SECOND EDITION Writing and Learning
Anne Ruggles Gere

# Writing AND Learning SECOND EDITION

# Anne Ruggles Gere

University of Michigan



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### Preface

The French saying "plus ca change, pluc c'est la même chose" [the more things change, the more they stay the same] describes this second edition of Writing and Learning. There are a number of new features, some of the original material has been rearranged, and parts have been deleted or updated. But the essence of the first edition remains unchanged.

New features include a chapter that suggests ways to prepare for a writing course. This chapter raises questions about habits, experiences, and attitudes toward writing, explains the writing process, makes connections between reading and writing, and suggests specific tools and procedures for approaching a composition class. Another new feature is the inclusion of more samples of writing from both students and professional writers. These samples demonstrate the various types of writing discussed in the book. Much of the student writing includes both drafts and revisions, which allow readers to see how the processes of writing and learning occur. The handbook has been expanded to include more information useful to student writers.

Rearrangement of material has brought sections on drafting and revising closer together. Portions on drafting emphasize writing as a means of learning, a way of discovering new connections, a process of developing ideas. Sections on revising emphasize writing as a means of showing one's learning to others. Here issues of thesis, organization, audience awareness, and conventions of standard written English become important. Part One surveys both writing to learn and writing to show learning, and it also suggests many strategies for evaluating one's own writing. Written selections have been updated to include more contemporary material.

Although there are many changes, the central assumptions of the book remain unchanged: writing is a recursive process that occurs over time; what is learned in a writing course should have application in other courses; learning is a complex and ongoing process; and learning to write is not the same as writing to show learning. This edition, like the first, combines the best of traditional approaches with innovations based on current theory and research in composition. It includes writing assignments from many disciplines, and it assumes that writing and learning cannot be separated. Learning in history or physics or art involves more than mastering subject matter, and effective

writing requires knowledge as well as control of the conventions of writing. This book presents writing as a series of choices rather than as rules that must be followed slavishly. In so doing, it emphasizes that without learning there is no writing, and that without writing, learning is impoverished.

I have learned as much from revising Writing and Learning as I did from writing the first edition. Once again, many people helped along the way. A more detailed explanation of sources appears in the Instructor's Manual, but I would like to acknowledge a number of individuals here: John Daley in Chapter One; Roy Hughes D. Gordon Rohman and Ann Wotring in Chapter Two; Barry Kroll in Chapter Three; Ken Davis, Michael Halliday, Requa Hasan, Philip Phenix, and Mike Rose in Chapter Four; Stephen Dunning and Frances Yates in Chapter Five; Mike Rose in Chapter Six; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in Chapter Seven; Richard Larson in Chapter Eight; Chaim Perelman in Chapter Nine; Arthur Stern in Chapter Ten; Frank O'Hare in Chapter Eleven; Walker Gibson and Martin Joos in Chapter Twelve; Virginia Tiefel and Paula Walker in Chapter Thirteen; George Dillon, Mina Shaughnessy, and Eugene Smith in the handbook.

My debts to colleagues are larger but more difficult to specify. Spending a summer as a visiting professor at the University of New Hampshire provided an opportunity for extended conversations with Bob Connors, Don Murray, and Tom Newkirk—conversations that enlarged my thinking about teaching writing. With them, as with George Dillon and Eugene Smith, valued friends and colleagues at the University of Washington, I could not always tell where their thoughts left off and my own began. Jeff Carroll, now of the University of Hawaii, added much to my learning as he completed his own graduate school career. As was true for the first edition, members of my writing group responded helpfully to drafts, and many of the suggestions of Marcia Barton, Sandra Silberstein, and Kate Vangen all have been incorporated into these pages. Students whose work appears in the text are acknowledged by name, but I continue to learn from all I teach.

Tony English, my editor at Macmillan, provided me the tonic of laughter along with many insightful comments and continuing support. A number of reviewers offered helpful suggestions along the way: Michael Feehan, The University of Texas at Arlington; Jerrie C. Scott, University of Florida; Peter Owens, Southeastern Massachusetts University; Ted W. White, Cochise College; Catherine A. Curtis, University of Houston; Ronald H. Dow, University of Maine at Presque Isle; Martha Coultas Strode, Spoon River College; Ann B. Dobie, University of Southwestern Louisiana; and Charles V. O'Brien, Rochester Community College. Roy Angell's careful reading of the first edition gave me many useful ideas and Meg Schreiber's indexing helped make them accessible.

This edition, like the first, is dedicated to the older generation, symbolizing my continuing gratitude to those who embodied the love on which Budge and I base our own lives. I am particularly grateful to my mother whose grace under the pressure of debilitating illness instructs me in living that seeks not merely to endure but to prevail.

A. R. G.

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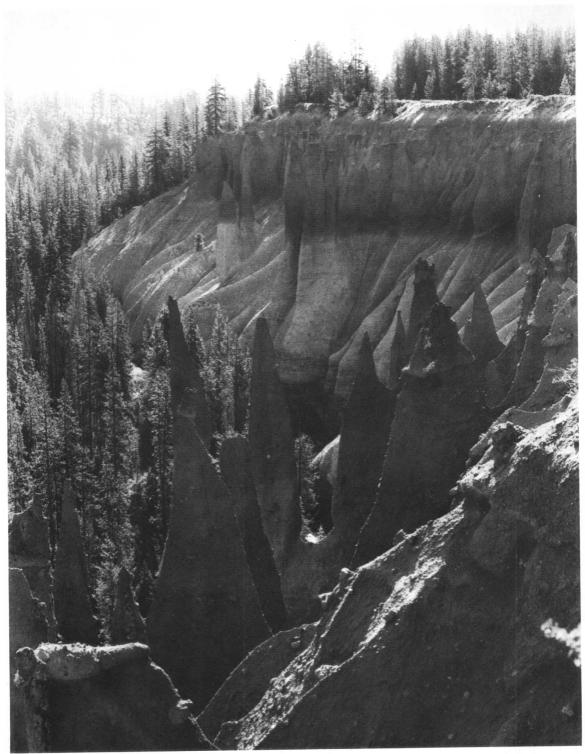
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# PART ONE

# AN Overview



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## Chapter One



# Getting Ready for Writing and Learning

The first page of a book, perhaps the first day of a new course, the prospect of the first blank sheet of paper sitting before you—it seems a time for new resolve ("This time I'm going to do it right. No more procrastinating for me") or reassurances ("I know I'm a good writer. I always did well in high school"). You may be feeling curious ("How do people write anyway? Is it worth all the trouble?") or anxious ("What if I don't have a gift for writing?") or resigned ("Learning to write better will be good for me. It will help me get higher grades in all my courses"). In the classroom you may eye other students, wondering whether they know as much or as little as you do. You may intend to evaluate the instructor, to determine what this individual will expect of you, whether you will be able to get a good grade, what you will learn from the course. You may look at this textbook, trying to decide whether it contains "the way" to improve your writing.

Looking at other students, at the instructor, or at the text ignores the most important resource—yourself. This may be your first writing course or your last, you may be taking this course by choice or by requirement, and the word "writing" may fill you with dread or delight, but what you bring to the course and what you choose to do will determine how much your instructor or this book can help you. Let's take a look at what you bring and what you can do before you actually begin a course on writing.

Examine Habits, Experiences, and Attitudes

Whether you have come to this course directly from high school or after an absence of many years, you bring with you experiences, habits and attitudes that are part of your preparation. You may enjoy writing and look forward to taking composition courses, or you may think of writing instruction as disagreeable medicine to be choked down. A five-page paper on a topic of

your choice due anytime before the end of the term may strike you as either terrifying or wonderful. You may have written a great deal for your own pleasure, or your writing may have been limited to what teachers and employers have required of you. You may be a writer who needs the discipline of deadlines in order to produce something, or you may find it easy to complete a piece of writing simply because you care about the topic.

#### RECOLLECT EXPERIENCES

All of these feelings and ways of proceeding derive from the experiences, habits and attitudes you have developed over time. The sources of many of them are probably buried in your subconscious. Becoming more aware of your experiences, habits, and attitudes will make it easier for you to improve your writing. It is easy to follow old patterns without being fully aware of where they come from or how they shape writing. Answering the following questions will help you see how your experiences shape the writer you are today.

- 1. What is the first thing you can remember writing?
- 2. How old were you?
- 3. Did you write this on your own or in school?
- 4. Did anyone help you?
- 5. What happened to this first piece of writing?
- 6. What do you remember writing after it?
- 7. What is the most important piece of writing you have completed?
- 8. Has most of your writing been done in school or outside it?
- 9. What rules have you been taught about writing?
- 10. Do you remember any writing teacher especially well?
- 11. Can you describe this person?
- 12. Did you ever have to write as a punishment? Explain.
- 13. What, in your opinion, is the best thing you have ever written?
- 14. What is the worst?
- 15. Have you ever received any sort of recognition for your writing?
- 16. Can you recall a time when your feelings about writing changed sharply?

#### BE CONSCIOUS OF WRITING HABITS

As you responded to these questions, you undoubtedly discovered long-forgotten experiences that contribute to your habits and attitudes about writing. You may assume that you have no particular habits of writing, but if you look more closely at what you do, you will probably discover that you have many distinctive habits of writing. Generally, habits remain least visible to the individual practicing them. I once had an instructor who habitually rose to his toes at the end of each sentence, and I am sure he never realized that his students noted the number of rises per lecture more carefully than his statements about history. Your writing habits may be equally invisible to you, but a little thought can make you more aware of them. To bring your habits of writing to a more conscious level, answer the following questions.