

MOTIVES FOR WRITING

SECOND EDITION



ROBERT KEITH MILLER
SUZANNE S. WEBB

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PREFACE

The second edition of this book continues to reflect our belief that helping students to discover and fulfill their motives for writing will help them to write well. As its title suggests, *Motives for Writing* emphasizes the importance of the writer's purpose—the reason for composing and the ends that process should achieve. In focusing upon purpose, we have been influenced by the work of such theorists as James Britton, James Kinneavy, and James Moffett, all of whom have shown that understanding the aims of discourse can contribute to better communication. We believe that an emphasis upon these aims can help students to develop the active minds that are essential for making sense of the world and conveying that sense to others.

Each of these aims—or motives, as we call them—is the subject of one of the introductions that we provide for Chapters 1–10. Our introduction for the book as a whole, “Writing for Your Life,” places the aims within the context of other elements of the rhetorical situation, such as audience and occasion, and discusses strategies for invention, arrangement, and revision so that students will be better prepared to accomplish their aims.

All of the introductions are designed to provide both instructors and students with flexibility. We frequently remind writers that the aims of discourse can be pursued by different means, and as we discuss different methods of planning and drafting we encourage writers to choose the methods that work best for them. The entire book reflects our awareness that not only do different writers work well in different ways but the same writer may work well by using different approaches at different times. We have seen in our own classrooms that providing students with choices can enable them to overcome the difficulties writers encounter.

Because of the importance we attach to flexibility, we have not tied the book to the work of any single theorist. However, because we believe that the pentad of Kenneth Burke provides a useful means for helping students both to read and to write, we have drawn upon it at several points. Its presence is most noticeable in the headnotes that precede the selections in Chapters 1–10. Rather than write headnotes devoted to biographical and bibliographical information about the authors, we have used these notes to orient students to concerns of special importance in the selections that follow.

The selections themselves have been chosen to illustrate the various motives for writing and to provide examples of different writing styles and patterns of arrangement. Of the seventy-two selections, thirty-four are new in the second edition. Our selection of pieces has resulted in a second

edition even more diverse than the first in terms of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. We have also included a number of familiar pieces both because they have proven records as classroom favorites and because we wanted to spare instructors the necessity of undertaking an entirely new class preparation. Maya Angelou, Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Mark Twain, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lewis Thomas, and Susan Glaspell are just a few of the authors represented by well-known works. Although the readings vary in length—with the longer, more challenging selections concentrated in the second half of the book—they all address issues that are likely to inspire good class discussion, and we have provided an alternative table of contents grouping selections on related topics for readers interested in pursuing a particular subject or theme.

To facilitate class discussion, every selection has its own apparatus. Although some of the Questions for Discussion are designed simply to gauge reading comprehension, most raise concerns that invite readers to think about what they have read and to formulate their own responses. Every reading is also followed by two Suggestions for Writing. Individual readers may well identify other questions and suggestions; we did not attempt to exhaust the possibilities of any piece. Our goal was simply to encourage thoughtful responses to reading, and we recognize that such responses, when encouraged, can take any number of directions.

Most chapters begin with short, readily accessible readings and conclude with more demanding pieces. And the motives themselves have been arranged according to the degree of difficulty inexperienced writers are likely to have with them. Instructors familiar with the first edition will find that we have changed the order in which we present the motives. Responding to the experience of instructors who used the first edition, we now have the two exploratory chapters (“Writing to Explore the Self” and “Writing to Explore an Idea”) grouped together. We also moved our two chapters on exposition to an earlier position in the book and extensively revised the introductions to these chapters, now called “Writing to Report Information” and “Writing to Interpret Information,” to clarify how these motives differ.

If you examine our new sequence of chapters, you will find that we begin with such writer-oriented motives as “Writing to Record a Memory” and “Writing to Explore the Self,” move on to such topic-oriented motives as “Writing to Report Information” and “Writing to Interpret Information,” and conclude with such reader-oriented motives as “Writing to Amuse Others” and “Writing to Persuade Others.” But because every chapter is self-contained, the various motives can be studied in any sequence that seems appropriate for a specific class—just as the readings within any chapter can be read in a sequence determined by individual interests or needs.

A word here about the rhetorical modes: We teach that writing seldom involves conforming to a fixed pattern, that a single piece usually involves several modes, and that no mode is limited to any one motive. In other

words, we present the modes as means that writers employ when pursuing different aims, but we do not present them as models to which writers should make their thoughts conform. We believe that instruction based upon fixed patterns of arrangement can turn writing into an academic exercise that bears little relation to the way writers write in the world beyond the classroom. Patterns such as definition, classification, and comparison are more likely to grow out of the act of writing than to be imposed at the outset as a framework to which invention must be subordinate. We recognize, however, that teachers of composition must be prepared to help students organize their thoughts, and the modes can be useful for this type of instruction. The Index by Rhetorical Strategy (Mode) beginning on page 549 is designed to be helpful in this regard. Our book thus encourages students not only to concern themselves with the modes when doing so might be useful but at the same time to recognize that arrangement is simply one of the writer's tools and not an end in itself.

In completing this edition of *Motives for Writing*, we are indebted to colleagues and friends with whom we have discussed our work. Mary Rose O'Reilley, Lon Otto, Joan Piorkowski, and Erika Scheurer all provided good counsel. Kimberly Allison wrote the instructor's manual—*Teaching Motives for Writing*, Second Edition, and also worked tirelessly to help us select new readings and secure permission to reprint the pieces we selected. We continue to be grateful to our friend Sally Reagan Ebest, who wrote the instructor's manual for the first edition and who remains very much a part of both the book and the manual. We also thank John Blodgett of the Congressional Research Service for his timely help. Merlyn Holmes, our production editor; Carol Beal, our manuscript editor; Jeanne Schreiber, Mayfield's art director; and Pamela Trainer, permissions editor, all provided much appreciated support. We also want to thank those instructors who told us, directly or indirectly, about their experience with the first edition. Finally, to Tom Broadbent, our editor, we both join in special thanks for the generosity with which he gave us friendship, advice, and attention to detail.

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