

A MEETING *of* MINDS

A Brief Rhetoric for Writers and Readers



Patsy Callaghan

Ann Dobyns

A Meeting of Minds

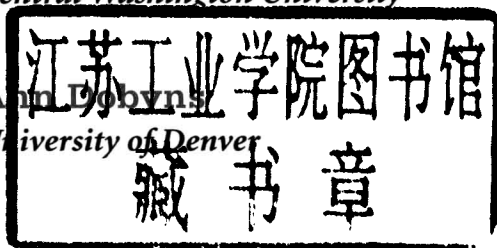
A BRIEF RHETORIC
FOR WRITERS
AND READERS

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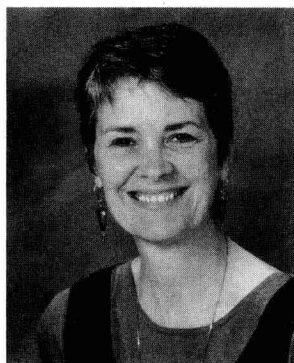
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A Meeting of Minds

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Patsy Callaghan is Chair of the English Department at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington, where she has been a professor and administrator for twenty years. She teaches rhetoric, composition, and world literature and has coordinated both the writing and English Education programs. This is her second book with Ann Dobyns, following *Literary Conversation: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Literature*, published in 1996. She has held leadership roles in national professional associations and has served on many state and regional committees on writing assessment and teacher education.



Ann Dobyns is Chair of the English Department at the University of Denver, where she is an Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Medieval Literature and teaches the graduate seminar on teaching argument as well as classes in writing theory, history of rhetoric, Kenneth Burke, Chaucer, the Pearl Poet, and medieval romance. She is the author of *The Voices of Romance: Studies in Dialogue and Character* (Delaware, 1989) and co-author, with Patsy Callaghan, of *Literary Conversation: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Literature* (Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

A Meeting of Minds

PREFACE

Every day, we struggle to make sense of what is unfamiliar or complex or disturbing or intriguing. Winning that struggle requires that we fit new information and ideas into the intricate web of our experience. When we win, we understand something in a new way. In most cases, the struggle to make sense involves other people. In our communities, we work together to find solutions to complex problems. In our college classes, we work together to achieve an understanding of the subject matter. “Do you know what I mean?” we ask each other. “Do you see this the way I do?”

So, for our students, for other writing instructors, and for ourselves, we have written a book about the art of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of using words to make sense, and of using words artfully so that they make sense to others. Such a “meeting of the minds,” as Chaim Perelman calls it, allows writers and readers to explore their differences in reasoned discourse, and their understanding of this meeting of minds informs all parts of the book.

Students may think that learning involves mastering information, and to a certain extent that is true, but facts and data have no use until we act on them with our intelligence and imagination to make them meaningful to someone else. When we read, we are attempting to understand the words of other writers. When we write, we are attempting to help others see our meaning the way we do. Conscious, guided practice in reading and writing with a clear sense of this dynamic relationship strengthens our ability to come to understanding. Such explorations require us to identify our initial responses, and then challenge them through discussion, reasoning, and research.

Here’s how this book can help readers and writers meet other minds through informed conversation.

PART I: RHETORIC AS A MEETING OF MINDS

Part 1 comprises three short chapters that introduce the strategies and responsibilities of the art of rhetoric. In Chapter 1, students learn how to analyze rhetorical situations—the way reader, writer, subject, and purpose influence the writer’s work—and they learn how good writers choose effective rhetorical strategies, words, structures, reasons, and appeals that fit the situation. They “listen in” as members of a community try to make sense of the shooting of a young bear in a suburban backyard. Reading the community’s responses, students locate key rhetorical concepts—situation, strategy, context, dialogue—within their consideration of a community controversy. In Chapter 2, students investigate situations and strategies as they explore in writing the kinds of inquiry developed more fully in later chapters. They write inquiry essays that encourage exploration for learning. In Chapter 3, students consider the ways writers shape their writing to follow

different sets of conventions, different sets of rules, depending on the rhetorical context. They examine the conventions of language use and patterns found in personal, public, and academic messages so that they will be prepared to participate in conversations in all of these contexts.

PART II: READING AND WRITING AS DIALOGUES

The chapters in Part 2 present reading and writing as ways of knowing and understanding through dialogues with others on shared issues. Students often seem to assume that we expect them to enter conversations on issues with their minds already made up, or they believe they have no authority to say anything. We reassure them that the qualifications they need to join conversations about issues are that they know how to listen responsibly and speak with respect.

In Chapter 4, we discuss reading and writing to understand and respond. We separate *reading to understand* from *reading to respond*, even though we know that those processes happen simultaneously, because many of our students have difficulty reading texts that they disagree with and critiquing texts that they agree with. Students write summaries to help them listen thoroughly and respectfully to the words of others. They write responses to see how new ideas compare to their own experience and prior knowledge.

In Chapter 5, we continue to develop critical and rhetorical awareness as students examine strategies professional writers use to find, plan, and structure arguments that encourage mutual understanding. They consider how stasis questions allow readers to identify the kinds of questions a writer is addressing, whether the issue is one of fact, definition, circumstance, policy, or value. They also explore writers' appeals to reason, values, and emotions and how these appeals determine language choice. As they examine these choices in others' writing, students learn to write rhetorical analyses.

Chapter 6 presents a unique approach to academic research. Instead of seeing research as a genre, a paper with sources, we present essential information about finding and evaluating sources. Early in the book, students are provided with the tools they need to explore any issue they need to know more about. They are invited to prepare not research papers, but research proposals, including working bibliographies and plans for further investigation. Projects proposed in response to this chapter can develop as students learn more about inquiry and reasoning in subsequent chapters.

Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 show students ways to apply their responsible and responsive reading to the inquiry process. Chapter 7 suggests ways that students might synthesize alternate perspectives—helping them to suspend the inclination to jump prematurely to a conclusion. In synthesis essays, students connect different points of view on questions at issue, reflecting the complexity of academic conversations. They learn how to discover, cite, and document the voices in those conversations as they become familiar with the methods and conventions of research. Chapter 8 focuses on the rhetoric of the academic argument, its purpose,

audience expectations, and forms and structures of reasoning. The emphasis is not on winning but on arriving at the position that is most acceptable among alternatives. This chapter on argument translates technical vocabulary into practical strategies for reasoning to avoid the “algebraic” look of logic-based texts. Chapters 9 and 10 invite students to apply the skills they have been learning and practicing throughout the book—skills of analysis, response, and argument—to questions of interpretation and evaluation.

PART III: DESIGNING AND REFINING YOUR WRITING

The three chapters of Part 3 focus on how writers can refine and present their messages to address the specific needs of a rhetorical context. In Chapter 11, students learn to see the elements and strategies of visual messages as analogous to the rhetoric of verbal messages. Then, in the section on document design, students come to understand that presentational features such as space, typography, alignment, and graphics are also persuasive and must be chosen strategically. Finally, the chapter links the visual and verbal by analyzing the Web page as a rhetorical document containing both verbal and visual strategies.

Chapters 12 and 13 present the editing and revision processes within a rhetorical context as well. Often, students complain that we evaluate their work on skills we do not teach. Instructors often complain that every student comes equipped with some revision and editing skills, but no two students have the same ones. When and where should we include sentence and paragraph skills in the first-year composition course? Our answer: Anytime the students need them, within the context of their own work. Chapters 12 and 13 do not replace the reference function of a handbook, but they do provide students with strategies for revising and editing, including coverage of the twenty most frequent errors college writers make. The key concepts related to structure, grammar, and syntax, as well as coherence, cohesion, clarity, and conciseness are illustrated, and students are invited to practice achieving these qualities through exercises designed to encourage purposeful decision making. An Appendix on Documentation is included to help students integrate source material responsibly and accurately.

PART IV: A MEETING OF MINDS: DIALOGUES ON ISSUES

We have included readings as models for analysis throughout the text: examples of student writing, letters to editors, and published writings. But because we want to present a realistic model of inquiry, we have expanded the discussion of three of the topics addressed in the text itself into casebooks. Each casebook includes readings that are meant to function as texts in dialogue with each other. They are varied in source, genre, and purpose. They are concerned with elements of a common subject, but they do not address the same question. We think they are evocative, raise multiple opportunities for inquiry, and help avoid “pro-con” oversimplifications of complex issues. Casebook 1: The Vote has as its focus the rights, responsibilities, and

difficulties of participating in a democracy. Casebook 2: English Only addresses the culturally thorny bilingualism question. Casebook 3: He Said/She Said begins with Deborah Tannen's controversial research on the differences in male and female communication styles and then includes several essays that respond to and critique her argument.

OUR PURPOSE

As students read this book, we hope that it offers

- Acknowledgement of their uniqueness—by giving them opportunities to introduce their prior knowledge and experience into the classroom conversation.
- Reassurance—by making clear that some qualities of good writing apply across disciplinary and professional boundaries.
- Orientation—by making familiar the expectations and strategies used in academic writing tasks.
- Challenge—by encouraging them to identify their own preconceived notions and the assumptions of other readers and writers, and by valuing reasoned critique and assessment.
- Respect—by assuming that they can find and make their own meaning through the art of rhetoric.

SUPPLEMENTS FOR A MEETING OF MINDS

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual was prepared by Betsy Gwyn in collaboration with the authors. Betsy Gwyn has taught introductory composition, as well as argument and research courses, at Oklahoma State University, Denver University, Arapahoe Community College, and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. The Instructor's Manual includes a practical overview for using the text in different course structures and with a variety of approaches; complete chapter notes including sample responses and guidance for chapter exercises; notes on student online writing with website references; an essay on the rhetorical and critical assumptions that inform the text; and sections on pedagogy and resources for composition.

Companion Website

The Companion Website (www.ablongman.com/callaghan) includes additional student resources and exercises for each chapter, including Writing to Learn activities, links to online resources, a list of readings and bibliographies for paper topics, and additional sample student papers to supplement the extensive selection of student papers provided in the text. The Companion Website is authored by Hillory Oakes, Director of the Writing Center at St. Lawrence University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The title of our book acknowledges the extent to which our work emerges from ongoing conversations: between the two of us for the last twenty-five years; with the theorists who have influenced our thinking and practice; and with professors, mentors, colleagues, and friends. First, as a collaborative work, this book grows out of a long dialogue that began in the spring of 1978 when we shared an office in graduate school and discovered our similar academic backgrounds. Patsy had studied rhetoric with William Irmischer in the masters program at the University of Washington; Ann had studied communication theory in undergraduate school at Lewis and Clark College. Both of us had taught at the secondary level. Later, we were both fortunate to study rhetoric with John Gage, whose influence can be found in every chapter of this book, both his own scholarship and that of the major figures we studied in his classes and tutorials: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian; Kenneth Burke, I.A. Richards, Chaim Perelman, and Wayne C. Booth. In addition to these theorists, we owe a debt to scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Ann Berthoff, Martin Camargo, Thomas Conley, James Crosswhite, Jeanne Fahnestock, Lawrence Green, Louise Rosenblatt, Marie Secor, and Jeffrey Walker, whose work has enriched our understanding of rhetoric. The conversations we have had with colleagues and friends have given us opportunities to test ideas in dialogue with good interlocutors. We should like to thank, in particular, Janet Bland, who read most of the book in manuscript and offered many suggestions for revision, and, in addition, Linda Bense-Meyers, Eric Gould, David Klooster, Christina Kreps, Terry Martin, Sally O'Friel, Eileen Turoff, and Margaret Whitt. And we are grateful to Betsy Gwyn and Hillory Oakes for class testing the book, reading and commenting on the manuscript, and composing the Instructors' Manual and Companion Website, and to Dell Vandever for all her support. We should also like to thank the editorial staff at Longman: Eben Ludlow for his continuing support and oversight of the project; Judith Fifer for her suggestions that helped us focus the format and presentation of our ideas and for her attentiveness to details throughout the process; and Lake Lloyd for her speed and care with production. And we owe thanks to the excellent readers for their careful, respectful reading and excellent advice for revision.

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PATSY CALLAGHAN
ANN DOBYNS

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