



ROBERT A. SCHWEGLER

# PATTERNS IN ACTION

SECOND EDITION

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## **Acknowledgments**

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# PREFACE

Successful writers know how to make good use of their skills and knowledge. They know how to draw on experiences, facts, and ideas and can blend them to create an essay whose content is worth sharing with readers. They are able to employ a variety of forms of written expression, using different sentence, paragraph, and essay patterns as ways of sharing information, arguments, and feelings. They shape and revise their writing to take into account the demands of the subject, the purpose for which they are writing, and the expectations and attitudes of their audience.

Above all, successful writers have mastered the skills of exploring a subject and organizing, drafting, and revising an essay—skills we often refer to collectively as “the writing process.” It makes sense to talk of writing as a process because the act of writing calls for using these skills not individually but in combination. In probing a subject to discover ideas for an essay, a writer may recognize ways to arrange the finished product. Or in revising, the writer may decide to go beyond changes in wording and style to alter the purpose of the essay or to add new information and ideas. Thus much writing instruction today is properly directed at acquainting students with the elements and interrelationships of the writing process, often by observing a piece of writing in various stages of development or by describing the practices characteristic of experienced writers.

Yet though we speak of the writing process, we might with even more justification refer to it as “the writing/reading process” because reading plays an essential role in all the stages of writing. It is

through response to reading that novice and experienced writers alike develop the feelings and ideas that go into writing and gather material for their own work. Reading helps writers create a repertoire of stylistic patterns to draw on. It gives writers a chance to see what kinds of expression have succeeded (or failed) when addressed to a specific audience and to recognize the conventional patterns that an occasion for writing may require and readers expect.

The essays, discussions, questions, and activities in *Patterns in Action* are all directed towards helping developing writers make connections between reading and writing. They reflect, as well, what might be called a ‘constructivist’ approach to reading—a recognition that readers participate actively in constructing the meaning of a text for themselves by drawing on their own knowledge and ideas as well as the information presented in the text. Because the process of active reading is parallel in many ways to the writing process, an awareness of what happens as one reads contributes as well to the development of an effective approach to writing. The essays in each chapter in this book provide many opportunities for response, analysis, and evaluation. They can be used as models of effective writing, as sources of information and ideas, and as stimuli for discussion and argument. The discussions that open Chapters 2 through 11 look at the reading and writing process as it is shaped by particular occasions for communicating and offer practical hints for writers employing the writing strategies on which each chapter focuses. In addition, these discussions identify conventional forms of nonfiction that both writers and readers are likely to encounter quite often.

The questions and activities following each selection encourage students to respond with ideas and feelings that may in turn be developed into essays. They also direct attention to strategies of style and structure that students can use in their own work. The opening chapter (“Reading and Writing”) discusses different ways of responding to a text, from personal response through analysis and evaluation. It also describes a variety of writing activities that explore the relationships between reading and writing.

The text throughout emphasizes the aims of writing (to express feelings, to inform and explain, to persuade, to re-create experience) as well as the forms. In addition, it is built around discussion of ideal rhetorical patterns, such as comparison and classification. The text recognizes that in real writing—in action—these forms are shaped by audience and occasion and that good writing mixes the

patterns in many different ways. The instructor's manual for this text, written with the aid of Judith Stanford and with a bibliography on reading and writing by Chris Anson, explores some of the many interactions of form and purpose and suggests a variety of activities to explore these relationships.

For their help in preparing this book I would like to thank Joe Opiela, Carolyn Potts, Billie Ingram, Nan Upin, and Amy Johnson of Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown; Peggy Gordon of P. M. Gordon Associates; and Sarah Clark.

Most of all, I would like to thank Nancy Newman Schwegler for her support and advice, and especially for her humor and affection.

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