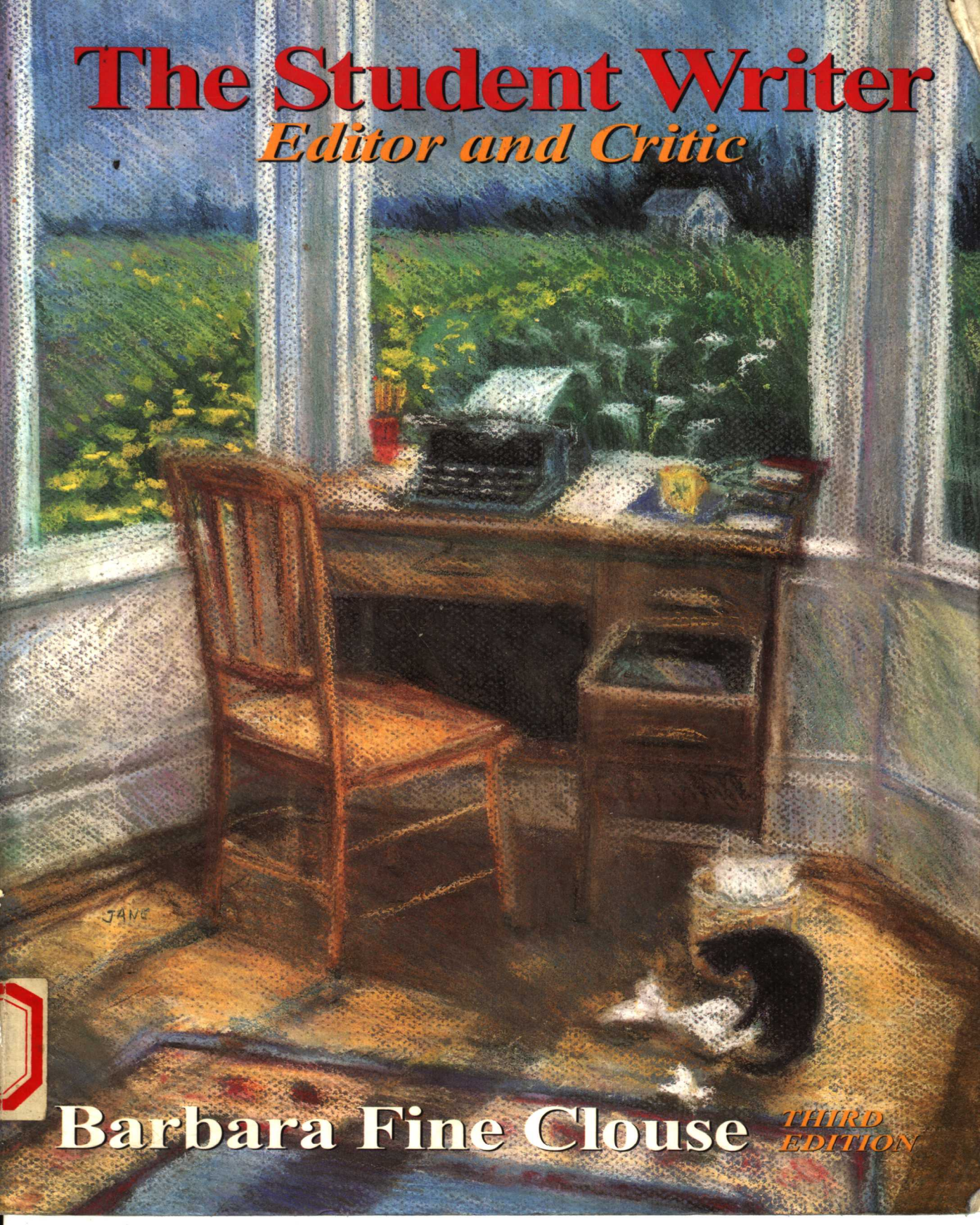
The Student Writer

Editor and Critic



Barbara Fine Clouse *THIRD EDITION*

The Student Writer

Editor and Critic

Third Edition

Barbara Fine Clouse

Slippery Rock University

With a Contribution by

Joy Johnson DeSalvo

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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

This book was developed by STEVEN PENSINGER, Inc.

The Student Writer:
Editor and Critic

Acknowledgments appear on pages 491–493, and on this page by reference.

4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOH DOH 9 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

ISBN 0-07-011414-5

This book was set in Times Roman by The Clarinda Company.
The editors were Steve Pensinger and Jean Akers;
the production supervisor was Denise L. Puryear.
The cover was designed by Caliber/Phoenix Color Corporation.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Clouse, Barbara Fine.
The student writer: editor and critic/Barbara Fine Clouse:
with a contribution by Joy Johnson DeSalvo.—3rd ed.
p. cm.
Includes Index.
ISBN 0-07-011414-5
1. English language—Rhetoric Criticism 3. Editing.
I. Title.
PE1408.C537 1992 91-23061
808'.042—dc20

In loving memory of
Rose Lewin and
Chance Crago Tatman

Preface

One assertion informing this text is that learning to write well means developing effective writing procedures. Thus, a primary focus of *The Student Writer: Editor and Critic* is helping students develop their own successful writing processes. To this end, the text helps students become aware of what they do when they write. It also helps them determine which aspects of their processes are effective and efficient and which are not. It describes a variety of ways to handle the different aspects of writing (idea generation, drafting, organizing, revising, editing, and proofreading), and it calls on students to sample many of these procedures. After sampling alternative procedures, students assess their effectiveness to determine whether further sampling is in order. In other words, throughout the text students are considering what they do when they write, evaluating the effectiveness of their procedures, and trying alternative procedures in an ongoing effort to improve their processes.

Another assertion informing this text is that student writers need considerable work with revision. For this reason, revision is a second focus of *The Student Writer.* To help students become skilled at revision, the text targets two concerns: accurately judging the strengths and weaknesses of a draft and successfully effecting the necessary changes. Revision, then, is treated as a two-step process. To help students learn to judge writing reliably so they can make accurate revision decisions, the text includes a large number of student essays. These essays are of varying quality, but each has some strengths and some weaknesses. Students are asked to study these essays and assess those strengths and weaknesses. This experience develops students' critical abilities and helps them become reliable evaluators of their own drafts so they can make accurate revision decisions. To help students learn to revise effectively, many revision strategies are described throughout the text. Students are encouraged to try a number of these strategies in order to discover revision techniques that work well for them.

The two-stage focus on revision gives the text its subtitle: *editor* is used in its broadest sense to refer to one who makes change to improve writing; *critic* refers to one who evaluates writing to determine what changes need to be made.

In addition to focusing on process, *The Student Writer* also treats essay structure: Chapter 2 discusses essay structure in detail; each of the chapters in Part II includes material on essay structure; the questions that follow the professional writings speak, in part, to the structure of the essays. In fact, throughout the text, the dual concern for process and structure is evident.

Features of the Text

The Student Writer: Editor and Critic is divided into three parts: The Writer's Process and the Essay's Structure, Methods of Development, and A Brief Guide to Frequently Occurring Errors.

Part I concerns itself with both the student writer's process and the characteristics of an effective essay. It treats process by helping students identify their own processes and determine how they can improve them. It describes a wide range of techniques for shaping topics, generating ideas to develop those topics, determining purpose, establishing and assessing audience, and drafting. All of this is discussed in the context of writer-based activity. In the context of reader-based activity, Part I describes various ways to evaluate a draft, revise, edit, and proofread. This section also includes essays by professional writers Barbara Wright and Gail Godwin that reiterate points made in Part I about the writing process.

In addition, Part I concerns itself with product. It offers a detailed treatment of essay structure and the qualities of an effective essay, including logical organization, adequate, relevant detail, and effective sentences.

Part II discusses description, narration, illustration, comparison and contrast, process analysis, cause-and-effect analysis, definition, classification, and persuasion. A full chapter is devoted to each. The chapters all have the same features, ones that attend to both process and product. Each chapter discusses content, structure, audience, and purpose. Each chapter also includes both professional and student samples to illustrate the principles discussed in the chapter. In addition, the student samples are the basis for activities that help students sharpen their critical abilities. These chapters also include writing topics as well as writing procedures students can sample as they work to improve their processes. Finally, each chapter closes with questions to help students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their current processes and to help them decide in what ways, if necessary, to alter their processes.

In addition, Part II includes a chapter on using researched material to develop essays. Rather than treat the traditional research paper, which has rightly been judged artificial, this chapter calls for students to use source material to develop their own essays. The focus here is on using source material as a portion of the writer's supporting detail. The chapter treats how to find material, document it responsibly, and incorporate it into an essay.

Part II also includes a chapter on writing in response to reading. This chapter describes some of the more frequently occurring writing tasks students will face in college, in and outside the English classroom. Six previously published essays appear in this chapter; they are accompanied by a range of writing assignments that call upon students to respond to their reading.

Part III of *The Student Writer* is a brief guide to frequently occurring errors. Rather than a handbook, this section is a concise explanation of fragments, run-ons, agreement, tense and person shifts, dangling and misplaced modifiers, parallelism, capitalization, and punctuation. It is intended as a quick editing reference for students who make occasional mistakes in these areas but not so many that comprehensive help is needed. The section also includes exercise material to allow students to apply the principles discussed.

An important feature of the text is Appendix I, which is a quick guide to solving writing problems. Most of the problem-solving strategies in this guide are explained in more detail in the body of the text, but the shorter appendix version makes a convenient troubleshooting reference.

Appendix II is another important feature. Here the student can study a student essay in progress to better understand the nature and importance of revision.

Changes in the Third Edition

In response to suggestions made by instructors who have used the second edition of *The Student Writer: Editor and Critic,* I have made a number of additions to the third edition. Two chapters have been added, one on classification and one on writing in response to reading. Chapter 1's discussion of idea generation is augmented by descriptions of clustering and using an outline tree; Chapter 3's discussion of revision now includes information on peer review; and Chapter 4's discussion of sentence effectiveness now includes information on mixed constructions.

To freshen the text, I have changed approximately one-third of the readings, examples, and exercises. Most of the readings that were replaced were done so at the suggestion of users of the text.

Finally, to make the previously-published essays easier to discuss, I have numbered the paragraphs.

Like most writing, *The Student Writer* is a work in progress. The third edition is better than the second because it incorporates the changes instructors and their students have called for. I hope to continue responding to the needs of those who work with the text, so please write to me or McGraw-Hill with your responses and suggestions.

Acknowledgments

Composition texts are not written in isolation, and this one is far from an exception. Many studied the manuscript in its various stages and offered valuable

advice and direction. I am particularly indebted to the following reviewers, who showed patience and wisdom: Thomas Amorose, State University of New York, Potsdam; Jay Balderson, Western Illinois University; Nancy Culberson, Georgia College; Linda Donahue, Mattatuck Community College; Todd Duncan, Wayne State University; Harvey Kail, University of Maine; Wayne Losano, University of Florida; Lawrence J. McDoniel, St. Louis Community College at Meramec; Janet McReynolds, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville; Robert Perrin, Indiana State University; Mark E. Rollins, Ohio University; Herbert J. Roth, Southwestern Adventist College; June W. Siegel, New York City Technical College; Jeffrey Sommers, Miami University; Richard Stoner, Broome Community College; Ellen L. Tripp, Forsyth Technical College; Ralph Voss, University of Alabama; Marjorie Wells, San Antonio College; and David Willard, Bakersfield College. In addition, a special thanks must go to Michael S. Kearns, Ohio Wesleyan University, whose criticisms were particularly astute.

I am also grateful to Mary Louise Quisenberry, who types with efficiency, speed, and good humor. Her graciousness made this project more pleasant. To my parents, Lucille and Irvin Fine, as always, I owe more than I can repay, for it is they who are responsible for my love of language and education. To my husband Dennis and my sons Gregory and Jeffrey, I offer heartfelt thanks for their understanding and unfailing patience.

For her contribution to the first edition I thank Joy DeSalvo of Youngstown State University. She is a respected colleague, a superior teacher, and a cherished friend.

To the Student

Learning how to write well is vitally important. I am not talking about writing well so you can survive college, although I admit that's part of it. I am referring to another truth: Knowing how to write well will make a difference in your life outside the classroom. On the job, people write often. Those in business routinely write letters, reports, memos, and grant proposals. Those in science write research grants, lab reports, research papers, and reviews of scientific literature. Those in education write reviews of methodology, research reports, book reviews, committee reports, lesson plans, and reports to parents and colleagues. Those in the arts write grant requests and reviews. So necessary is writing to any profession requiring a college degree that one cannot name a degree-related job that does not require some writing.

When you write on the job, you make a statement about your competence. No matter how good your ideas are, if you do not present them well, your reader will question your ability. That is a hard fact of life. Imagine yourself on the job after graduation. And imagine that your boss has asked you to write a report outlining ways to improve efficiency in your department. You may know just the things to do, but if your report is poorly written your boss will doubt your competence.

In your personal life, too, writing will be important. You may write business letters of varying kinds—letters of inquiry, letters seeking redress, and letters of praise or complaint. The organizations you belong to may involve you in writing committee reports, addresses to the membership, newsletters, or proposals. You may read something in a magazine or newspaper that prompts you to write a letter to an editor. Or you may want to share an observation or an experience with someone or try to influence how someone thinks or acts.

Let me share here an experience I had. I bought a faulty product that the store would not take back. I wrote a letter to the manufacturer and received a refund as a result of that letter. However, if my letter had been poorly written, I might have been viewed as just another crank and might not have gotten my refund.

There you have it: Writing is important outside the classroom. In other words, people write because they expect their writing to accomplish something, but poor writing probably will not have the desired effect.

Now let's deal with writing for academic survival. Yes, you must learn how to write well to pass your writing course, to handle essay examinations, and to write research papers and reports. But once you become a confident writer, you will discover an interesting thing happening. You will welcome opportunities to write as more than chances to show your teachers what you have learned. You will notice that as you write, you are doing *more* than recording what you know—you will find that the act of writing helps you discover ideas, sharpen reactions, and refine your thinking, because the act of writing is a discovery process. Writing is a series of stages that gets your mental wheels spinning so you can explore ideas, test relationships, and develop your thinking. More than anything, this is why writing is such an important part of the college curriculum. In short, writing is thinking. To be an educated person, you must write to record your ideas *and* to discover what they are in the first place.

To learn to write well, you must draw on a number of resources close at hand. First, you have this book. If I have done my job well, it will help you improve your skills. More important, you have your teacher. She or he will offer guidance, make suggestions, and comment on your work. Take everything your teacher says to heart. Study the comments on your papers. Be sure you understand them all, know how to repeat the strengths noted and overcome the weaknesses pointed out. If you have questions, *ask.* Your teacher will be glad to clarify. Try to apply what you learn to the next essay you write. Talk to your classmates. Form a network. Discuss techniques you have tried and share successful procedures. Read and comment on each other's work. Ask people—classmates, your teachers, your boss—what they do when they write, and try some of their procedures. Gradually, you will improve, and the key word here is *gradually.* Nothing as valuable as learning how to write will happen quickly. Your goal should be slow, steady progress.

Now a word about how this book operates. The goal of *The Student Writer* is to help you become a better writer by helping you discover writing procedures that

work well. Throughout the book a variety of procedures will be described. It is your responsibility to try a range of these procedures and evaluate their effectiveness. You should incorporate into your writing process the procedures that work well. Try alternative procedures to replace the ones that do not work well. In other words, you will read about many writing techniques. You should experiment with many of these techniques until you are satisfied that you have found procedures that yield effective writing. If you are ever unsure about the success of your procedures or how to alter them, talk to your instructor.

Another goal of *The Student Writer* is to help you become an accurate judge of the strengths and weaknesses in a piece of writing. Once you can reliably judge an essay's strengths and weaknesses, you will be able to make wise decisions about how to change your own drafts. One way this book helps you become a reliable judge is by providing a number of student writings for you to evaluate. Some of these writings are better than others, but all have strengths and weaknesses. As you study these writings, you will become more skilled at judging the qualities of effective writing so you can determine what changes to make in your own drafts.

As you work this term, remember the significance of your endeavor. Learning to write is important, and writing well is satisfying. If at times the going gets rough and you feel frustrated (that can happen when you are learning a skill), talk things over with your instructor. By the end of the term, you will feel proud of your progress.

Barbara Fine Clouse

Contents