a list of your four best suggestions for improving the draft, and sit mum for the rest of the hour.

Third, once you're clear on the value of peer editing and have strategies for filling the time if students run dry, think about ways to vary the format so peer editing doesn't turn into a ritual:

1. Vary the size of the peer group. Have students work in pairs, in groups of three or four, or as one large group.

2. Vary the formality of the presentation. Have a student present a seed to the class orally, have the student describe the paper he or she's planning, have the draft read out loud, or have the student present duplicated copies of a polished draft to be read and critiqued overnight.

3. Vary the duration. Ask students to critique a draft from five minutes to two hours. My formal critiquing sessions are typically one class session long per essay (fifty or seventy-five minutes), but you can peer edit a manuscript in two minutes. I've had sessions where we sat in a circle, had each class member describe his or her planned essay in a minute, had classmates suggest two or three possible rebuttals or trouble spots, then moved on to the next essay.

4. Vary the form of the readers' responses. Students can chat in a group; you can give groups formal assignments to report their findings to the class or have students write critiques to the author.

5. Vary the point in the writing process where the feedback occurs. You can peer-edit first thoughts, first drafts, or highly polished late drafts, or line-edit a manuscript just before press. Never critique a finished work.

What goes wrong?

1. Most students are practiced peer editors these days, but occasionally you encounter writers, classmates, or entire classes who still think of editing as personal attack, ego destruction, and so on. I still hear talk about "chopping up the essay" or "creaming the poor author." The chapter discusses ways out of that mindset.

(A)   Begin with the author's own questions so the conversation begins by *offering assistance,* and the writer acknowledges his or her participation—he or she isn't an unwilling victim.

(B)   Have students use "I" statements to remind themselves that they aren't "right" or pointing out "errors."

(C)   Push comments away from "That's wrong" or "I didn't like *X*" toward specific suggestions for revision—"I'd do *X* in the rewrite"—to remind everyone that we're in the business of offering aid and making the product better; thus, the author profits from the experience by handing in a better essay.

(D)   Peer-edit early in the writing process so the writer is still psychologically open to changes, and he or she profits directly from the experience.

(E)   Make sure the conversation ends by enumerating specific suggestions for revision so the writer leaves with concrete help in hand and isn't left with an impression of vague dislikes.

(F)   Focus on virtues as well as weaknesses. Remind yourself and students that we also learn from noting when things go well and what makes them go well.

2.   A beginning peer-editing group will break almost every rule in the chapter. The easiest way to confront this is to let them peer-edit without your interference, then do the exercises at the end of the Writer's Workshop section. Be sure to have the class discuss their resolutions. This exercise is a godsend, and I strongly recommend it.

3.   The most common problem with peer editing is also the most common problem with outlining, abstracting, or any other revision tool: Students are happy to do it but reluctant to learn from it. You must force the group to commit itself to concrete revision strategies when the conversation ends—otherwise, it will be ten to fifty minutes of random observation making to no one's benefit.

Chapter 11   Rewriting for Style

This chapter is about what most students think of when they think of rewriting: work-level polishing, making things "sound good" or "flow smoothly." Because most students give it too much attention, and give short shrift to bigger fish like audience, structure, and critical thinking, you might consider de-emphasizing it unless individual students need it. Stylistic matters teach very well, and the methodology is a snap. Simply take sample passages from your students' or others' writing, project them up on a screen, and start diagnosing and rewriting: Circle the verbs and decide how active and emotive they are, do a Latinate percentile breakdown of a paragraph, combine sentences, and so on.

It's a grand game, a sort of word play that is central to every writer's love of language as a medium, and it gets students' hands dirty with language like nothing else.

Should you work on writing by your students or from outside the course? Both are useful in different ways. If you're trying to solve actual stylistic problems, work with the writers' own work. But if you're just trying to have fun with language and raise language consciousness, outside work is probably better since the ego isn't threatened. Nothing is more empowering than to spend a day exposing and ridiculing the Latinate percentiles of our culture's authority figures. It's like exposing the manipulative logic of advertising.

What goes wrong?

With stylistic editing, the temptation to become entirely error-and-ugliness focused is strong. Any time you do that, even with strangers' writing, you run the risk of strengthening your students' beliefs that good writing results from avoiding blunders and that teachers read to find fault. To avoid this, use the chapter's point of view: Style is a matter of choices, choices empower, there are no right or wrong choices, and the question is, what's the effect of your choice? To do this, you may have to shake your own belief that there is a "good style" to be preached. Studying other writers' stylistic excesses often doesn't alert a student to his own. If a student has a serious stylistic problem, one-on-one tutoring is by far the best remedy, if you have the time. You can't just identify the problem for him or her; you'll have to rewrite together so that he or she sees the revision process. The risk of ego damage is tremendous, so you'll have to be supportive, friendly, sensitive, and collegial.

Wordiness

Because I wanted to talk only about stylistic *choices* and not about *vices,* I haven't discussed wordiness, a favorite topic of instructors. There is one great advantage to teaching wordiness: Cutting flab from the lard-loaded passages of strangers is a delightful classroom game. You will have to decide if the fun is worth the inherent negativity of the activity.

Sentence Combining

What goes wrong?

Students often have to be reminded that the point is to combine sentences in legal ways. Often students will force sentences together into ugly, un-English run-ons and say proudly, "I did it!" It helps to begin with pairing up: Add each pair of sentences together, then add the resultant sentences together and continue as long as you can.

Some students think there is one right way to combine sentences, so show the class the successful combinations of several different students to illustrate the possibilities.

Latinate Diction

Latinate diction is a hot-button issue in our culture, so you may find that you or your students have very strong feelings about it. Some consider it a curse. For some students, it's exactly what they've come to college to get. You can treat it as a choice, as I have; you can teach it as an evil to avoid; or you can discuss all this with your students.

Latinity is God's gift to the writing teacher because it's the one stylistic feature that is concretizable and reducible to numbers and norms. Students can "prove" that a word is Latinate and "prove" that the passage is exceptionally high or low. This will appeal to any student uneasy with the subjective.

There are a thousand ways to play with Latinity in class—Exercises 4, 5, and 6 are just a start. Here are other ideas:

1. Have students do Exercise 4 using a passage of their own work.

2. Have them search for the highest and lowest 100-word passage in their own work.

3. Have a contest to see who can find the highest and lowest 100-word passage in the outside world.

4. Rewrite any of the passages you're working with to the other extreme: If it's high, rewrite it low; if it's low, rewrite it high.

5. Rewrite a normal-to-high passage to zero Latinity and discuss the stylistic effect of having no Latinate words at all.

6. Have students read out passages and have the rest of the class guess the Latinate level by feel; then compare the feel to the actual percentile and discuss any discrepancies—Why does a passage feel higher than it is?

7. Study a single author or public figure (TV commentator, politician) in terms of his or her Latinate percentile, relating the persona to the percentile: Rush Limbaugh, Ernest Hemingway, Jesse Jackson.

8. Study representative styles from various genres—Western novels, textbooks—to find out which groups in our culture use high Latinate levels and which groups use low ones.

It's a nice idea to get some practice spotting and dissecting Latinate words before trying to run percentiles on passages. Here are six warm-up games:

1. Hand out a list of Latinate words and ask students to list native synonyms:

    consume, eat

    consider, think about

    facilitate, make go easier

2. Do Exercise 1 in reverse order:

    kill, execute, eliminate, destroy, terminate

    end, termination, consummation

    funny, ludicrous, absurd, comical

3. Give lists of Latinate words and ask students how they know they're Latinate; for example, *simple* is Latinate because its noun form, *simplicity*, has an *–ity* suffix.

4. Play Roots and Affixes, where you take a Latinate root and try to think of all the English words that use it:
    duc- ("to lead"): deduce, deduction, induce, induction, inducement, reduce, reduction, reductive, conduct, conduction, conductivity, conducive, conduit, duct, educate, education, educator, educative, abduct, abduction, introduce, introduction, product, produce, production, productivity, seduce, seduction, seductive, traduce, traduction, duke, ducal, archduke, duchy.

5. Play Word Chain: Take a Latinate word and think of another word that uses one of its morphemes—either its root or one of its affixes—then think of another word that uses one of the morphemes in the second word, and so on forever:

    deduction

    ⌐

    product

    ⌐

    proclaim

<pre>
      ¬
disclaimer
      ¬
dislocate
        ¬
allocation
      ¬
allegation
        ¬
  legitimate
</pre>

6. Discuss the results of any of these exercises. In Exercise 1 you often find that a single Latinate word is replaced by a phrase, so non-PP prose often takes more words; in Exercise 2 a single native word will often have five or six Latinate synonyms. Why?

Latinate Percentiles

What goes wrong?

Computing Latinate percentiles is much trickier than it at first appears, and your students will be frustrated by a host of problems at first:

1. Students have a hard time with the concepts of *roots* and *affixes*. I keep assuring them that they do in fact have a sense that most English words are built out of a core with stuff added on the front and rear, and keep offering them clear examples like *re + open + ed*. By far the biggest problem for students is understanding why the *a-* of *all* or the *di-* in *did* doesn't make *all* and *did* Latinate.

2. Students want to insist that for something to be a root, it must be an English word. Common words like *ex + cuse* prove this untrue.

3. Students with any language sensitivity get confused by French borrowings like *distinguish* or *café*. Such words feel Latinate but aren't, and thus don't fit the rules. I tell my students they can either not count them because they don't fit the rules, or count them because they feel so foreign. You can explain the historical reasons behind not counting French words if you want to.

4. Students occasionally get frustrated over actual Latin words like *campus*. Such words often don't fit the rules, but should, students feel. I discuss it and share their frustration.

5. Students have a very hard time seeing that very common, short Latinate words like *cause* or *real* are Latinate. Keep stressing the rule that any root that *can take* Latinate suffixes is Latinate, and *cause* can take *-al* or *-ation,* and *real* can take *-ity*.

6. Students always miss the rule that nouns ending in *-y* are Latinate, so you must remind them . Then you have to stop them from generalizing and calling *all* words ending in *-y* Latinate.

7. Students ask what to do with proper nouns. You can treat each word in the proper noun by the rules and categorize it, or you can skip the proper nouns and count around them, which is what I do.

8. Students need to be reminded of Rule #5: *re-* and *ex-* have become so English that they go on any English verb or noun.

9. Students often count wrong. They'll count each *different* word that occurs in a passage once, instead of counting each physical word in the passage. Or they'll count each different Latinate word once. Thus, if *basis* occurs ten times in the passage, they'll compute a Latinate percentile of 1 percent, not 10 percent.

10. Students often generalize the affix rule to mean that any word that has *any* affix is Latinate. Students have to be specifically instructed not to count *-ly,* for some reason.

11. Students become frustrated and angry when the rules don't give an unambiguous answer. This is a very common situation, and you have to admit it, not get defensive, and discuss why this happens (i.e., the history of any language is a messy business). Show the students that for you the messy words are fun, not threatening, and remind them that we don't care about exact numbers—it doesn't matter were we say a passage is 24 percent or 25 percent. We're only ballparking the style.

Don't try to cure any of these eleven before the fact—send students off to do a Latinate breakdown, share the product, and diagnose and solve problems that arise. Once the methodology is in place, three approach problems will emerge:

1. Students will insist that a totally Latinate style is 100 percent Latinate, whereas it's actually about 555 percent Latinate, since roughly half of any English passage is words like *of, and,* and *the,* which are Germanic and have no Latinate alternatives.

2. Someone will always want to argue that very high Latinity is good because it wins arguments and gets people good grades. Don't disagree—discuss the ethics and let the issue be the complex thing it is.

3. Students will approach revising as word substitution—they will locate a Latinate word and try to replace it with a Germanic word. This doesn't work at all—refer to the "Bird in the hand" example in the chapter to make the point that revising requires a complete resaying, including new syntax.

Concretion

What goes wrong?

Concretion turns out to be trickier than expected by teachers, who just get it. The problems seem to be four:

1. While some words are indisputably concrete and some indisputably abstract, much of English vocabulary exists in a slippery no man's land where words are sort of concrete and sort of abstract—words like *family, go, three, red, tall, wander, rush, business, university, Microsoft, villain, weed, housewife, TV show* . . . Because of this, if you ask students to classify the words in a passage for abstraction and concretion, they tend to come back frustrated. I don't try to make the slipperiness go away; I own it, admit we can't make it disappear, and reinforce the idea that, despite the slipperiness, the concept of concretion and abstraction has great power for us as writers.

2. Students want to approach revision via word substitution—find an abstract word and replace it with a concrete one. All the examples in the chapter model the fact that revision has to be a complete rethinking.

3. Students often seek concretion by *adding* concretions to the abstractions—thus they are attracted to similes. You must lead them through the process of concretizing via metaphors or examples, then *deleting* the concretion.

4. Students mistake metaphors for abstractions. They'll argue that "blow your stack" is an abstraction because it expresses an emotional state, not a recordable fact. Dwell on this because it's the point of the entire chapter section: The metaphor is a concretion used to represent an abstract idea. Precisely its power is that it lets us say abstract things in concrete ways To make this point, you have to distinguish between the *content,* which here is abstract, and the *words,* which are concrete.

Exercises

Exercise 1

A. *Short version:* I went to high school. I got mostly *A*s and a few *B*s. I've managed, for the most part, to do the same in college. Most people hear that. They think, "That means she's really smart." I'm sure of it. Well, I'm not stupid. But I don't know near as much as people think I know. I just learned how to pass tests. I got an *A* in history. I couldn't tell you where the first battle of the Civil War was fought. I got an *A* in geometry. I couldn't in a million years tell you the area of a circle. I learned many things. They have vanished from my memory. Flaws in the teaching system did it.

   Long version: When I tell people that in high school I got mostly *A*s and a few *B*s and that I've managed for the most part to do the same in college, I'm sure they think, "That means she's really smart," but even though I'm not stupid, I don't know near as much as people think I know—I just learned how to pass tests. Even though I got an *A* in history, I couldn't tell you where the first battle of the Civil War was fought, and, even though I got an *A* in geometry, I couldn't in a million years tell you the area of a circle—thanks to some flaws in the teaching system, all this has vanished from my memory.

B. *Short version:* Ryan changed every concept that I held about myself as a mother. He changed every concept that I held about myself as a person. He changed my views about parenthood. He changed my views about children. He changed my views about personality. He showed me that children are not simply empty slates awaiting impression. He showed me they are active participants in their environment. They make their own imprints on the world. They evoke response from their caregivers. I have had to redefine my goals as a parent. I've had to recognize that infants are born with distinct personalities intact. My job is to guide what is there by nature. It's not to create the perfect person with my superior nurturing skills. I have less power than I thought. I believed lots of simple absolutes about who I am. I'm not a spanker, for instance. Now all those ideas seem open to debate. They seem dependent on context.

   Long version: Ryan changed every concept that I held about myself as a mother and a person—all my views about parenthood, children, and personality. He showed me that children are not simply empty slates awaiting impression; they are active participants in their environment, making their own imprints on the world, evoking responses from their caregivers, and therefore I have had to redefine my goals as a parent and recognize that infants are born with distinct personalities intact. I have less power than I thought, so my job is to guide what is there by nature, not to create the perfect person with my superior nurturing skills, and all those simple absolutes about who I am—I'm not a spanker, for instance—now seem open to debate and dependent on context.

Exercise 4

For each passage, here are (a) the Latinate words (with proofs in parenthesis after each), (b) the Latinate percentile, and (c) a rewrite in a much lower percentile. Some of the "Latinate" words are in fact romance (of French origin):

Aa.   Latinate words: academic (-ic), excellence (ex-, -ence), achieved (-ment), distinguished (dis-, distincTION), faculty (-y as nominalizer), primary (primAL), responsibility (-ity, re-), superior (-ity), instruction (in-, -ion), campus (ENcampMENT), unique ("-ique" is a French

form of "ic"), geographic (-ic), curricular (-ar), character (-istic), campuses, multipurpose (root "pose" give REpose, PROposAL), institutions (-ion, in-), offer (root "fer" gives PREfer, INferENCE), undergraduate (-ate, graduaTION), graduate, instruction, professional (pro-, -ion, -al), occupational (-tion, -al), liberal (-al), education (-ate, -ion)

Ab. 25/47 = 53 percent Latinate

Ac. We do a good job of teaching because our teachers are hot shots and their number-one job is to teach well. Each school has its own CHARACTER because of where it is and what COURSES it has, but all the schools, since they all do more than one thing, have CLASSES for UNDERGRADUATES and GRADUATES, CLASSES that teach PROFESSIONAL and TECHNICAL jobs as well as those that just teach the old school TOPICS like writing and HISTORY. (The capitalized words are Latinate or romance.)

Ba. Latinate words: center (eccentrIC), major (majorITY), construction (con-, -ion), effective (-ive), theories (theoreTICAL), result (re-, resultANT), significant (significATION), conceptual (-al, con-), practical (-al), impact (im- impacTION), composition (com-, -tion), pedagogy (-y, pedagogICAL), stimulation (-tion), research (re-)

Bb. 14/29 = around 48 percent Latinate

Bc. The big thing this shop is trying to do is make workable THEORIES that will be big deals and really CHANGE the way we teach PEOPLE how to write and make PEOPLE want to go out and STUDY this stuff some more. (The capitalized words are Latinate or romance.)

Exercise 5

This exercise can be approached in two ways. The first is simple Latinate word substitution: "Don't cry over spilt milk" becomes "Avoid lachrymosity of accidental lactic spillage." But the old saw is a metaphor, and true PP will translate it into abstract terms: "Current phenomena, when studied as a holistic system, suggest that prolonged mental anguish or protracted grieving over past and therefore unalterable experience, however negative in nature or undesirable in the abstract, produces no tangible positive results, and should be avoided as a lifestyle choice."

a. Research suggests that attempts to calculate outcomes in anticipation of the event have a statistically low rate of success and should be discouraged. In addition, such attempts tend to result in mental states of unrealistic optimism, often accompanied by consequent exaggerated disappointment.

b. The continued increase in the proportion of administrative positions in any functioning multipersonal organization does not result in a proportional increase in effectiveness, efficiency, or product output. In fact, at a calculable point, a pattern of negative impact begins to emerge, and the relationship becomes inverse: Increase of positions produces an actual measurable decrease in achievement of previously specified product goals.

Exercise 6

a) Latinate (act-ual); b) Latinate (con-, -ation); c) Latinate (-ity, istic); d) Germanic; e) Germanic; f) Latinate (-ual); g) Germanic; h) a French word related to Latinate *civility, civilization,* qualifies as Latinate (falsely) because is noun ending in *-y*.

Exercise 7

Here are vitalized rewrites:

a. We have to stop treating drunk drivers like they're kind of cute. We have to stop making movies that celebrate them, making jokes about them, and doing imitations of them at parties, and start reacting to them the same way we'd react if some partygoer began describing how he beats up his wife to make her mind.

b. We should ignore the streetcorner drug dealers and the dime-bag users so the police can devote their time to catching murderers and getting lethal drugs off the road.

c. Go to school if you don't want to dig ditches or load trucks all your life.

Exercise 8

a) Dalmatian, mutt; b) Chevy, lowrider; c) saunter, wriggle; d) chatter, blather, orate; e) blood, cherry, rose.

Exercise 9

a) concrete; b) concrete, even though invisible; c) abstract as an entity ("The University regrets the incident"); concrete as a place ("The University covers 200 acres"); d) concrete, but similar to C; e) abstract; f) abstract; g) abstract; h) concrete, but a common metaphor ("Don't be sore at me"); i) either way, same as C.

Chapter 12   Editing

Editing means different things to different people. Some use it to mean revising; others include within it stylistic polishing like we did in Chapter 11. To some, it means cutting out stuff. I like a narrow definition meaning only mechanical/grammatical polishing. I have two reasons for this: (1) Editing is a dead word for students, so it tends to make revising a dead, mechanistic business if you use the word early, and (2) if you give mechanical editing a special name, there's some chance students will do it. The two biggest problems with mechanics are (1) students try to do it too early and begin editing from the moment they begin drafting, and (2) students have no editing stage in their writing process, so there is no moment when mechanics get their full attention.

Mechanics are the hardest thing to teach about writing. Most mechanics instructions does no good; in fact, much of it actually does damage by giving students writer's block and making them dislike writing more. It also can swallow up vast amounts of course time, time one could spend learning to write better and with greater pleasure. You must make a decision about how much time mechanics are worth. Many instructors give them no class time, on the theory that any time spent on them is wasted.

Chapter 1 lays down my principles for how language, including mechanics, is learned; if you extrapolate from them, they suggest a set of rules about how to teach mechanics instruction. The list is long because mechanics instruction can go wrong in lots of ways. This list is supplemental to the list of principles in the beginning of this manual, regarding giving feedback in general. See "Finding Alternatives to Line Editing" and "Conducting Office Conferences" to remind yourself of what was discussed.

1. A student can't learn editing skills until he or she wants to, until he or she cares. Most students hate and fear mechanics; they feel stupid and out of control. They have learned not to care in

order to protect themselves. They have ingested a host of half-truths about mechanics: Mechanics are what make writing good or bad; mechanics are what writing is; if you don't master writing mechanics you'll never get a good job; all good writers are mechanical perfectionists; mechanics are logical and sensible; there is one right way to do mechanics and only one thing called correct English; if you aren't mechanically sound, it's because you're dumb; and so on. You have to change that before anything good can come about.

Do it with talk. Do activities like the "Things to Do" at the end of Chapter 1, where you talk about how students feel about mechanics and where the feelings come from. Discuss the "Awkward" and "Vague" discussions at the beginning of Chapter 11. Give students bad or grammatically wrong sentences like "He don't know" and ask them to talk about why they're bad and who decided they're bad. Discuss the logic of conventional behavior and the illogic of arguing about whether conversations are right or wrong. Talk (honestly!) about when, why, and how much these things matter.

The hardest part of all this is learning to care in just the right way. Caring too much produces writer's block and a skewed sense that the goal of writing is mechanical perfection; caring too little produces an ugly, hard-to-read text surface. How much should you care? In one sense, mechanics are trivial things; in another, they're absolutely mandatory. In the chapter I use of the analogy of the off-sides rule in football. Obeying it can't make you a good player, but if you don't obey it, the game simply can't go on. Talk about it, but don't hand students answers—they have to think it through for themselves.

2. Never edit anything that hasn't been revised, judged of value, and is now being readied for real audiences. Don't edit just for editing practice.

3. Never edit until the creating/expressing is over.

4. Don't try to teach students all the knowledge they need to edit flawlessly because there's too much of it; instead, teach them to think and act like editors. Let them find answers to editing questions. If they act like editors, they'll go out and learn the nuts-and-bolts knowledge themselves.

5. Never edit by red-penning a student's writing and returning it. Chapter 1 gives a list of reasons why this doesn't work.

6. If you have the time, work individually with students. Every student's mechanical knowledge gaps are unique, and every student has formed his or her own idiosyncratic, inductive mechanical system.

7. Work inductively, not deductively. Don't give lecture-demonstrations on comma usage in general; work with a student or a class on their own sentences, pushing commas around, and draw general conclusions from the experience. Never work with faked writing samples.

8. Never think that correction alone teaches. Students must see how you did it. You must do the correcting with them, asking them to explain their reasoning and then explaining yours to them.

9. Teach by solving problems, not by finding faults. Make the students come to you. Instead of marking up their essays without their say-so, ask them to bring to class three of their own sentences they have questions or doubts about; then *assist them* by solving the problems on the board.

10. Don't teach through written jargon; use spoken conversational English. Labeling a problem does nothing; a student needs to understand it in his or her own language, learn how to spot it, and learn how to fix it.

11. Stress choice, audience, and effect. Sometimes there's only one legal way, and you should be honest when that's the case, but often (especially with punctuation) there are lots of possibilities. Our old friends "Who are you talking to?" and " What do you want to do to them?" obtain results.
12. Be open about the fact that much of grammar and mechanics can't be explained.

13. Resist the temptation to oversimplify. If you tell students that there are really just three rules for comma placement and that if they learn them, they'll never have trouble again, you'll think you're helping them, but in fact you're hurting them because it's not true. So you're adding a new problem to their comma problem: Now they feel dumb because they can't make the "simple" rules work.

14. Generalize. If you line-edit a passage of text, the page will be filled with a hundred marks, and students will conclude that there are a hundred things to learn. However, there may be as few as three or four. Make the learning task seem manageable by saying, "We're really just doing the same three things over and over again: (1) putting commas after long introductory phrases and clauses, (2) putting commas in place of semicolons that are tying fragments to sentences, and (3) using the dictionary to pick up misspelled words."

15. Prioritize. Not all mechanical problems weigh the same, and students need to know when the culture cares mightily about an error and when it's not a big deal. Spelling counts hugely; therefore, bad spellers are considered very problematic; putting a comma outside the quotation mark instead of inside loses little face. I always make a list of a student's big needs ("Our first priority is spelling—let's ignore all other mechanics until that's under control") and list the popular heavy-duty errors for the class: misspelled words, misused apostrophes, comma splices, and proofreading errors. Students also need to know what the culture's standards are: Many students who grant that misspelled words are undesirable are astounded to discover that our culture considers three misspellings a page a serious problem.

16. If possible, edit before the project is submitted so the student gains practical benefit from the editing by getting to hand in an improved piece of writing.

Two Line-Editing Formats

In practice I've found that only two teaching formats work with mechanics. The first is individual conferences, where a student and I sit down with his or her own work and line-edit together, chatting as we go, allowing the student to explain his or her thinking and me to explain mine. This way the student sees the changes being made and the reasoning behind them. Preferably, the student has come to me by choice, for help rather than punishment, and the essay will be revised and submitted to an audience, so the line editing results in immediate profit for the student.

The second format consumes less of your time and is more fun: class editing. Take a student essay (volunteered, not chosen by you, since the potential for hurt is great here), make a transparency of a page, and line-edit it with the class as one big editorial committee. Ask each student to line-edit a paragraph alone silently; then share results, discussing all differences of opinion. There will be many. Don't be responsible for supplying answers; instead, help the students think their way through to decisions. To make this work, follow these rules:

1. Involve everyone by asking for a show of hands on differences of opinion: "How many people want to leave the comma in? Why? How many people want to take it out? Why?" Use the conversation to underscore the point that there often is no consensus about what's right and wrong.

2. Force students to make assertions, not ask questions. Student: "Is that comma right?" You: "Are you telling me to take it out?—yes or no." Tell the students that they can *ask* now, but when they're home writing, they must *make a decision*.

3. Ask "Why?"—see if the students have reasons for their decisions. They may; they may not; the reasons may be hogwash. Whatever they say, it's meat for a good discussion about where rules come from. Mechanics often can't always be explained; sometimes there's a cold, hard logic to a comma; mechanics are often a matter of choice and effect, and so on. Students need to witness all this.

Your students will constantly want to stray from the topic and talk about style, argumentative logic, and other more attractive topics—because mechanics aren't very interesting, and because the students feel unsure and seek the comforting group of subjective topics. Don't let them—insist that only comments on grammar and mechanics will be heard today. And tell them why: Because if you try to talk about mechanics and anything else, you end up not talking about mechanics. Writers must discipline themselves to close out all other issues so mechanics gets its due forty-five minutes.

You can't make your students mechanically solid, even if you devote the entire term to the project. Accept the principles of Chapter 1, realize they'll learn mechanics through exposure and modeling, acknowledge that your job is to help them think like editors, and do some line editing with them to set their feet on the path.

Teaching Grammar

Should you try to teach students traditional grammar such as dependent clauses, participles, subjective complements? I wouldn't, and the text avoids it, because historically it's a topic that will swallow huge amounts of time and frustrate your students. There is, of course, an advantage to knowing the terminology—comma splice discussions go more smoothly if people know what an independent clause is—but usually it isn't worth the price you must pay to get it. After all, how many times have the students been through it already without getting it?

Stripping to the Skeleton

Stripping to the skeleton is the only thing in the chapter you might want to drill in class with everyone because everyone can use it, and students won't pick it up on their own. It's really just an informal version of sentence diagramming. Here you may want to break my rule about always working with the students' own text because the potential for pain is great. I collect real problem sentences from essays and use them in later courses.

Stripping (and any structural activity) requires students to distinguish between content sense and grammatical sense. If you ask students whether "It is" is a sentence, they'll often say no because it "isn't a complete thought"—it doesn't tell you what "it" refers to, and it leaves you asking, "It is *what*?" To a linguist, "it is" has subject and verb and therefore is a well-formed clause. If a student thinks only in content terms, all stripped sentences will seem awkward and therefore "wrong," and the method won't work. Explaining this distinction may only get you blank stares. In any case, do stripping on the board and discuss the problem as best you can when it arises.

Spelling

Spelling is quite teachable. Spelling is also a joyous game if you separate it from punishment, so the spelling rules in the chapter (like #5) translate directly into wonderful search games. Remember, you're not trying to teach students how to spell every word in English; you're trying to teach them to think like spellers. Good spellers are people who love words, so teach the love, not the actual spelling.

Spelling gets tangled up with all sorts of learning disorders and eye and brain dysfunctions like dyslexia. It's helpful to distinguish among three kinds of spelling problems. (1) Some people *don't look*. Teach those how to pay attention. Proofread with them, watch how they do it, slow them down, and model proofreading for them. (2) Most people misspell twenty to one hundred words, and they misspell those words the same way every time. Make those people a list of their personal spelling demons and practice them. (3) Some people are dysfunctional spellers. They misspell perhaps thirty words a page, spelling almost randomly, misspelling the same word three or four ways on the page. You probably can't help these people, who must be spent to specialists.

Format

I think format matters. The care with which a writer presents his or her text to the public is a measure of how much the writer values the whole writing act just as a public speaker's attire is a measure of his or her reverence for the speech-making act. Students deny this, and it may be a difference in cultures because many of my students also give public speeches dressed in holey jeans and T-shirts. Beyond this, format-following is an elementary test of direction-following skills, and direction-following is more a part of writing than most writers admit. I make format-following a formal step in my writing process.

Proofreading

Proofreading isn't spelling. Spelling is a knowledge problem; proofreading is a seeing problem. Students usually equate the two, and the result is that good spellers, knowing they're good, don't proofread. Help them by making the distinction.

Many people use the word *proofreading* to mean general editing—looking for mechanical problems and fixing them. Those who understand proofreading in this way never do real proofreading, so make the distinction for them.

Because it's mostly a matter of caring, proofreading problems often disappear as soon as you make it clear that it matters to you. If they don't, the writer needs hands-on proofreading practice. Do it one-on-one with his or her text, with you watching the student proofread to see if you can spot what he or she's doing wrong. If you must, isolate passages you know have typos and have the student read them over and over, slower and slower, backwards and forwards, out loud, and so on, until the typo reveals itself.

Exercises

Your basic work in this chapter should be to look at a page of student writing with your students and line-edit it together. Don't let the three exercises distract you from that central task.

Exercise 1

Students go wrong here two ways: 1) They pick up attitudes or principles ("Mechanics are less important than content"), and 2) they identify topics instead of lessons ("I don't know about comma splices.") Force them to stick to concrete rules and to state them fully.

Chapter 13   Publishing

Chapter 13 is self-explanatory, so I need only beg you not to reject the idea of having your students publish as a pipe dream . Obviously, few of them will publish in *The New Republic*, but the chapter makes clear that getting one's writing in front of an audience larger than your friends is very doable.

The payoff is enormous. If you can get your writers into print, the experience will do most of your teaching for you.

You may meet resistance from students who can't imagine having the audacity to see themselves in that role. And that's precisely the mental block you must break down. Because as long as students write from the premise that their work will never, ever see print (and you agree with them), they're either wasting their time writing or they're writing an elaborately disguised personal journal.

The biggest hurdle to student publishing is not finding places to publish; it's the time frame. It takes a long time to prepare a manuscript for publication, submit it, and hear back from the publishers. Can your course afford the time commitment? You can minimize the problem by looking at the sources with short turn-around times. *Newsweek* responds in a week; newspapers often publish in two or three days; electronic bulletin boards and chat groups publish in seconds and garner responses in minutes.

Exercises

These exercises break the publishing process down into many smaller steps. That may have the unintended negative effect of making publishing seem intimidating. You can keep publishing very simple: Write the essay, get an address from some newspaper's or magazine's business page, and mail it off.

PART IV   MODES OF WRITING

(Chapters 14-17)

How you use Chapters 14 through 17 depends on your overall course design. I'm going to assume that you're assigning these chapters and having students write essays in these modes *while* you're working through the process portion of the book. In that case, these chapters require very little teaching. You can just assign them, have the students read the essays in the Essay Treasury, perhaps read some of the essays for the craft ("What's one technical feature you like in this essay?" is always a good starting point), and let the students write.

If you're not teaching by modes, there are things you may want anyway: the discussion of showing, not telling in Chapter 14; the discussion of COIK writing in Chapter 15; the critical thinking in Chapter 16; and modeling in Chapter 17.

At the end of each chapter there are exercises that lead up to the full-blown model essay, but don't assume students need to do any of them; if your students are ready, just say, "Go write an essay like those."

Chapter 14   Personal Writing

This chapter makes no distinction among three kinds of personal writing: character sketches, personal narratives, and what I call "This is me" essays, which seek to share a part of the self, like the egg essay in Chapter 3. You certain can distinguish among them, especially if you want more than one personal writing assignment, but in practice there is little teaching to be done for one that doesn't apply to the others. The Treasury section contains samples of all three.

Personal writing is a time of ego revealing and sharing among students and can be a real bond-builder. It's also a good time to catch the spirit of writing as public performance since personal writing reads out loud well. To encourage these things, I suggest you go lightly on critical feedback and analysis at this point—just enjoy each other's work.

The most popular technical feature to teach in personal writing is concretion: To what extent are the abstractions (the ideas, the feelings) made flesh in things the reader can touch, taste, smell, and so on? The "Concretion" section of Chapter 11 is good background reading, so you may want students to read it now.

Character sketches are harder to structure than narratives and "This is me" essays because people are hard to organize (narratives are just in chronological order, and "This is me" essays may be relatively formless). I don't suggest you formally outline or abstract personal writing because these strategies tend to kill it.

What goes wrong?

1) Students have problems with the term *personal*. Some think it means writing to and for yourself. Other assume that since this is personal writing, all other kinds of writing must be impersonal, meaning "lifeless." Discuss both misunderstandings. 2) If you've been working with tools like thesis statements and outlines, those can come back to haunt you here. Students often try too hard to follow school rules here—pressing for a "lesson" or tight outline structure, for instance. Discuss the issues—admit that personal writing often has nothing like a conventional thesis, often wanders, often suffers when the "rules" are followed. It's a good time to remind students that the writer decides what to do, not the rules, and the only rule is "What works?" Similarly, discussing purpose with personal writing is often not very productive because the purposes are so transparent: "To let the reader know who I am," for instance.

Chapter 15   Writing to Inform

Informative writing runs into three obstacles: Students think that

  A.   They "don't know anything."

  B.   Informative writing is easy.

  C.   Informative writing is supposed to be dull.

You need strategies to overcome each.

  A.   The chapter begins by addressing the first problem, as do all of Chapter 3 and 4 (since it's really an audience problem). Use their exercises and classroom interaction to dispel the illusion. Have students tell the class where they've lived, what their hobbies are, and what jobs they've held, and let others who are interested ask them questions. If you give students an

inquisitive audience, they'll become informers. If all else fails, an individual Sally-style interview (in Chapter 3's Writers' Workshop) always works.

B. People think informative writing is easy because of the COIK problem: Writers always understand their own instructions. Attack the problems in two ways: (1) Have students write directions for simple physical activities (tying a bowline knot is a classic). Then, have ignorant fellow students try to do the activity, guided only by the instructions. (2) Use peer feedback. Let readers read drafts of informative essays and point out all the places where they are confused and unsure, are left wanting to know more, or can imagine another reader would be. Don't define it as error—the readers just *want more*, which is a kind of compliment. And don't you be the bad guy who points out the COIK problem; let the students' colleagues do it.

C. To convince students that informative writing isn't necessarily dull, use argument and modeling. (1) Point out to them that most of the world's entertainment reading is information: *People, Rolling Stone, Reader's Digest, Cosmopolitan, TV Guide*, all newspapers. Explain that informative writing is boring when it's bad or (more likely) when there's an audience problem: Either you're not the intended audience (as in auto manuals), or the audience is so broad the text can't target them (as in encyclopedias). (2) Model good informative writing that doesn't bore—the sample essays in the Treasury section, for instance. Ask your students, "Would you prefer them to impersonal, dull, and distant." Of course not.

If you want to make several informative essay assignments, there are many subcategories of the genre: Classification, definition, comparison and contrast, and process are the five most common. But a rigid insistence on categories drives students crazy, breeds writer's block, and mistakes form for purpose—have you ever tried to write an essay that does nothing but define something?—so don't make fitting the category perfectly the point of the writing activity. Comparison-and-contrast essays are basic academic assignments across the curriculum, so you might give attention to them if your course has a focus on academic writing.

Similarly, the distinction between modes can be irritatingly slippery to students. Students, given an informative assignment, will want to twist it into personal writing because it's easier and more fun or will be afraid of having the slightest whiff of argumentation (which is almost impossible to avoid). I keep regrounding my students by asking them: Are you giving the reader stuff that is largely not open to debate? (If so, you aren't writing an argument.) Is what you're giving readers something they can go out and *use* in some utilitarian way? (If so, you aren't doing personal writing.) Another helpful question is, How much information that readers didn't know before are they actually getting here? (If the answer is "Not much," the essay is probably more personal than informative.)

The Mock Informative essay ("Eradicate") is the most popular way of avoiding the challenges of informative writing—I doubt I've ever gotten a set of papers without at least one, despite my explicit instructions to the contrary—and the only way you can prevent it is to assign one and get it out of the students' systems.

The informative assignment is the place above all others where the concept of Knowing Thy Audience becomes blatantly powerful. Teach it here if you haven't already.

Exercises

Exercise 2

Here are possible theses:

a. You have to be a survivor to shop at garage sales.

b. Anyone can sing.

c. You don't believe you can survive divorce when you're in the midst of it, but you can.

d. There are many good places to take kids on a rainy day, and if you don't know about them, you'll go stir-crazy.

e. If you don't know what cholesterol is, it's probably killing you right now.

Exercise 7

Possible COIK problems: What's a jack? How do you jack up a car? What's a jug wrench? Where do you get one? What's a spare? Where do you get one? How do you remove the jack?

Exercise 8

Likely questions: Where is the restaurant? What are the restaurant's hours? What else do they serve? How low are the prices exactly, and how do they compare with other Mexican restaurants in the area? What does *picante* mean? How hot is it, exactly? What's flan? Why don't they have it? Does anyone else have it? What are the refried beans like? Do they use lard or vegetable shortening? Do they have a vegetarian menu? Etc.

Chapter 16 Writing an Argument, Part I: Thinking It Through

This is a chapter on critical thinking, and it's the first half of a two-step argumentative process. The first half is getting your thoughts straight; the second is finding an effective strategy for selling your beliefs to an audience.

The distinction is a hard one for students, who think that arguers simply grasp their unexamined opinions firmly in hand and shove them down readers' throats. Over and over you must say to them, "First, you think it through; second, you sell it. First, you ask yourself a lot of hard questions; second, you strike to persuade. The first you do for yourself, to know what you really think; the second you do for your reader, to get him or her to do what you want. In the first, guile and cleverness and rhetoric are wholly inappropriate because they cloud your thinking; in the second, they're at the heart of what you're about. In the first, you look squarely at all the weaknesses of your logic; in the second, you try to hide those weaknesses. The second is what lawyers do; the first is what lawyers never allow themselves to do," and so on.

Arguments pose two great problems for students. The first is one of definition: Students define arguments as stiff, formal position papers on impersonal issues that don't touch their lives Your challenge is to make arguing matter, to make it something they can do as themselves, to show them how arguments emerge from their lives, and to get them out of stagnant arguing styles that bore them to tears. The book addresses all this, but reading it alone probably won't do it. Here are five things you can do:

1. Use the model essays in the Treasury to inspire and break out of old molds. Use the modeling principles in the Writers' Workshop to do the same.

2. Have students read the arguments in print around them for the craft, asking how many of them are thesis-plop essays and how many are not. A survey of the arguments in a daily newspaper will demonstrate that, except for editorials, few published arguments are thesis-plop, impersonal, clinical, "There are three reasons for this" kind of arguments. When the students notice this, you can talk about the rhetorical aims of editorials that make them so stuffy.

3. Have students look back at the Weeklies they've been doing all term and ask them to say which of them are and are not arguments. Then have students read out these pieces and discuss their decisions. Does the class agree? You'll find that some students will call anything that isn't a thesis-plop essay "not an argument": anything narrative, or anything with personal experience, or anything about a personal issue (like finding good day-care in town), or anything that doesn't have a stated thesis. The resulting conversation will quickly demonstrate several important truths: (1) Everything is potentially argumentative; (2) most writing is at least slightly argumentative; (3) argument isn't a black-and-white matter—instead, a piece of writing exists on a spectrum, where you say, "This essay is about a 6 on a 1-to-10 scale of argumentativeness"; (4) not all arguments address "the Opposition," and so on.

4. Assign forms of argument that encourage energy, wit, creativity, and personal connection. Assign restaurant reviews, where students feel they can be experts, and the audience isn't "the Opposition." Assign arguments on small, personal things: the worst store you ever shopped in, your anger at the university administration's indifference to you, a course you didn't want to have to take and ended up loving. As always, the most direct route out of impersonal writing is through anger: Ask students to write about what made them mad recently. Give them real audiences: Have them write letters of complaint to companies and store managers and university administrators instead of formal essays. Find concrete situations as topics: Don't ask them to write about "sexism"; give them a letter to "Dear Abby" complaining about sexism in the workplace and have them give the writer advice.

5. Let them react to their journalistic reading, in the manner of the Weeklies discussed earlier; then point out to them later that they've been arguing without knowing it.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking can be a pedagogical trap where you do students more harm than good. Students don't think well, and we all want to do something about that, but students will tell you that their logic course is right up at the top of their list of "courses I took, hated, and got nothing from." The problem is if you reduce thinking to mechanistic application or rules about logical fallacies or error-finding, you destroy the whole creative, discovery-oriented, playful spirit that makes thinking a joyful game for you and me. Critical thinking then becomes an endless negative lesson in how dumb the student is and how she or he can't say the things she or he said because they're logically flawed. You need to find a productive way to work with thinking in class, not restrictive—a way that leads to more, richer text, not less text or more repressed text.

Chapter 16 is my attempt to avoid the trap. It works by *asking questions*, not by *finding errors*, because questions produce answers, which are *more text*. Questions lead you on and on, so after a while you have lots of rich, complex things to say. I imagine a class discussion using this chapter beginning with a student's single, short assertion on an issue, and ending thirty minutes later with every student holding pages of notes for expanding the assertion into a fascinatingly complex discussion.

Key to this approach is the absence of "That's wrong" statements. Notice that nowhere in the Writers' Workshop does "That's wrong" occur; nor does the chapter spend more than a moment identifying "bad thinking." Instead, treat thinking the way freewriting treats writing: Accept it all, and do whatever you can to get more.

What goes wrong?

Just about everything. Even if you aren't a fan of "teaching the book," with Chapter 16 I think you have to. Literally everything in Chapter 16 is difficult, fraught with confusion, and requires constant monitoring by you. I won't list ways students get confused or need help; instead, I encourage you to take a student thesis (Step 4 in the "How to Think" sequence), start working with Step 5, and work through every step in the chapter, discussing and trouble-shooting as you go.

One special warning: Students hear the rule "Ask, 'What's the philosophical antithesis?'" and conclude you're asking for the thesis directly opposed to their thesis. Thus, if they're arguing that the city should build a parking structure, they say, "The philosophical antithesis is that the city shouldn't build a parking structure." This is useless. The antithesis is the theoretical opposite of your underlying *principle*: e.g., if your argument rests on the belief that the U. S. Constitution is a perfect and eternally true document, the antithesis is that times change, values change, and we have

the right to rewrite the social contract as our values and needs change. The key point is that *the writer herself believes both the principle and the antithesis* and must negotiate a peace between them.

Discussing critical thinking is like discussing grammar: A little is worse than none because it only confuses and frustrates. I advise giving it the time it requires or leaving it alone. I give it two weeks. A week seems minimal.

Chapter 17 Writing an Argument, Part II: Selling the Case

Writing an argument is the ultimate composition-class challenge, usually done late in the term. There's nothing new about it—just the same stuff as in all the earlier chapters—but all the hard stuff has to be done at once. Students frequently self-destruct, go dead, or start faking now.

The problems seem to reduce themselves to three: (1) It's very hard to think well, and students know it and hate having to perform badly in front of people; (2) it's even harder to think well while remaining lively, witty, and charming; and (3) structuring thinking is much harder than structuring information or personal experience.

Address each problem directly. (1) Keep Chapters 16 and 17 separate; tell students to think the matter through as best they can, then turn their attention toward rhetorical issues. (2) Keep reminding them that writing remains always a performance and entertainment. Keep asking them if they're still exciting themselves. Have them look back at their personal writing and tell them to recover that energy if they've lost it. (3) Lean heavily on abstracting—it will save their lives now, even if it seemed like overkill before.

Two issues that seem always to need to be addressed:

1. Should the essay acknowledge the opposition's case? The chapter discusses this, but it's never enough. Deal with it as a classic example of reader-based rhetoric: Ask students, "What happens if you do address it? What if you don't? What do you want to accomplish?" Students will say, "If I acknowledge the opposition's case, my case will look weaker." Ask them if in fact that's how *they* react when someone they're talking to grants that there is some truth in their position.

2. What's the personal connection? A question I ask my students a lot is "Why are *you* writing this argument?"—why did you choose this issue over all others, and why should it be written by you instead of someone else? The answer gets at the personal connection: "I'm writing this because the issue has touched my life in some way." Then take the next step: Suggest incorporating that connection into the text itself (if it isn't there already). If there is no personal connection, ask the student why he or she chose to avoid writing about anything that matters to him or her.

Chapter 17 is where *The Writer's Way* works extensively with *modeling,* which is mentioned in Chapter 3. The subject could have been broached almost anywhere, but I put it here because boringness is such a problem with argumentative writing, and modeling is a way out. Feel free to work with modeling at any time and use this section when you do.

Exercises

Exercise 3   The Anti-Cliché

The anti-cliché is much misunderstood. Even though the exercise says not to, students will often turn the anti-cliché assignment into a joke. That may be a fun loosening-up exercise, but it avoids the real point, which is that there are multiple intelligent positions to take on an issue—not just in

the world, but within oneself. Until that point is grasped, students will forever have the sneaking suspicion that there is a "right answer," and they're supposed to find it.

The anti-cliché is rarely a direct "You're wrong" refutation but is rather a "Yes, but" response. If I argue that my town desperately needs city-funded day-care because working parents have no inexpensive way to have their children cared for, the anti-cliché probably won't argue that children shouldn't be cared for, but it might argue that city governments should stay out of the parenting business.

PART V WRITING IN SCHOOL

(Chapters 18–25)

You can use this section in many ways. Three seem obvious: 1) You can build the course around it, in which case the course becomes a service course, a support system for the rest of the university's writing assignments: "Here, I'll help you write the papers in your other courses and get good grades." 2) You can devote a segment of the course to it, as the book has done—perhaps a three-week unit. 3) You can pull out the bits you want your students to know—perhaps quoting mechanics and citations—and assign just those pages.

Chapter 18 Writing in School: An Introduction

Chapter 18 explains how the lessons of Chapters 1–17 apply to school writing: We've seen how outlining, thesis statement writing, and stylistic choice-making work in nonacademic essays—now let's see how well they work in the classroom. If you want to talk about academic writing at all, I'd think you would want to assign Chapter 18 and discuss it.

Chapter 18 is like Chapter 1—almost entirely about attitude and trying to get off on the right foot. Students have very toxic notions about the purposes, methods, and ethics of school writing. Your biggest job is to replace those notions with healthy ones.

To use the chapter and those that follow, your students have to be doing academic writing. You can make academic writing assignments, practice redefining and revising previous more personal essays to an academic focus, or have them bring in assignments from other classes.

What goes wrong?

1. Students don't value thesis enough—mostly because it's hard. You can't say it often enough: The essay must have more than just a bunch of things to say—it must have a point.

2. Students struggle with purposefulness in school—as well they should. We've talked about writing to make something happen, to affect the reader, to change the world. School writing often makes these things difficult or impossible. Admit it and discuss it, but don't let the students argue you into saying that therefore in school one writes with no purpose beyond "getting an *A*."

3. Students use the concept of audience to gut the writing experience of meaning: They obviously write to "the teacher," they say, and assume that it logically follows that writing in school is a pointless exercise in fraudulence. The chapter gives you lots of ammunition to show that writing to the teacher is a real and honorable task with its own ethical rules.

Chapter 19   Writing on Literature

This chapter will be of importance to literature majors and students in literature courses. If you want to work with it, you could assign a very short work of literature—a short story or sonnet—to use as a text. It assumes a knowledge of Chapter 18. For students not in literature classes, perhaps the only useful advice is in the instructions on efficient quoting.

Chapter 20   Writing in the Sciences

This chapter will be of importance to science and technical majors and students in technical courses. If you want to work with it, you'll need to have students working on some sort of experiment. The only way I've found to do such a thing as a group is to conduct a simple science experiment in the classroom, share the data, and have everyone write it up. This is more fun that it sounds. In the scientific community, writing is almost always collaborative, so this chapter teaches nicely along with Chapter 22. Chapter 20 assumes a knowledge of Chapter 18. For students not in science classes, the discussion of technical style is useful since all students struggle with the issue of appropriate levels of formality and informality in their academic writing.

Chapter 21   Essay Tests

This chapter is obligatory if you're giving tests, but even if you're not, students respond well to it because it casts you in the role of helper—you're showing them tricks to better grades. The chapter is easy to use: You can give a test on *The Writer's Way* (make it a demo if you don't like grading), then give it back to the students with an assignment: Go through the chapter and find one tip that you didn't follow and that might have helped you out. You can invent drills to address any of the tips in the chapter. For instance, I like to take a test question, get the class to agree on a good, lengthy answer, and then ask, "What is the smallest number of words it takes to say that?" You can often show that a twenty-word or thirty-word answer can be shrunk to two or three words—remarkable!

Chapter 22   Collaborative Writing

There is only one important thing to say here: If you're not having your students do collaborative assignments, try it. The chapter explains why it's good for them; it's also very good for you because it cuts your paper reading in half, makes revising and peer editing happen as a matter of course without your raising a finger, and gets you out of the writing loop. Students write with each other and in reaction to each other, and stop checking with you for approval or writing to please you. And they produce better writing, which saves you the grief of rejecting their work.

You may have nightmares: students fighting with each other, one student doing all the work, essays that are bland compromises. All those things happen, but the pluses outweigh the minuses. The most common complaint—that the weak students don't learn because the good students write the papers—misunderstands how learning takes place. What better way for an inexperienced writer to learn than to apprentice him or her to a skilled practitioner and work with him or her and observe? Don't you wish someone had led you by the hand through the essay-making experience when you were starting out? Collaboration is, in effect, constant one-on-one tutoring, and if you can pair the strong writers up with the weaker ones, you should.

The appendix discusses the popular traps students fall into, but one deserves special attention: the assumption that collaboration means all partners share equally in all stages of the writing

process. Few collaborations in the working world work this way; division of labor is the norm. You can demonstrate this to students by giving assignments that force it: Exercise 4 in Chapter 15 is one.

Students always want to know "What happens if the collaborators disagree?"—if they go to a restaurant and one loves it and one hates it, for instance. This is a golden opportunity to discuss many of the central themes of *The Writer's Way*. What does a reader of a restaurant review want from the reviewers? How can you use your difference of opinion to serve him or her better? Does the difference of opinion mean that one of you is right and the other wrong? What structural ways are there to construct an essay that uses the disagreement to advantage?

Chapter 23   Research

Chapter 23 is key if you want your students to do any sort of research. Obviously, you will if you're assigning academic papers, but you might want to push your students outside the personal even if you aren't—there's something very healthy about taking an argument that has come entirely from inside ("This is what I think") and expanding it by asking, "Okay, but what do other people think . . . and know?" School used to be all about that. Then, after the 60s, it became not at all about that. Now we seem to be returning to a sense that we should teach our students that they don't write in a solipsistic vacuum. Chapter 23 is partners with Chapter 24 and is useless without it.

Remember that research is something campus specialists do better than you, so use them—arrange for a research tour by a reference librarian.

I have omitted exercises in Chapter 23, so you won't be tempted to separate research from the students' own writing. If the students can't do meaningful, rewarding research on their own papers, don't teach research at all.

What goes wrong?

1) Students want to do research the easy way, which is by Internet search engine. You will have to force them to use the better, more cumbersome tools and explain why they must. 2) Students will always see research as an exercise in bibliography-inflating—citations for citations' sake. It's hard to make the process real, but you must try. 3) Some students go to the other extreme and lose themselves—writing becomes a process of key-word searches, web-site scanning, copying, and pasting. It's plagiarism, but, worse, it's pointless. Have students finish their drafts, then research to enrich and extend. 4) Students find it frustrating that electronic research methods are evolving and changing. All you can do is empathize and move on. 5) Somewhere in Part V you're going to have to talk about plagiarism. Here is as good a place as any. Many students just don't or won't get it. Address the issue.

Chapter 24   Using Sources

Chapter 24 is partners with Chapter 23: After your research turns up a juicy quotation or fact you want to use, you have to cite it.

I don't think anyone thinks citation and bibliography are fun. I wouldn't try to sell the idea to my students. Just admit that it's a grimy but necessary chore. If you obsess on it, citation methodology can turn into an industry and eat up your course. Give it only the time it deserves.

What goes wrong?

1) Students can't believe you really have to cite everything you use—keep telling them. 2) Electronic citation methodology is hideous, illogical, cumbersome, and constantly in flux. Admit it, empathize,

and move on. 3) Students can't believe that nitpicky format details matter. Who cares if the Works Cited ends with a period or not? People do, as the oil company says.

Exercises

Exercise 1

   a.   Here is the bibliography in MLA format:

Works Cited

Anthropy, Phil. "Developments on the Enrollment Front." Personal email. 3 Dec. 1997.

"Boredom in School." *College Today* 35 (1999): 12–18. Your library's name, your school's name. 7 Nov. 2001 <http://www.SKOOL.com>.

"Byte Dogs Man." *Chicago Tribune* 12 Nov. 1975: C4.

Dumont, Margaret, ed. *Literacy Revisited*. New York: Rearguard, 1986.

Gore, Andrew, and Thomas Nixon. *Studies in the Grotesque*. Boothbay, MN: Androgyne, 1971.

"Greenland." *Britannica Online.* Encyclopedia Britannica. 1994–1997. Netscape; Your library's name, your university's name. 12 Jan. 1998. <http://www.eb.com>.

Shalala, Brittany. "Sex Is Out." *Today's Trends* 3 Jan. 2002. 27 Jan. 2003 <http://www.trendy.com/sex/07/html>.

Strand, Ellen. "Are We Helping the Russians Without Knowing It?" *Voice of the Nation* 3.12 (1982): 75–86.

———. *Down the Spout*. Cleveland: Windward, 1983.

United States. Department of Transport. *Wind Sheer and Its Effect on House Trailers*. #3769. Washington: GPO, n.d.

Wills, Morris. "Negative Camber: Three Approaches." *Suspensions and Their Maintenance*. Ed. Stirling Ross. Houston: Digger, 1964. 12–212.

b. Here is the bibliography in APA format. The email from Phil Anthropy isn't here because APA discourages listing email messages in bibliographies:

References

Boredom in school (1999). *College Today,* 35, 12–18. Retrieved November 7, 2001, from SKOOL database (Academic Issues) on the World Wide Web: <http://www.SKOOL.com>.

"Byte dogs man." (1975, Nov. 12). *Chicago Tribune*, p. C4.

Dumont, M. (Ed.). (1986). *Literacy revisited*. New York: Rearguard Press.

Gore, A., and Nixon, T. (1971). *Studies in the grotesque*. Boothbay, MN: Androgyne Press.

Greenland. (1997). *Britannica Online.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994–1997. Netscape. Retrieved January 12, 1998, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.eb.com>.

Shalala, B. (2002, January 3). "Sex Is Out." *Today's Trends.* Retrieved 27 Jan. 2003 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.trendy.com/sex/07/html>.

Strand, E. (1982, December). Are we helping the Russians without knowing it? *Voice of the Nation* 3(12), 75–86.

Strand, E. (1983). *Down the spout.* Cleveland: Windward Press.

United States. Department of Transport. (n.d.) *Wind sheer and its effect on house trailers.* #3769. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Wills, M. (1964). Negative camber: Three approaches. In Stirling Moss,
Ed., *Suspensions and their maintenance*. Houston: Digger, 12–212.

c. Here is the bibliography in numbered citations. Remember, there is no single correct format to
    numbered citations, so accept anything with numbers and a consistent, logical methodology:

Bibliography

1. Anthropy, P. "Developments on the Enrollment Front." Personal email.
    3 December 1997.

2. "Boredom in School." *College Today,* 35, (1999): 12–18. Academic
    Issues. SKOOL Your library's name, your school's name. 7 Nov. 2001.
    <http://www.SKOOL.com>.

3. "Byte Dogs Man." *Chicago Tribune*, 12 Nov. 1975: C4.

4. Dumont, Margaret, Ed. *Literacy Revisited*. New York: Rearguard Press,
    1986.

5. Gore, Andrew, and Nixon, Thomas. *Studies in the Grotesque*. Boothbay,
    Minn.: Androgyne Press, 1971.

6. "Greenland." *Britannica Online.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994–1997.
    Internet. Netscape: <http://www.eb.com>. (accessed 12 January 1998).

7. Shalala, Brittany. "Sex Is Out." *Today's Trends.* 3 Jan. 2002.
    <http://www.trendy.com/sex/07/html>. (accessed 27 Jan. 2003).

8. Strand, Ellen. "Are We Helping the Russians Without Knowing It?"
    Voice of the Nation, III, 12 (December 1982), 75–86.

9. Strand, Ellen. *Down the Spout*. Cleveland: Windward Press, 1983.

10. United States. Department of Transport. *Wind Sheer and Its Effect on
    House Trailers*. #3769. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing
    Office., n.d.

11. Wills, Morris. "Negative Camber: Three Approaches." *Suspensions and
    Their Maintenance*, ed. Stirling Ross. Houston: Digger, 1964, 12–212.

Exercise 2

Here are the sentences with citations with MLA format (1), APA format (2), and numbered citations
(3). The page numbers are plucked out of the air:

a1. Strand showed that American plumbing has a working life of only five years (12).

a2. Strand (1983) showed that American plumbing has a working life of only five years (p. 12).

a3. Strand showed that American plumbing has a working life of only five years (5: 12).

b1. Gore and Nixon argued in 1971 that "the grotesque is merely the realistic turned on its head"
     (79).

b2. Gore and Nixon argued in 1971 that "the grotesque is merely the realistic turned on its head"
     (p. 79).

b3. Gore and Nixon argued in 1971 that "the grotesque is merely the realistic turned on its head"
     (3: 79).

c1."Literacy is a fiction" (Dumont 237).

c2."Literacy is a fiction" (Dumont, 1986).

c3."Literacy is a fiction" (2: 237).

d1.   Since 1945, our foreign policy has unwittingly played directly into the hands of the Soviets (Strand "Are We Helping" 76).

   Or, Strand argues that since 1945 our foreign policy has unwittingly played directly into the hands of the Soviets ("Are We Helping" 76).

d2.   Since 1945, our foreign policy has unwittingly played directly into the hands of the Soviets (Strand, 1982).

d3.   Since 1945, our foreign policy has unwittingly played directly into the hands of the Soviets (4: 76).

e1.   In 1962, the average negative camber of a Formula One race car was 7 percent (Wills 198).

e2.   In 1962, the average negative camber of a Formula One race car was 7 percent (Wills).

e3.   In 1962, the average negative camber of a Formula One race car was 7 percent (7: 198).

f1.The Federal Government has concluded that *no* commercial trailer can be expected to withstand winds above 60 mph (United States 7).

f2.The Federal Government has concluded that *no* commercial trailer can be expected to withstand winds above 60 mph (United States, n.d.).

f3.The Federal Government has concluded that *no* commercial trailer can be expected to withstand winds above 60 mph (6: 7).

g1.   Actually, a man once was pursued by a computer—on November 11, 1975, in Flint, Michigan ("Byte").

g2.   Actually, a man once was pursued by a computer—on November 11, 1975, in Flint, Michigan ("Byte", n.d.).

g3.   Actually, a man once was pursued by a computer—on November 11, 1975, in Flint, Michigan (3).

h1.   A colleague assures me that, judging by her experience, college students are more familiar with recent American history than they were ten years ago (Anthropy).

h2.   A colleague assures me (personal communication, Dec. 3, 1997) that, judging by her experience, college students are more familiar with recent American history than they were ten years ago.

h3.   A colleague assures me that, judging by her experience, college students are more familiar with recent American history than they were ten years ago (1).

i1.Contrary to popular belief, Greenland isn't very green ("Greenland").

i2.Contrary to popular belief, Greenland isn't very green ("Greenland," 1997).

i3.Contrary to popular belief, Greenland isn't very green (6).

j1.Only 3 percent of college students report they are "extremely bored" by their classes ("Boredom" 16).

j2.Only 3 percent of college students report they are "extremely bored" by their classes ("Boredom," 1999).

j3.Only 3 percent of college students report they are "extremely bored" by their classes (2: 16).

k1.　Celibacy is cooler than NHL jerseys right now (Shalala).

k2.　According to Shalala, celibacy is cooler than NHL jerseys right now.

k3.　Celibacy is cooler than NHL jerseys right now (7).

Chapter 25　The Research Paper

Having freshmen write terms papers can be risky. If you let it become a four- or six-week exercise in writing to no purpose or writing to go through the motions of term-paper making, you'll undue all the good work of the term. When I ask my students to recall significant moments from their school writing career, either good or bad, students always fix on the term paper as the moment when writing became pointless. There is also the question of whether it is worth the time. Term papers usually take at least four weeks. In those four weeks students will prewrite, write, rewrite, and perhaps peer-edit once. If you spent the month on writing one-page essays, students could do each of those things eight times. If you assign a term paper, you owe it to your students to make it meaningful and rewarding—if you can't, don't assign one. I'd spend a lot of time shaping the goals in the prewriting stages, and I'd personally okay every project before I'd let a student undertake it, to prevent disaster. Macrorie's well-known "I-search" approach is a good model. Having said that, I'll just say that the term paper is nothing more than a big version of what we've seen before and poses no new problems. You'll need to teach Chapters 23 and 24 in harness with Chapter 25.

PART VI　A TREASURY OF GOOD ESSAYS

Here are 24 great essays by people like your students. Together with the student essays sprinkled throughout the chapters, *The Writer's Way* sports over fifty such essays. I hope these essays will be the heart of your course. Use them any way you like. Read them. Discuss them. Have students pick out ones they like and say why they like them. Use them for inspiration, as technical models, or as conversation starters. Try to bring them into everything you do in the course. They'll do much of your work for you. Most important, they'll let your students know right away that they can do this thing called writing.

THE WRITER'S WAY

To the Instructor:

In the text I explained how I think people write; now I hope that you'll tell me if you agree. I would like you to take a few minutes to let me know about your reactions to *The Writer's Way*. Someday the fifth edition will be revised, and you can help me make that revision better. Please write your answers on this form and add extra sheet if necessary and mail them to me:

> Jack Rawlins
> c/o English
> College Division
> Houghton Mifflin Company
> 222 Berkeley Street
> Boston, MA 02116-3764

Be honest and specific in all your answers; tell me what you like and what you don't like. Thank you.

1. Overall, how would you rate *The Writer's Way*? (Check one.)

   ✳ excellent   ✳ average

   ✳ good   ✳ poor

2. Which chapters in the book worked best for your class? Which chapters worked least well?

	Why?	

3. Were there other aspects of writing or specific types of writing tasks that you'd like to see in future editions of *The Writer's Way*?

4. Did any sections of the book seem too long or too short? Did any of them seem too easy or too hard for your students? If so, please list them and explain why.

5.	Were the exercises at the ends of the chapters useful?	

6. Do you have any additional suggestions, criticisms, or reactions to *The Writer's Way*?

7. How do you write? For instance, what steps do you go through to make an essay? Section II of *The Writer's Way* describes a writer's process; does that model work for you? What personal gambits, tricks, or games have you invented to help yourself along the path to the finished essay, things that might be included in future editions of *The Writer's Way*?

Name	
Department	
School	