

Second Edition

HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS AND DISSERTATIONS

A GUIDE FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS

UNIT 1

Introduction

THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING IN

A lot of the interest in studying literature comes from reading a lot of the pleasure. It seems reasonable, therefore, to think of it as mainly a process of reading and learning about prescribed or recommended works; in doing this as part of a programme of study, you develop specialised kinds of knowledge, ability to investigate writing, and in this way you become a professional discipline.

This view of history studies requires some qualification. It is true that the 'input' of your course consists largely of what you read and how you read it. But the assessed 'output' about what you have read or written. Sometimes that writing takes the form of short written answers to prescribed questions (as it does in exams); sometimes it consists of essays or dissertations. It is these written pieces, rather than your reading or participation in class discussion, that determine the marks, based on which the grades you are awarded.

论文写作指导书系

Nigel Fabb and Alan Durant



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HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS AND DISSERTATIONS

A GUIDE FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS

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藏书章

Alan Durant



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作 者	Nigel Fabb Alan Durant
丛书策划	石 坚
责任编辑	张 晶
责任校对	王 兴
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论文写作指导书系

总导言

随着高等教育的发展和教学改革不断深入，从应试教育转向素质教育已成为目前讨论的焦点；高校更加重视学生的创新思维，强调学生的实际技能和研究方法的培养。为此，论文写作已经成为大学本科生、研究生学习的重要环节。本科生的学年论文、毕业论文，研究生的硕士、博士论文等已成为考核学生学习的重要依据。除英语专业的本科生和研究生需用英文写论文外，也有不少其他学科的研究生需要用外语撰写论文，或将自己的研究成果用外语发表，以达到对外交流之目的。学术论文可以说是学术水平最直接的反映。学术论文写作与一般作文不同，除应有创新的观点、充分的论证、流畅的文笔和严谨的文章结构外，还得有符合学术要求的方法与规范，特别是用外语撰写论文就更应该符合国际通用的学术规范。

写作在外语学习中普遍被认为难度最大，但这正是外语实际应用中最重要的一种技能。学习外语的目的就是为了交流，而学生的交流能力往往要看学习者动口和动手的能力。不少本科生，甚至研究生，一提到写论文就犯难：通常是因为理不出思路 and 头绪，下笔写几句就感到无话可说，或辞不达意，不能有条理地阐述清楚自己的观点；参考了大量的文献资料却无从下手，不知道怎样合理和正确地引用文献资料；文章写作过程中，不知道论文的格式要求，比如说论文的标题、目录和提要，文章的章节结构，引文的标注，论文的文体与格式、表格、插图、脚注、引文及参考书目的著录格式等等。所有这些

在一篇论文中都有相应的规范要求。四川大学出版社引进的这套“论文写作指导书系”能很好地帮助论文作者解决上述难题。

WRITING MATTERS 一书的作者 Peter G. Beidler 教授是很多中国大学生熟悉的作者。他那脍炙人口的“WHY I TEACH”一文（《大学英语》第三册，上海外语教育出版社）打动过无数学生和老教师。作者有着长期从事大学英文写作课教学的经验，作为美国富布莱特教授他也曾到中国大学任教。此书有其他写作教材所没有的特点：它不直接给出写作中的规范（a list of Dos and Don'ts），而是循序渐进地引导读者自己动手，在写作的过程中学习、体会，逐步掌握论文写作要点和规范。全书的另一大特点是，作者用一般大学生所掌握的3 000左右的词汇量及生动而又风趣的语言，条理非常清楚地教给学习者怎样提高写作能力。Beidler 教授在书中首先帮助学习者建立起学习写作的自信心。他从多年的写作课教学经验中知道写作对于母语为英语的学生和以英语为外语的学生同样是学习中难度较大的一门功课。他用自己学习和工作中的积累及他多年来所教的学生的学习过程，让读者体会到任何人都可以成为一个优秀的作者，都可以写出好文章。他主张学习者要有自己的思想，有自己的创新思维，经过深思熟虑可形成自己的论点。同时，他也主张学习者要掌握文章写作的条理结构和篇章布局。为了让读者体会他所讨论的每一个写作要点，他把书中的每一章节写成一篇范文。从如何写好论文、找准题目、理清思路、组织论证、处理不同论点，到引文标注和写作规范，每一个章节都为读者做出了示范。Beidler 教授对大学生写作中常出现的问题采用学生的文章加以讲解，一边讲解一边修改，带着读者开辟出一条新的路径。每一章节均为一篇完美的文章，这也是本书的一大特点。所以在使用这本教材时，读者不仅仅可以学到每章中所讨论的写作要点，而且还可以把每一章节作为相关要点的文章来赏析。这本书让读者感到学习英文写作可以是一件愉快而又很有收获的事情。它既可以用作写作课的教材，也可以用作一般读者自修提高的学习手册，还可以成为英语爱好者阅读赏析的读本。这种让人思考、给人自信、引导人走向成功的书并不多见。

这套引进丛书中 Nigel Fabb 和 Alan Durant 所著的 *HOW TO WRITE ESSAYES, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN LITERARY STUDIES* 是一本针对性极强的学术论文写作指南，它在欧洲被以英语作为母语和非母语的大学生广泛使用。此书既可用作高校本科生、研究生和教师自修提高的读本，也可以作为文科学者，特别是文学、语言学学者在用英语写作学术论文时的参考指南。Fabb 和 Durant 两位作者是有多年写作教学经验的教师，他们认真总结了 20 世纪 80 年代以来大学课堂教学的变化，注意到在人文社会科学的学习中，教师对学生学习的考核不再用传统的“对与否”的问答式闭卷考试方法，而更多采用开卷式：在考试中以短论文的方式让学生就相关学习内容阐发自己的见解。许多文科课程还采用让学生写论文的方式来考察学生对学习内容掌握的情况。本科生完成学年论文、毕业论文，硕士研究生、博士研究生完成学术论文和学位论文已经是大学学习的基本要求。在我国也是如此。另外，Fabb 和 Durant 在编写这本写作指南时也考虑到了文学批评与文化批评自 20 世纪 80 年代以来的发展变化以及人文社会科学学科在国际交流中所普遍遵循的学术规范。这本书的重点不在写什么，而在怎么写；对论文写作的规范也不是枯燥乏味地列出 what you must do and must not do，而是在讲解学术论文写作规范和方法的同时，给读者和学习者留足空间，引导学习者去拓展自己的思路和张扬个人的写作风格。作者在有限的篇幅内用简洁的语言指导读者怎样阅读语言和文学作品，怎样克服对写作的畏惧心理，怎样理清思路和形成自己的论点，怎样论述和使用文献支撑来增强说服力，以及怎样使论文成为一篇规范的学术成果。同 *WRITING MATTERS* 一书的作者 Peter Beidler 一样，Fabb 和 Durant 把重点放在写作的过程之中，强调写作是一种构建，是一种不断完善的构建过程。他们认为写作与交谈不一样，是一种思考的过程。通过这种思考过程，读者可对所阅读的文本有更深刻的理解，同时对需要进一步阅读的资料和目的会更加清楚。书中所用的举例和范文均选自英语语言文学本科生和研究生的论文，他们中有以英语为母语的学生，也有以英语为外语的学生。对于学习者来说，这些在论文写作中易犯的共性错误很有启示意

义。本书的另一特点表现在其编撰方式上：作者在每一章节结尾对讨论的要点做了一个提纲式的归纳，有针对性地设计了一些练习帮助读者掌握所学的内容。除此之外，书中还为读者留有自己补充学习心得和笔记的篇幅，真正体现了作者在编写此书时一再强调的一个字“enable”，让读者和学习者在实践中学习写作，体会到写作中只有重视过程才会有好的结果。

George Watson 是剑桥大学经验丰富的写作课教师。他的 *WRITING A THESIS: a guide to long essays and dissertations* 一书是在他多年来所作的有关论文和学术文章写作的系列讲座的基础上形成的。这也是一本颇有新意的规范学术论文的读本和指南。全书共 21 个章节，分为两大部分。每一章节同上两本书一样并不是乏味的说教和写作规则的简单罗列。同 Peter Beidler 一样，George Watson 书中的每一章节本身就是一篇漂亮的范文。在每一章的开篇，他均精心节选了一些知名作家、学者谈学术和写作的论述，从 William Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson, Ralph Waldo Emerson 到 Samuel Taylor Coleridge，这些引言给人以非常深刻的启示。在“方法篇”（The approach）的 10 个章节中，作者从学者为什么要写作谈起，认真讨论了在论文写作时怎样合理使用学术理论、拟定文章主题，怎样谋篇布局和克服写作中的心理障碍等等。在“技能篇”（The techniques）的 11 个章节中，作者却从另一个角度对引文风格、引文技巧、文稿编辑、初稿处理、参考文献著录、语言学习及应用、论文发表等具体技能一一做了讨论。Watson 认为能写好文章不等于能写出合格的学术论文。在他看来，学术论文写作完全是另一门学科训练，不是学习者想怎么写就能怎么写的。学术论文写作有其严格的规范，需要严谨的行文、系统的文献处理、有理有据的论证和条理清晰的结构。*WRITING A THESIS* 在有限的篇幅中给了读者一个明晰的指南。作者编写本书的目的是指导文学、语言、史学的大学高年级本科生和研究生做课程论文、学年论文、毕业论文和学位论文，但这本指南对法学、经济学及其他社会科学和自然科学的学习者也非常适用。对于对英文写作有兴趣的一般读者来说，这也是一本很有价值的参考书。

四川大学出版社首批出版的这几本论文写作指南虽然原不属于统一系列，但它们有一个共同特点——强调写作学习是能力和创新思维的培养，强调写作学习是在动手的过程中进行的。*WRITING MATTERS* 帮助读者提高文章和论文写作的能力，*HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN LITERARY STUDIES* 训练读者掌握学术论文写作的规范，*WRITING A THESIS* 则在更高一个层次上帮助读者提高作为一个学者应该具备的素质和修养。相信这套“论文写作指导书系”会为我们的大学本科生和研究生、英语专业和非英语专业的学生、用英文进行科研和写作的学者和教师，以及爱好英语的读者带来非常实用的帮助。在这套书系的指导下，读者会发现用英文写作其实是一大乐趣。

石 坚

2003 年 3 月

川大花园

第二版导言

Nigel Fabb 和 Alan Durant 所著的 *HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN LITERARY STUDIES* 自 1993 年第一版出版以来备受读者的欢迎。读者群中以大学本科生、研究生和高校哲学社会科学学者、教师为主。12 年后作者于 2005 年在广泛听取该书使用者意见的基础上, 修订出版了第二版。第二版首先在书名上做了一点小小的改动, 这一改动似乎不太引人注目, 但却表达了作者的意图, 即更加注意让学习者在动手实践的过程中学会、学好写作。新版本的英文书名改为 *HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS AND DISSERTATIONS: A GUIDE FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS*。新版本保持了该书作为学术论文写作指南针对性强的特点, 其落脚点仍然在“enable”上, 强调一本好的论文写作教材不是给学习者列出一些具体的规则和教授具体的做法, 而是让学习者和读者通过自己动手实践, 在实践中既保持自己的个性, 又养成遵守学术论文写作规范的良好习惯, 在写作实践的过程中培养自己具有个性化的写作风格, 提高写作能力。

Fabb 和 Durant 两位作者是有多年写作课教学经验的英语语言文学教授, Fabb 还是 *Journal of Linguistics* 杂志的编辑。在本书第一版的撰写过程中, 他们就认真总结了 20 世纪 80 年代以来欧美大学课堂教学的变化, 注意到在哲学社会科学的教学, 教师对学生学习的考核不再用传统的“对与否”的选择问答式闭卷考试方式, 而更多地采用开卷的方式; 在考核中以短文或课程论文写作为主, 让学生就相关的学习内容阐发自己的见解。在许多哲学社会科学的课程中用调研报

告、读书报告和课程论文的形式来检查学生对学习内容的掌握已经非常普遍。10年前在撰写本书时，作者注意到了学生中普遍存在的“写作恐惧症”——学生们往往面临论文写作无从着手，难以把课堂讨论中的新颖观点和独到见解用文字在论文中确切地表达出来。

在2005年修订第二版的过程中，两位作者注意到上述这种文科学生写作时所面临的困惑仍然存在。在针对这些困惑提出应对措施的同时，他们又结合21世纪初高等教育的新特点和新的教学、学习方法，增添了新的内容。在新版本中作者考虑到了高校学生和研究者们在论文写作过程中所面对的新的评判标准、用计算机文字处理系统写作和编辑，以及广泛使用网络参考资源等带来的新问题，在修订本中补充了新的内容。新版本的另外几个特点是：

- 在每一章节中有针对性地选择了学生的论文作为范文，它们中有英语为母语的学生的习作，也有英语为外语的学生的习作，原汁原味地呈献给读者，供批评借鉴，并辅以作者的有针对性的详细评述来帮助学习者。

- 新版本的每一章节后增添了有针对性的练习来训练学习者提高对学术写作规范的掌握。

- 新版本还刻意考虑了长篇课程论文和学位论文的写作训练，设计了细致全面的训练过程，让学习者在实际动手的过程中“enable”他们自己驾驭长篇大作的 ability。

目前，我国高等教育正面临新一轮的教学改革。大学生、研究生创新能力和创新思维的培养越来越受到重视。我们的大学课堂如何教给学生探究式的学习方法，如何提高他们的基本素质，如何加强他们口笔头表述和交流能力，是教学界特别是外语教学界共同关心的问题。我一直认为，一本优秀的教材往往可以给我们带来一种新的教学理念和方法，可以改变我们的传统教学模式。*HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS AND DISSERTATIONS: A GUIDE FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS*正是这样的一本好书。因为这本书的重点不是教给学生写什么，不是告诉学生“what they must do and what they must not do”，而是让学生实际动手来体会怎么写。

综上所述，本书的引进为我们高校本科生、研究生和教师提供了一本好教材，为广大读者提供了一本自修提高写作能力的好读本，同时也为文科学者，特别是语言学、文学学者提供了一本英文学术写作的参考指南。

石 坚

2006 年 6 月 14 日

川大花园

Preface

If you are studying literature—whether at school, college or university—you will have to write essays. Those essays may take the form of exam answers, coursework projects or in some cases a longer dissertation, but they all have something in common. Each is meant to be difficult. If you don't find writing your essays difficult then something is wrong, since your teachers have set those essays largely because they expect you to learn from confronting difficulty. This book should help you to identify the difficulties presented by essay-writing and to work productively with them.

Being a good writer of an essay on literature means being a good reader, one who is able to make discoveries about a literary text. It also means being able to organise your time efficiently, so you can make the best use of the inevitably limited time you have available. Beyond these two skills, however, you also need to have a set of more specialised strategies for how to write; it is these strategies that this book should help you develop.

But why work on strategies that need to be learned and practised, rather than relying on your own individual creativity? After all, literary studies as a discipline has always been strongly committed to subjectivity and individuality; and an idiosyncratic essay may deserve to be rewarded far more than one which is clear and competent but lacks distinctive flair. (Many writers have discussed how the aims and methods of literary studies reflect values that vary between different places and times; and we ourselves

have done so in otherbooks which complement this one, including the practical guide Montgomery, Durant, Fabb, Furniss and Mills, *Ways of Reading : Advanced reading skills for students of English literature.*) It is an understandable reservation to be reluctant to nail down your interest in reading with rules for writing; but there is a reason to work on essay-writing strategies nevertheless: that even the most individual work—or perhaps especially the most individual work—builds on and refers to established conventions; you need to understand what those established conventions are if you are to work with (or against) them without being dominated or marginalised by them.

How to Write Essays and Dissertations : A Guide for English Literature Students is intended to be enabling rather than prescriptive. We recognise that it would be impossible to predict all the possible ways a good essay could be put together, and that prescriptive rules for writing risk inhibiting originality, stifling imaginative involvement in literature, cramping your style and turning literary study into a production line of variations on the same basic model. So instead of trying to tell you what to do, we offer ideas, models and suggestions to be used only where you judge them to be preferable to what you have done in the past or tend to do at present. Practical advice of this kind, and your reading of the examples we discuss, should enable you to benefit from norms and conventional devices without crushing your individual writing talents. Throughout, we emphasise how you might adapt our suggestions for your own purposes.

In the fifteen units which follow, we work through the process of writing an essay or dissertation step by step. For each essential task, from grasping the point of a question or formulating your own topic through to handing in a completed piece of work, we offer guidelines based on our experience as teachers and examiners and reflect on the assumptions and difficulties of particular techniques we introduce. We also give detailed commentary on extracts we have chosen to illustrate strengths and weaknesses of different

ways of tackling each aspect of essay writing.

The examples we use to illustrate essay-writing strategies—both effective strategies and less effective ones—are taken from a range of levels of work: school ‘A’ Level essays, undergraduate coursework essays, projects and examination scripts. Occasionally we have also taken examples from postgraduate work to illustrate a particular point. Some of the writers whose work we discuss are native speakers of English; others are not (they are so-called ‘non-native speakers’). The wide range of these sources reflects our view that many of the same basic problems are faced in writing literary essays at each level. Much of what we say should therefore be relevant whether you are preparing to write a short exam essay or doing postgraduate research. And although our examples are taken from courses and student research in English Literature, most of what we say is applicable to writing essays on literature in other languages, as well as to courses in cultural studies, media studies, art history and other humanities fields. The conventions and strategies we outline apply in all courses where essays of literary or cultural analysis are written in English.

Many of the essays we quote from, it should be remembered, are unfinished; and some examples have been taken from first drafts. Numerous errors remain in these extracts, both in those written by native speakers and in those written by non-native speakers. This is often exactly why the extracts are useful for our purposes. For reasons of space and continuity, however, we only comment on those features in any extract that are relevant to the particular topic under discussion. We are not recommending that you should imitate other features of the extracts simply because we have not discussed them.

Our wish in writing the first edition of this book, over ten years ago, was to address two difficulties we commonly met with in the different groups of students we were teaching. One difficulty was the range of reactions, from frustration through to depression, experienced by many students of

literature when contemplating a blank page or an essay deadline. The other was the widespread underachievement of students who read and discuss literary works in interesting and original ways in class, but whose written work made little impression on examiners not personally acquainted with the writer. Ten years on, neither problem is any less common, and in this second edition we continue to address these same basic difficulties. But we have also tried to incorporate lessons from the new ways in which the same underlying, general difficulties are experienced by students now. So as well as updating the book generally, we have taken this opportunity to consider fresh essay-writing challenges presented by changing forms of assessment, use of word-processing as the principal means of writing and editing, and extensive use of internet materials.

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