

Brief Edition

*The Prentice Hall Guide for
College Writers*

Stephen Reid

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Preface

The idea for this textbook began nearly ten years ago when I abandoned composition textbooks altogether in favor of a workshop writing course focusing exclusively on my students' own essays. The longer I taught that course, though, the more I realized both its virtues and faults. It did enable students to discover writing processes that worked for them. It did give me time in the classroom to coach individual writing projects and structure peer groups. It did create a social group that was both a source and an audience for writing. Again and again, however, I felt a need for some overall rhetorical structure—some framework to guide the students as they wrote for variety of aims or purposes. What I wanted, in short, was a new rhetoric: a structure to help students with their writing process, help them make connections between their reading and writing, and enable them to benefit from the theory and practice of hundreds of first-rate teachers and researchers who have transformed the teaching of writing over the past fifteen years.

This textbook brings a clear rhetorical structure to the composition classroom. It supports the writing teacher with a cognitive sequence of writing assignments based on purposes, with journal assignments keyed to each assignment, with complete writing process advice, with professional and student writing, with samples from students' writing processes, and with an optional handbook to assist students in the editing and proofreading stages. The major features of this text, described below, illustrate that the operative word here is "support": this text intends to be another coach in the classroom, helping writers—both students and teachers—find the most effective means to learn through writing and to communicate with their audiences.

Overview of the Text

An Introduction to Myths and Rituals for Writing. Chapter 1, "Writing Myths and Rituals," discounts some common myths about college writing courses, introduces the notion of writing rituals, and outlines the variety of journal writing used throughout the text. Rituals are crucial for all writers but especially so for novice writers; effective rituals are simply those behavioral strategies that complement the cognitive strategies of the writing process. Illustrating a variety of possible writing rituals are quotations from a dozen professional writers on the nature of writing. These short quotations continue throughout the book, reminding students that writing is not some magical process, but a madness that has a method to it, a love that is built from labor, and a learning that is born of reading, thinking, observing, remembering, discussing, and writing.

An Orientation to Rhetorical Situation and to Writing Processes. Chapter 2, "Purposes and Processes for Writing," bases the writing process in the rhetorical situation (writer, subject, purpose, text, and audience). It restores the writer's intent or purpose (rather than a thesis sentence or a rhetorical strategy) as the driving force during the writing process. It demonstrates how meaning evolves from a variety of recursive, multidimensional, and hierarchical activities that we call the writing process. Finally, it reassures students that, since individual writing and learning styles differ, they will be encouraged to discover and articulate their own processes from a range of appropriate possibilities.

Aims and Purposes for Writing. The text then turns to specific purposes and assignments for writing. Chapters 3 through 5 ("Observing," "Remembering," "Investigating") focus on invention strategies. These chapters illustrate how writing to learn is a natural part of learning to write. Writing to learn—through observing, discovering, expressing, remembering, and investigating—is central to the sequence of purposes that structures this text. To promote learning, these chapters introduce three important sources of feelings, ideas, and information necessary for any writing: *observing* people, places, events; and objects; *remembering* people, places, and events; and *investigating* information and ideas through interviews, surveys, and written sources. Although in each of these chapters students write essays intended for definite audiences, the emphasis in these early chapters is on invention strategies and on writer-based purposes for writing. This text includes expressive and transactional elements in every assignment, but the direction of the overall sequence of assign-

ments is from the more personal forms of discourse to the more public forms.

Chapters 6 through 9 (Explaining, Evaluating, Problem Solving, and Arguing) are built on subject- and audience-based purposes. The sequence in these chapters moves the student smoothly from exposition to argumentation (acknowledging the obvious overlapping), building on the skills and cognitive strategies of the previous chapters. The teacher may, in fact, use chapters 6 through 9 as a mini-course in argument, teaching students how to develop and argue claims of fact, claims of cause and effect, claims about values, and claims about solutions or policies.

Chapter 10 (Exploring) shows students how to write that most philosophical of personal essays, the exploratory or reflective essay. This chapter treats the exploratory essay as a post-argumentative form, an essay emphasizing intuition, perception, and personal experience as legitimate means of solving problems, evaluating, or grappling with controversy.

Research Chapter. Chapter 11 (Writing a Research Paper) draws on all the skills and cognitive strategies presented in the first ten chapters. Research papers are written for a purpose and audience too, but the writing process is much more extended. This chapter helps students select and plan their projects, use the library, evaluate and document sources, record their progress, and test ideas in a research log—learning all the while to integrate the information they gather with their own experiences and ideas.

Optional Handbook. *The Prentice Hall Guide for College Writers* is available with a handbook (standard edition) or without (shorter edition). The focus of the handbook is on solving the problems writers encounter during editing and proofreading.

Special Features. This text has several other features that are particularly noteworthy:

Journal or daybook writing is integral to this text, helping writers “warm-up” for each assignment, practice various invention and shaping strategies, and improve their reading skills.

Writing strategies (process analysis, comparison-contrast, definition, classification, causal analysis) are treated both as invention and as shaping strategies. More importantly, they are *integrated into each chapter as part of the writing process.*

Nearly a hundred short quotations by novelists, poets, essayists, researchers, and teachers illustrate key ideas from each chapter. In

addition to their bits of advice, these authors' voices personalize for the inexperienced writer a larger community of writers who are still struggling with the same problems each student faces.

Professional and student writing appear in each chapter. One student essay (complete with invention notes, rough draft, and final draft) illustrates a writing process appropriate for that particular purpose and audience.

Assignments for each chapter are intentionally general so that students can develop or explore their own interests. Teachers can, of course, tailor the writing to class or programmatic needs. Throughout the text, journal assignments and suggested topics emphasize *cross-curriculum* dimensions: students are continually encouraged to write about what they are studying and learning in other courses.

The Annotated Instructor's Edition integrates teaching tips, answers to exercises, and citations for relevant research into the text for easy reference.

The most obvious feature of this text is the cyclical, self-contained structure for each chapter. In place of the traditional modes and strategies approach, the invention-arrangement-style organization, or the sentence-paragraph-essay structure, this text presents a sequence of purposes and assignments and then supports the students' efforts with appropriate invention strategies and arrangement schemes. The result is a flexible and easy-to-use text. Teachers can concentrate on those chapters most relevant to their program and their students. For some chapters, teachers may ask students to write only journal entries or portfolio assignments; for other chapters, teachers may require complete essays and thorough revisions.

Good writing teachers, however, don't teach a text or a course; they teach students. They help writers learn to read, write, think, learn and communicate more effectively, with greater range and variety, and with greater understanding of writers' techniques and readers' expectations. It is my hope that this text supports those activities.

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The final version of this text bears only a slight resemblance, thankfully, to the proposal and the early drafts that I wrote nearly three years ago. The credit for that goes largely to colleagues from across the country who reviewed the manuscript from its inception to the moment of delivery. If a living creature survives in these pages, they deserve much praise:

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*Stephen Reid
Fort Collins, Thanksgiving 1988*

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