FOUR WORLDS
OF WRITING

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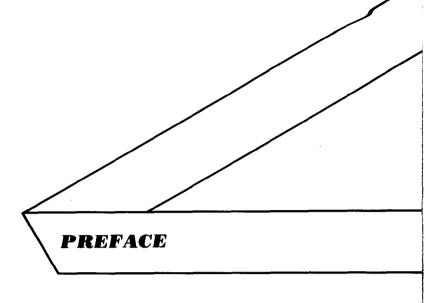Copyright © 1981 by Janice M. Lauer, Gene Montague, Andrea Lunsford, and Janet Emig

PREFACE

We set out to build *Four Worlds of Writing* around the composing process, basing our approach on premises derived from rhetorical theory of the last decade:

–that writing is a unique way of learning
–that meaningful writing grows from a writer's own pressing questions
–that the composing process is a series of stages that can vary in sequence and are often recursive, even though they must be ordered in certain ways in a text
–that primary to meaningful writing is the discovery and communication of a significant focus to which aims and modes are subordinate
–that specific skills such as sentence-combining, paragraph building, and conventions of usage are best developed within the framework of the whole composing process

Throughout, we have merged theory with the practical experience of college instructors who have developed, tested, and refined that theory in their classrooms. Numerous samples of student work exemplify all stages of the composing process, and present the struggles and achievements of many kinds of students attempting many different types of writing.

In developing this approach, we have been aware always of the difference between *stages* of writing and *strategies* that guide writers through stages. Alternative strategies can be helpful at a given stage. For example, our Exploratory Guide does not preclude the use of others. We adopted this model, however, because it worked well for our students, is easily understood, easily remembered, and applicable to all writing situations.

Our general approach in each chapter has been this:

1. To identify for the student the writing situation the chapter poses and to differentiate it from the situation in the preceding chapter or chapters.
2. To explain the stages of the writing process as they bear on the unique writing situation, stressing always the sameness of the stages.
3. To explain at each stage the strategy a writer can use to complete the stage.
4. To exemplify, by copious display and analysis of student work, the movement through the stages and the use of particular strategies.
5. To supply class exercises so that students may practice the strategies.
6. To assign specific tasks at each stage so that students, while learning from principles, examples, and exercises, are required to develop their own papers, stage by stage.

Taken in sequence, the chapters move the student from the expressive paper to the expository, from the inward to the outward, both in subject matter and audience. The order in one sense is arbitrary, in another logical and desirable. But the instructor who wishes to change the sequence can do so easily by using the Table of Writing Stages and Strategies on the front endpaper, which permits the use of sections of chapters the instructor may not wish to deal with as wholes. Thus *Four Worlds of Writing* can be adapted for either a one-term or two-term course; our arrangement permits the instructor to limit the course by aim, by type of writing, or by subject matter.

The Table of Writing Stages and Strategies also allows the instructor to choose the emphasis to be placed on developing editing skills. Part II of the book deals with the conventions and includes assignments in sentence-combining and editing checklists, followed by a convenient glossary of terms. The chapters themselves contain introductions to sentence-combining, choosing appropriate diction and syntax, and paragraphing at stages where instruction in these matters is most profitable. All of these sections are cross referenced.

Our concern for producing a book that is "adjustable" grows out of a practical, unavoidable fact: a book that can be used by all students must be flexible enough to provide practice material for students who need a good

deal of work in the conventions, but it must not burden all students with the same work. On the other hand, there are limits to flexibility. This book is deliberately arranged to discourage the notion that students must wait to write until they have eliminated their problems with the conventions of language. Fundamentally, this book directs the attention of the student and the instructor to the composing process, and puts the acquisition of conventional skills in perspective as only one part of that process.

That view manifests itself in the organization of the book. Janet Emig's introduction emphasizes the necessity of conscious control of the writing process at the college level, the importance of understanding what the writer is doing, and why he or she is doing it. The center of the book—the eight chapters by Janice M. Lauer and Gene Montague—stresses the pedagogical importance of the repetition of the process, the pedagogical necessity of mastering one aim at a time, the pedagogical advisability of not pestering the student with concerns irrelevant to the stage he or she is working in. The final section, by Andrea Lunsford, addresses itself to self-instruction in self-editing skills. Among other things, the book attempts to reduce the confusion between matters rhetorical and matters grammatical and to put the emphasis where it belongs.

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INTRODUCTION
Understanding writing

Writing is one way of making meaning from experience for ourselves and for others. For many of us, writing serves as the most available and the most compelling way because the outcome, visible language, is a satisfyingly permanent record of thought and feeling. We are consequently willing to engage in a process that is often long and complex so we can render meaning as a sequence of words on a page. Can others help us as we actually move through the process of writing? Can others strengthen our abilities to write effectively and well?

The authors of *Four Worlds of Writing* believe that the response to both questions is *yes* and that this text offers direct help to writers of all ages. We have spent many years finding out how writers work. We have examined and analyzed statements made over the centuries by many of the world's noted writers. We have asked student writers about their practices and have observed them as they write. We have asked ourselves how we write.

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