

高级英语写作

Advanced English Essay Writing
Theories & Applications

理论 与实践

闫涛 编著

黑龙江人民出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

高级英语写作理论与实践/闫涛编著. —哈尔滨:黑龙江人民出版社,2009.4

ISBN 978 - 7 - 207 - 08184 - 1

I. 高… II. 闫… III. 英语 - 写作 - 教材 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 053885 号

责任编辑:徐 冲

装帧设计:孙 婧

高级英语写作理论与实践

闫 涛 编著

出 版 者 黑龙江人民出版社

通讯地址 哈尔滨市南岗区宣庆小区 1 号楼

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印 刷 齐齐哈尔慧达印刷有限公司

开 本 787 × 1092 毫米 1/16 · 印张 18.25

字 数 350 000

印 数 1—1 500

版 次 2009 年 4 月第 1 版 2009 年 4 月第 1 次印刷

书 号 ISBN 978 - 7 - 207 - 08184 - 1/H · 314

定价:36.50 元

(如发现本书有印制质量问题,印刷厂负责调换)

本社常年法律顾问:北京市大成律师事务所哈尔滨分所律师赵学利、赵景波

前言

(Advanced English Essay Writing Theories & Applications)

阅读欣赏和借鉴模仿较为成熟的语篇范本,是一种比较通行的写作教学手段,尤其是在外语写作教学中具有不可低估的作用。在外语学习中,阅读是整个写作过程不可或缺的一部分,思想活动的参与体现对阅读内容的理解和认识,写作过程在很大程度上就是解决阅读的有效吸收问题。

一、编写理念

写作能力在今天的社会工作和生活中并不是已经失去意义,而是仍然具有普遍的重要性。英语写作能力是英语学习者的一项核心技能。随着学习理念的不断更新,学习方法的不断优化,我们编写了这本《高级英语写作理论实践》,秉承建构主义学习理论,即认为学习过程在本质上是学习者对认知信息结构——解构——再建构——再结构的动态演进过程,在循环往复中不断生成新的意义、升级认知结构、丰富学习者自身的知识经验体系,从而完善对各种事物和观点的理解。

英语论说文写作有其特定的格式和要求,严谨的结构,突出的主旨,广泛的阅读,理论与实践相结合的事例分析,有新意的想法和提议,漂亮的语言都是创作的重要因素。

本书不同于传统的写作教材之处在于它以整体语篇为框架、以了解掌握各种篇章行文方式为前提、以阅读材料为基础,为学习者提供精选具有规范构架的范文文本进行批判性评析,让学生感知典型的语篇,循序渐进形成英语思维和表达方式。这种做法至少有两方面好处:其一,在内容表达层面上,不仅有利于学生扩展思路、分析和吸取信息、拓宽视野、学会主题思想的挖掘,而且有助于通过对比阅读发现自己写作中存在的问题,促进表达方式和思维方式的自主校订。其二,在语篇结构上,也能起到及时更新和强化学生语篇意识作用,并促成学生个体对原始语篇的反思和解构,给学生提供思考空间,这能为新知识的输入找到较为合理的切口,并为接纳吸收新的概念提供可靠的信息框架,提高学习者语言敏感性,优化输入,促进吸收。

本书将阅读、思维与写作三个过程进行有机整合的目的就是要通过阅读不同语篇获取文本结构、信息观点和表达方式,然后再以个体的认知体验为蓝本进行概念整合,最后建构生成新的语篇意义,促进学习者个体的语篇能力迁移。因此通过读写反馈、以写促学、培养英语思维的方式,学习者有机会进行阅读输入与写作输出的双向互动,从而得以在语篇建构的多元化世界里体验生活,丰富经验,转变思维方式,学会理性生存。于是外语写作不仅促进了语言能力的发展,而且成为自我教育的有效手段,为学习者个体释放人生感悟,进行互动交流提供广阔的话语空间。通过个性化语言实践活动,有助于打开学习者的情感通道,加快知识向运用层面的转换,帮助学生不断拓宽视野,不断超越自我。

二、内容安排

本书适合大学英语专业和其他涉外专业的本科学生和研究生用作英语写作和阅读课教材,也可供程度相当的其他学生和自学者使用。

本书共计十二个章节。第一章为绪言,介绍篇章由选择支撑材料,到观点和思维方式的形成,再到布局谋篇,最后产出文本的过程。从第二章到第十一章,讲解包括 Analysis, Description, Narration, Illustration, Classification, Comparison and Contrast, Cause and Effect, Process Analysis, Definition, 和 Argument 等十种思维表达方式的运用。每章包括三个主要环节:一是各种思维表达方式和写作手法的特点和写作策略;二是范文分析,附以若干分析鉴赏性思考问题,以利揣摩模仿;三是阅读材料,选择有一定深度的名篇佳作,同时也附以若干阅读与思考、思考与写作两个环节的分析鉴赏性问题和写作任务。第十二章提供了数篇地道的英语阅读材料供学生进行深入理解和鉴赏。在编写本教程过程中,编者曾参阅国外多种教材和文选读本,引用其中一些材料,在此一并致谢。本书后附有《主要参考书目》,收录了编者参阅的一些国外出版物。

由于编者的水平有限,书中肯定存在不少疏漏和欠妥之处,欢迎读者和同行批评指正。

编著者

2009年4月

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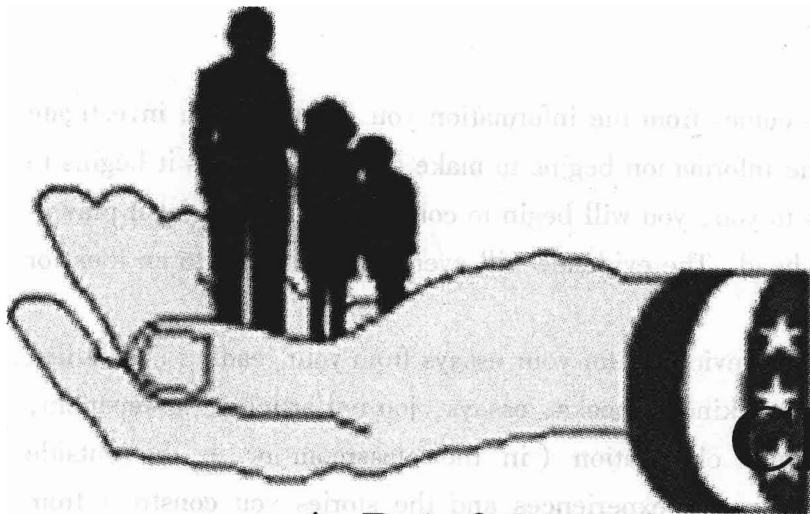
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Chapter 1

A Brief Introduction to the Essay

Advanced English Essay Writing: Theories & Applications is a new type of a book that provides approaches to analyzing and interpreting many kinds of texts, and to considering ways of thinking as well as ways of writing. It is also a book filled with ideas, opportunities, opportunities, and suggestions for explorations and essays. In this chapter we lay out some key terms and essential aspects of essay writing—clearheaded definitions that will prepare you for the work that follows.

Our aim is to give you a clear sense of the fundamental underlying concepts of writing essays. The book works beginning with a chapter that presents the essentials of each type of thinking and writing (called “patterns of inquiry,” or just “patterns,” throughout), and building those patterns upon each other to create a fuller understanding.

1.1 Evidence, Idea, Essay

The key terms evidence, idea, and essay suggest how the mind

moves as it considers a body of evidence, then turns to the creation of an idea, and finally develops an essay to express and substantiate that idea, or thesis.

Evidence

Evidence comes from the information you gather as you investigate a topic. As the information begins to make sense to you, as it begins to suggest things to you, you will begin to converse with it, to let it play around in your head. The evidence will eventually lead you to an idea for your own essay.

You can find evidence for your essays from your reading (including written texts of all kinds—books, essays, journal articles, newspapers, magazines), your observation (in the classroom or in the outside world), and your own experiences and the stories you construct from them. Your aim is to use that evidence to develop an interesting idea that you have drawn from it.

Advanced English Essay Writing: Theories & Applications provides bodies of evidence after every reading. These evidence have been carefully selected for the ways in which each item relates to the others and are surrounded by questions that will help you consider these inter-relationships, but you will find much of the evidence on your own. Sometimes evidence finds you, as when you see a picture that makes you feel something you wish to express or makes you mad enough that you want to clarify an idea for an audience. This is evidence in the first sense—evidence that drives you to write. You will have to find other types of evidence, often to support (or sometimes even to refute) a growing idea or thesis. For more on the uses of evidence, see the appendix, “Finding Evidence and Documenting Sources,” in the back of this book.

Idea: Getting to the Heart of the Matter

An idea provides a theory about evidence. An idea is your sense of what the evidence means, your explanation or interpretation of the facts that you have gathered from various sources during your research. As an

interpreter, you will help your readers understand what the evidence means. This meaning is rarely intuitively obvious to others; they will not have studied it the way you have. Your readers depend on you to interpret the evidence and explain its relationship to your idea. This explanation will be given to them in the form of an essay.

As you search for ideas in the evidence, seek out disagreement, controversy, or areas where a consensus is needed. Within these tensions, typically, is the core of an important matter—that which is really at stake in the debate, or discussion, of your chosen topic. There you will find many different perspectives to investigate. Somewhere at the center of the controversy beats the heart of an idea that you can make your own through analysis and reflection. This idea will be your own reasoned perspective on the controversy—a perspective that has been developed through a careful analysis of the gathered evidence.

You have at your disposal an array of writing and thinking strategies, called *patterns of inquiry* in this book. Because these patterns represent the fundamental ways that people think, they represent effective ways not only of approaching subjects you intend to write about, but also of organizing your thoughts in writing so that your readers will understand.

- Analysis. An act of taking something apart and putting it back together as a way of deepening our understanding of it.
- Description. An act of translation, an attempt to take an object or an experience from the visible, so-called real world into the mind, where it is translated into words.
- Narration. An act of recording and ordering events, most often chronologically—but not necessarily so.
- Illustration. An act of clarification and substantiation, an attempt to clarify a concept or idea through examples.
- Classification. An act of organization by means of categorizing.
- Comparison and Contrast. An act of relating two or more things as a way of understanding them.

- Cause and Effect. An act of analyzing the reasons for events and their consequences.
- Process Analysis. An act of explanation that relies on analysis with narration to convey a continuous sequence in discrete steps.
- Definition. An act of clarification, an attempt to account for a concept.
- Argument. An act of empathy, an attempt to allow others to see how evidence and idea are related in a particular way.

There patterns of inquiry are available to you as a writer as you examine a topic and begin to write about it. They will lead you to the discovery of new, exciting ideas.

You know that you have a good idea when it attempts to resolve such a controversy, when your readers say in response to the idea, "Tell me more. I never thought of it that way until now. That's really interesting." You must bring the evidence to life by providing an explanation of its meaning. This explanation constitutes your idea; without the idea, there can be no essay.

Essay

The word *essay* comes from the French verb *essayer*, which means "to attempt" or "to try". An essay, then, is a trial or an attempt to develop an idea, work out its implications, and share it with others. The form of the essay itself consists of three parts: a beginning (or introduction), a middle (or body), and an end (or conclusion). Within that three-part structure, an essayist makes an appeal to the readers' interests, develops and supports an interesting idea, and provides a closing perspective on both the subject and the work that has been done within the essay. Essayists seek consensus; they aim to get their readers to see as they see, to think as they think.

Essayists work along a spectrum of essays, ranging from the familiar to the academic, from the less formal to the more formal. *Familiar essays* depend primarily on stories of experience; those stories constitute the essay's primary evidence. In these essays, the writer's stories of

experience reveal and substantiate the idea. The writer often appears in these stories as a character named "I." But there is another "I" who is actually assembling these stories and using them as evidence; the discerning, writing "I" who offers his or her perspective on the meaning of the stories. In familiar essays, the development of the idea tends to be digressive as that discerning writer works out the idea under the reader's direct gaze.

More formal and traditional *academic essays* avoid use of the personal pronoun, omit experiential evidence, and offer a more detached perspective. The primary evidence in these essays tends to be more straightforward, somewhat more formal. The writer is, of course, also present in these essays, but that presence manifests itself primarily through the selection and ordering of evidence—both of which reflect the writer's mind at work—and through the quality of the idea.

As different as these forms of the essays can be, they are, essentially, very similar: each calls for the development of an interesting idea, the use of substantial evidence to support that idea, and a rigorous analysis and explanation of the evidence. Each form of the essay requires the presentation of evidence, its analysis, and a body of reflection that makes clear to the reader just what the idea means. In each form of the essay, the work of the writer's mind always takes place within that restricting but enabling three-part structure—beginning, middle, and end.

In the essays you write for your academic courses, you will usually be expected to make your idea explicit and to provide a clear and logical organization that is evident to your readers. On occasion, however, your instructors may invite you to write other kinds of essays that are more exploratory, essays whose internal order mirrors the shape of your thinking, the movement of your mind at play with an idea. The goal in writing such an essay, as with the more traditional academic essay, is to present, explore, explain, and substantiate an idea should give both writer and reader something interesting to think about, and sometimes e-

ven new ways of thinking about it.

1.2 Analysis, Interpretation & Reflection

Analysis

Because analysis is so crucial to understanding, writers learn to depend on it, seeking over time to perfect and hone their analytical skills. The clarity that results from good analytical work leads to considerations about meaning and value. So the writer always faces a series of interpretive tasks whether the focus is on a written text, a historical event, an art object, or a moment of experience. The interpretive work, accompanied by thoughtful and rigorous reflection, leads to a deeper understanding of what has been analyzed, to ideas, and then to the exciting task of writing about the discoveries.

As discussed in more detail in chapter 2 “Analysis,” a writer *analyzes* as a way of understanding.

Analysis is primarily an effort on the part of a writer to study an *object* – a book, a poem, a painting, a theory, a personality, a historical event, a performance, or a way of life—so that he or she can understand something significant about that object and then develop an idea about it.

Writers use analysis first to understand and then to record and demonstrate to readers what they have learned. The writing that accompanies analysis, especially in the early stages, is a form of exploration, a joint effort of the mind and the pen (or the keyboard) to learn something about the thing being studied. Later, writing preserves that analytical spirit, revealing to the reader significant parts of the writer’s learning process, and shows the reader how the writer’s thinking led to the idea being presented about the object.

Analysis is the working companion of every form of persuasive writing. Each of the patterns of inquiry—description, narration, comparison and contrast, classification, definition—depends on analysis to complete its work. In concern with a particular pattern, analysis turns the mind of the reader toward purpose, toward meaning. These patterns and analysis

conspire to reveal that a story has meaning, that an act of comparing and contrasting is not done for its own sake, that definition serves a larger idea.

We investigate analysis in isolation only to learn how to do it. But after learning how to study an object, a subject, or even a descriptive passage, the writer's primary task turns to using the information gleaned from that analysis to the development of an idea or an essay. Analysis, combined with other patterns, leads to sense-making, to the formulation and development of those newfound ideas.

Interpretation & Reflection

Because every individual will analyze—or break down—any one subject differently, the analytical act is also one of interpretation. Each way that subject is broken down highlights different aspects of the subject and therefore points to different meanings. Analyzing an apple, for example, by looking at stem, its color, and the texture of its skin—all external characteristics—tells nothing about what's on the inside, how the apple tastes, or what you can do with it. The important work of analysis is not only to break a subject down, but to tell something about it – to interpret it – in the process.

The job of the analytical writer is to convey the results of the analysis and the interpretation so that others not only understand what the object under consideration means to the interpreter, but also how the interpreter explains and accounts for the interpretation. The discerning voice of the writer is the voice of reflection. It is a kind of metavoice—meditated and thoughtful—that makes sense of both analysis and interpretation, reminding us that to *reflect* is to bend back, to create a new image of an object. That reconstituted object amounts to an explanation and a revelation of something the analyst has discovered. The new conception of the object, resulting from the interpretive analysis, constitutes the idea that leads to the essay.

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