

COLLEGE 101:

A Freshman Reader



JOHN D. LAWRY

College 101

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John D. Lawry

Marymount College Tarrytown

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá
Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan
Montreal New Delhi San Juan Singapore
Sydney Tokyo Toronto

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

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Acknowledgments appear on pages 309–312, and on this page by reference.

7 8 9 0 DOC DOC 9 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-036733-7

This book was set in Palatino by Carlisle Communications, Ltd.
The editors were Lesley Denton and John M. Morriss;
the production supervisor was Friederich W. Schulte.
The cover was designed by Armen Kojoyian.
Project supervision was done by Carlisle Communications, Ltd.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 91-68069

To the Instructor

Dear Instructor,

One of the most challenging and uplifting experiences I have had in my twenty-six year teaching career was teaching a Freshman Seminar/College 101 course for the first time. I wish you a similar experience!

The idea for this anthology came to me shortly after the publication of my book, *How To Succeed at School: Letters of a Professor to His Daughter*. As a result of the research I did for that book along with my growing interest in the “University 101” movement and attendance at several Freshman Year Experience Annual Meetings at the University of South Carolina and elsewhere, I discovered many of the readings that appear in this book. Most of the readings I have used myself with my General Psychology and College 101 classes with desired effect and enthusiastic response from my students.

This book is designed to stand by itself as a textbook but it can also be used with any of the many fine textbooks emphasizing skills currently available for this kind of course (e.g., *Study Skills For Today's College Student* by Jerold W. Apps, McGraw-Hill, 1990). At the end of each reading you will find four or five discussion questions designed to help in getting a good discussion started. I find the class usually needs only one or two such starters and then they are off and running on their own. You will also notice suggestions for journal entries. I have found the keeping of a journal to be an extremely worthwhile experience for my students. It is an excellent way to get to know them and it provides an opportunity for self-exploration and expression. In fact, I begin the book with the reading, “The Journal,” which I have found especially helpful in getting students started on keeping their journals.

While keeping in mind the diversity that exists in the contemporary population of freshmen, and their diverse reading abilities, I have tried to select a variety of articles that address the major issues of the freshman experience from a holistic, student-centered perspective. If any of the readings don't work for you or your students, I would like to hear about it. I would also appreciate any suggestions for new readings.

There are many people I could thank but I will save the tree space by restricting myself to the members of Marymount's Faculty Development Committee and the Academic Dean, Lorna Edmundson, for awarding me two annual consecutive course releases to complete this book; the patient and always helpful librarians at Marymount especially the Director, Sr. Virginia McKenna, RSHM; Lesley Denton, my sponsoring editor at McGraw-Hill for believing in this project when other editors said that it was too risky; the following reviewers, at various stages, who made some excellent suggestions: Dan Berman, University of South Carolina; Rennie Brantz, Appalachian State University; Nancy Brown, Lourdes College; Terry Doyle, Ferris State University; Paula Gibson, Cardinal Stritch College; Stephen Hensley, Marshall University; Eric Hibbison, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College; Patricia Konal, Blackburn College; Nancy McKinley, Lorraine County Community College; Dale Norton, College of the Sequoias; Alicia Pieper, Kent State University; Josef Raab, University of Southern California; Richard Schmonsky, Columbia-Greene Community College; Harriet Spitzer, New York Institute of Technology; Suzanne Tolliver, University of Cincinnati; Carl Wahlstrom, Genesee Community College; M.C. Ware, SUNY Cortland; Jerry Warner, Northern Kentucky University; and John N. Gardner, friend and colleague at the University of South Carolina, who got me interested in "University 101" in the first place and has given me unfailing encouragement from the very beginning of this project.

Good luck and may all of your students survive and thrive in their freshman year.

Your colleague,

John D. Lawry

To the Student

Dear Student,

Like most veteran academics I barely remember my freshman year at college. Although this year marks the 26th year I have been teaching at the college level, I only became interested in the freshmen experience when my own daughter, Lili, went off to college in 1985. It was then that I developed a new appreciation of just how difficult the first year of college can be. Somehow both Lili and I survived that first year and she graduated “on time” three years later. But I will never forget the struggles as well as the joys. (Lili tells me that I struggled harder than she did!)

My experience as a teacher and a parent has taught me the importance of a holistic (i.e., the physical, emotional, vocational, and spiritual as well as the intellectual) approach to the freshman year. I hope you will find the advice and the wisdom you need in these pages to give you the best start possible toward the rest of your college career and adult life.

I have used these readings in my own College 101 course and others. These readings are intended to provide various points of view for discussion and reflection. They are not offered as ultimate answers or truths to issues. My students are constantly giving me new articles to read and share with the class. I hope you will do the same.

There was a poster hanging in what was then called an alternative school that I read about. It said: “None of us is as smart as all of us.” That is the philosophy that I like to bring to my classes and I would like to extend that invitation to you the student reader as well.

And now it is time to begin the journey toward the fulfillment of your dreams about college.

Bon voyage,

John D. Lawry

Contents

To the Instructor xiii
To the Student xv

SECTION I

The Journal 1

Essay

1. Tolbert McCarroll: *The Journal* 2
“It is through my journal that I begin to hear my own story and to search for my part in the story of life.”

SECTION II

Campus Culture 5

Lists

2. John D. Lawry: *What No One Ever Told Them about College* 7
“The amount of responsibility (independence) placed upon the student.”

3. Lisa Birnbach: *Roommate Desirability Chart and Offense List* 10
“What to look for in a roommate: own car, stereo, tv, typewriter, mini-fridge, p.c., sexy sibling of the opposite sex, etc.”

Essays

4. William Zinsser: *College Pressures* 13
“I am privy to their hopes and fears—and also to the stereo music and their piercing cries in the dead of night (‘Does anybody ca-a-are?’).”
5. Ellen Goodman: *Training for Real Life* 21
“Men and women marry one by one, or at least one after another. But we work together in droves. The value of the coed dorm may be in graduating men and women who are natural with each other in the work world.”
6. Elvira Franco: *A Magic Circle of Adult Students* 24
“Older than 40 and starting from scratch: I thought I was a unique item, but as soon as I peeked out of my shell I found a sea of women in similar positions.”

Short Story

7. Andre Dubus: *Townies* 27
“As he approached, he looked into their faces, their hair. They did not look at him. He walked by them. He could smell them and he could feel their eyes seeing him and not seeing him.”

SECTION III

Student-Teacher Relationships 37

Essays

8. Dick Gregory: *Shame* 39
“I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn’t go back very often. There was shame there. Now there was shame everywhere. It seemed like the whole world had been inside that classroom, everyone had heard what the teacher had said, everyone turned around and felt sorry for me.”
9. Jean Houston: *The Art of Acknowledgment* 44
“To be acknowledged by another, especially during times of confusion, loss, disorientation, disheartenment, is to be given time

and place in the sunshine and is, in the metaphor of psychological reality, the solar stimulus of transformation.”

10. Michael Kantor: *Confessions of a Lonely TA* 48
 “Lisa began putting her phone number on assignments, and when she came by there was a certain forwardness about her, a kind of can-you-handle-this? attitude.”
11. Robert Oliphant: *Letter to a B Student* 51
 “Most of all, I hope that what I’ve said helps you to understand the limitations of any grade as a measure of who you are and what you can do. It’s a symbol, a mark on a piece of paper. Nothing more.”
12. Tama Janowitz: *He Rocked, I Reeled* 57
 “But when the teacher was as excited about the topic—as if he or she was still a little kid, rushing in from the yard to tell a story—that was when the subject became alive for me.”

Poem

13. Langston Hughes: *Theme for English B* 60
 “As I learn from you,
 I guess you learn from me—
 although you’re older—and white—
 and somewhat more free.”

Play

14. Shirley Lauro: *Open Admissions* 62
 “I don’t even turn no outline in? Jiss give me a ‘B’. An Lester a ‘B’!
 An Melba a ‘B’! An Sam a ‘B’! What’s that ‘B’ standin for anyhow?
 Cause it surely ain’t standin for no piece of work!”

SECTION IV

Academic Concerns 75

Essays

15. Donna Farhi Schuster: *On Becoming a Better Student* 77
 “. . . the greatest thing I can offer my students is to help them learn how to find themselves through their own investigation.”
16. Adrienne Rich: *Claiming an Education* 84
 “One of the devastating weaknesses of university learning. . . (for women). . . has been the almost total erasure of women’s experience and thought from the curriculum. . . .”

17. Sam Sifton: *John of Arc* 89
 “What do we as women think?” I asked sarcastically. ‘How would I know?’ I suddenly found myself on a mission. I’d take the course and prove that women’s studies isn’t just for women.”
18. Malcolm X: *Prison Studies* 92
 “No university would ask any student to devour literature as I did when this new world opened to me, of being able to read and *understand*.”
19. Joan Didion: *Why I Write* 96
 “In many ways writing is the act of saying *I*, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying *listen to me, see it my way, change your mind*.”
20. Samuel Scudder: *In the Laboratory with Agassiz* 102
 “‘That is good, that is good!’ he repeated; ‘but that is not all; go on;’ and so for three long days he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidden to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. ‘Look, look, look,’ was his repeated injunction.”
21. Gilbert Highet: *What Use Is Poetry?* 106
 “The knowledge of what the poets have said about experiences beyond the frontiers of logic will help us at least to sympathize with them in these experiences. Such understanding is one of the most difficult and necessary efforts of the soul.”

Poem

22. Peyton Richter: *A Humanity* 117
 “A humanity is where it’s at; that’s that. It’s not what’s clever; it’s what’s forever.”

SECTION V

Family Ties 119

Essays

23. Nancy Mairs: *On Being Raised by a Daughter* 121
 “Before long Anne will have to consider the job done. A daughter can’t spend a lifetime raising her mother any more than a mother can spend a lifetime raising her daughter; they both have other work to get on with.”
24. Susan Moon: *Sons and Mothers* 134
 “We just stand there clinging to each other, a good hard hug. ‘I sure hate to say good-bye to you,’ I say, and suddenly begin to cry.

My tears fall on his neck. I hear him crying, too, and he holds me tighter.”

25. William Appleton: *Fathers & Daughters* 138
“The more a woman understands her father’s effect on her the more she will be able to enjoy her husband or lover sexually, emotionally, and intellectually, the freer she will be to pursue and advance in her career, the better mother she will be to her own children, and the richer her life will be.”
26. Andrew Merton: *Father Hunger* 148
“By coming to terms with their fathers, men are becoming better parents and breaking the cycle of father hunger.”

Short Story

27. Alice Walker: *A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring* 158
“She found black men impossible to draw or to paint; she could not bear to trace defeat onto blank pages. Her women figures were matronly, massive of arm, with a weary victory showing in their eyes.”

SECTION VI

Interpersonal Relationships 169

Essays

28. Nancy Gibbs: *When Is It Rape?* 171
“In many cases the man thought it was sex, and the woman thought it was rape, and they were both telling the truth.”
29. Melvin Konner: *Homosexuality: Who and Why?* 182
“If AIDS were God’s punishment for gay men, then gay women would presumably be God’s chosen people, for they have the lowest rate of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.”
30. Joyce Maynard: *Looking Back* 187
“For about three weeks of my freshman year at college I had two roommates instead of one—the girl in the bottom bunk and her friend, who made our quarters especially cramped because, in addition to being six feet tall with lots of luggage, he was male. We slept in shifts. . . .”
31. Ellen Goodman: *The Tapestry of Friendship* 192
“Well, she thought, on the whole, men had buddies, while women had friends. Buddies bonded, but friends loved. Buddies faced adversity together, but friends faced each other.”

32. Daphne Merkin: *Prince Charming Comes Back* 195
“But it appears that in the post-modernist, post-feminist, closing decade of the 20th century, we still need our myths, our amatory fictions; they help us to endure. We are ready again for the mad, implausible embrace.

Poem

33. Anonymous: *After a While* 199
“After a while
you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand
and chaining a soul.”

Short Stories

34. Andre Dubus: *If They Knew Yvonne* 201
“I want to confess about the girl again, because when I confessed it before it wasn't right. I made love to her without loving her and the last time I made love to her I told some boys about it.”

SECTION VII

Personal Development 223

Essays

35. Kathleen Keating: *A Hug for All Reasons* 225
“Hugs are not only nice, they're needed. Hugs can help relieve pain and depression, make the healthy healthier, the happy happier and the most secure among us even more so.”
36. Jeff Howard and Ray Hammond: *Rumors of Inferiority* 233
“The doctrine of intellectual inferiority acts on many black Americans the way that a ‘con’ or a ‘hustle’ like three-card monte acts on its victim. It is a subtle psychological input that interacts with characteristics of the human cognitive apparatus—in this case, the extreme sensitivity to expectancies—to generate self-defeating behavior and thought processes. It has reduced the intellectual performance of millions of black people.”
37. Philip Zimbardo: *A Practical Guide to Sources of Help* 244
“When our usual emotional supports, such as parents or close friends, are absent or unavailable, we should not hesitate to seek help from other sources.”

38. Richard Rodriguez: *The Workers* 247
 "But I was not one of the *los pobres*. What made me different from them was an attitude of *mind*, my imagination of myself."
39. Elizabeth Wong: *The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl* 253
 "I finally was granted a cultural divorce. I was permitted to stop Chinese school. I thought of myself as multicultural. I preferred tacos to egg rolls; I enjoyed Cinco de Mayo more than Chinese New Year. At last, I was one of you; I wasn't one of them. Sadly I still am."

Poems

40. Nadine Stairs: *If I Had My Life To Live Over* 256
 "If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies."
41. Anonymous: *Risks* 257
 "because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
 The person who risks nothing,
 does nothing, has nothing and is nothing."

Short Story

42. C.D.B. Bryan: *So Much Unfairness of Things* 259
 "Many students feel stronger about the schoolboy code than the Honor Code. No one likes to turn in a friend. A lot of boys who don't know any better, a lot of your friends will never forgive Jumbo."

SECTION VIII

Spiritual Quest 287

Essays

43. John White: *What Is Meditation?* 289
 "Meditation is a time-honored technique-probably humanity's oldest spiritual discipline-for helping people to release their potential for expanded consciousness and fuller living."
44. Gerald Jampolsky: *Nothing Real Is Impossible* 299
 "Practicing peace of mind, peace of God, became her single goal;

practicing forgiveness her single function; and listening to, and being directed by, her inner voice became her way of experiencing a sense of completion and oneness. She began to forgive God and the universe for her blindness.”

45. John D. Lawry: *Learning What Really Matters: Forgiveness* 303
“At the beginning of the next class, I asked if anyone was successful in experiencing forgiveness towards someone. A very shy student in the first row raised her hand. She said she would like to tell the class about what happened between her and her older sister.”
46. Rainer Maria Rilke: *Letter to a Young Poet* 306
“If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself, tell yourself that you are not poet enough to call forth its riches.”

Acknowledgments 309

Index 313

Section I

The Journal

For the majority of my students in College 101, nothing in the course requirements causes more initial resistance than the requirement of keeping a journal. "I hate writing." "How can I be personal if you are going to read it?" "I don't have time to keep a journal." Etc. And yet, nothing seems to match the journal in its power to teach self-exploration. As McCarroll says: "... to hear my own story and to search for my part in the story of life." Most of my students acknowledge this at the end of the course and can't wait for me to read their journals. I strongly recommend, therefore, that you consider keeping a journal whether it is actually required or not.

It has been my experience that often my women students have kept a diary sometime during childhood and/or adolescence whereas it is the exceptional male student that has kept one. Therefore, if you are a female reader, you probably will not have much trouble with keeping a freshman journal. However, if you are a male reader, this may be difficult at first but I urge you to keep at it. Our culture does not encourage males to be very introspective and we pay the price for our ignorance.

If we experience our freshman year as something largely unrelated to who we are as persons, then we have effectively restricted the amount of change that we can expect from our college experience. If you find yourself resisting, think of it as writing the story of your life. What could be more interesting?

Reading 1

The Journal

Tolbert McCarroll

This is an excerpt from *Exploring the Inner World* (1974). The author, psychologist Tolbert McCarroll, University of Oregon '53, describes journal keeping and its tremendous potential for cultivating an inner life.

You are on a voyage of self-exploration. You need a journal, a log to keep a record of the adventure. The journal is not a place for explaining, for asking or answering why. It is not a diary. It is a log.

On this quest the activities recorded are dreams, fantasy, art, experiences, and similar events. The items are recorded in a simple manner with no comment, editing, or analysis. The journal is a record of what is; not what should be.

There are many other kinds of logs. The master on a ship decides what data to collect, what events to record in the ship's log.

Obtain a good sized notebook. Artists sketch books are inexpensive and ideal in every way. There is usually an embarrassing moment as you look at your new journal. How do you start? We feel the first entry should be very impressive. Do not use the journal to impress yourself, and certainly not posterity. If nothing else works to break the mystique, rip out the first page. The journal is an existential joke book. It is a place to play, to be free and spontaneous. The journal is you—all of you, including the parts that are not introduced into polite society: the immature you, the dreamer, the child. The journal is the place where they all come together without invitation and without rejection. And you own whatever is there.

There is a haiku by Issa that belongs in the front of every journal:

He who appears
before you now—is the Toad
of this Thicket.

Whatever comes, it's my thicket. My journal is many things to me; above all, it is a companion. It helps me gain self-discipline and keeps my experiences alive.

Discipline is important in this quest. Inner messages are not given to the casual dilettante. Am I really trying to hear myself? This is the basic question. A glance through your journal will tell you whether you are only talking about self-exploration or are actually engaged in the process.

Many of the experiences logged in a journal have a short life span. By your writing them down, their duration is prolonged a few precious moments. The act of recording also allows you to retain some of your emotional involvement each time you return to what you have written.

Each experience is a piece in a puzzle. You could try to work a jigsaw puzzle by using one piece and trying to deduce what the entire puzzle looks like, but it would waste considerable time in unproductive speculation. A better use of your energy and a clearer sense of the picture can be obtained by collecting as many pieces as possible. Each new piece gives additional meaning to the ones already collected. The journal is the table upon which to store and play with the pieces collected.

The discipline of growth is demanding. Its rewards are not always immediate. Why do it? That is the difficult question. If a person is not committed to his own growth, there is no reason to undertake this journey. If you are committed, then you explore your inner world simply because it is a necessary part of you.

It is not always easy to be ourselves. The first step is really to hear what is going on with us. The masks we wear for the benefit of others often deceive us as well. It is important that we learn to be ourselves. We do this by stopping the attempt to be somebody else. There is a wise biblical proverb:

“Drink the water of thy own well.”

You must drink your own water, be it bitter or sweet. You must be yourself. If you want to change or grow, you have to accept where you are and be who you are.

The wisdom for growth is within us. Once we have learned really to listen to ourselves we can hear suggestions for our next step. Sometimes there is pain. The wild storms of winter are a necessary preliminary for spring's beauty. Just as bodily discomfort can tell us when we have broken nature's rhythm, the pain in the heart can be a beacon showing us the next step on our journey.

It is through the discipline of keeping a journal that I learn to become me. Without this inner journey, I feel incomplete and lonely. I am conscious of all the “oughts” and “shoulds” of my life. This is not enough. I want to hear from that part of me that never changes and feel those parts that change every second. It feels good to be me and the more me I am the less conscious I am of me.

Each of us is a necessary part of a long story. It would have been nice if we had been taught our place in the story when we were young children, but a while back it seems as if everyone forgot the story. So we all grew up wondering about our value and our worth. We search for a place where we can belong. Now when we are older and it is harder, we must learn that our value is in being who we are and that we belong here. It is through my