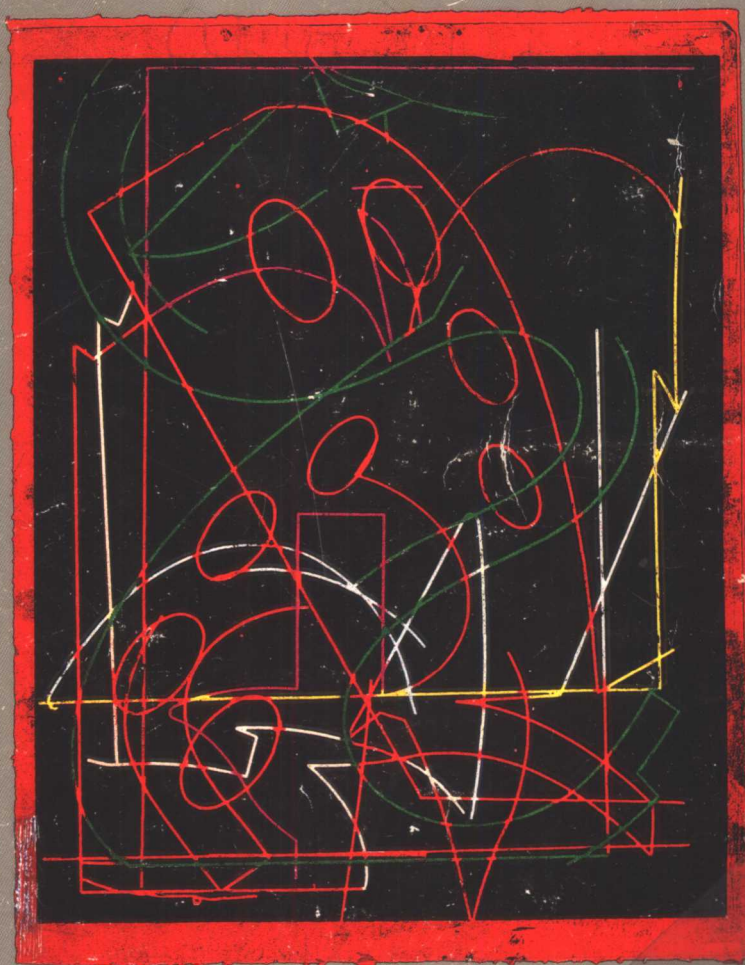


John M. Lannon

THE WRITING PROCESS

A
Concise
Rhetoric



Third
Edition

7-91-010

USED BOOK

THE
WRITING PROCESS
A CONCISE RHETORIC

THIRD EDITION

JOHN M. LANNON

Southeastern Massachusetts University

SCOTT, FORESMAN AND COMPANY
Glenview, Illinois Boston London

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Lannon, John M.

The writing process : a concise rhetoric / John M. Lannon. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-673-39671-1

1. English language — Rhetoric. I. Title.

PE1408.L3188 1988

88-26802

808'.042 — dc19

CIP

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4 5 6 7 8 9 10—RRC—94 93 92 91 90 89

Printed in the United States of America

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PREFACE

Freshman writers need both awareness and skills: They need to understand *why* writing occurs, as well as *how* it occurs. *The Writing Process* fosters rhetorical awareness and promotes rhetorical effectiveness by:

1. Emphasizing that writing is never done merely to demonstrate mechanical correctness; instead, the aim of any writing is to advance a writer's definite purpose and to serve a reader's definite needs.
2. Showing that writing is not a collection of random acts, but rather is a process of problem solving that requires a whole set of deliberate decisions.
3. Making clear the link between reading and writing, and promoting *active* reading.
4. Imparting the composing skills essential for control in planning, drafting, and revising each piece to meet the requirements of the particular writing situation.
5. Enabling students to evaluate their own writing for its rhetorical effectiveness: worthwhile content, sensible organization, and readable style.
6. Offering students practice in discovering, shaping, and expressing their meanings for a variety of goals.
7. Making a clear connection among the kinds of writing done for audiences in school, in the community, and in the workplace.

This text presents the writing process as it should be practiced — not as a simplistic series of linear steps, but rather as a set of deliberate and recursive decisions. Each rhetorical strategy is introduced in response to typical reader questions and explained in terms of the audience's needs and the writer's purpose. Well-chosen models, each accompanied by an explanation of the writer's decisions, illustrate the different strategies.

A practical guide, *The Writing Process* avoids the mechanical approach that brief rhetorics often use, as well as the needlessly theoretical aspects used by longer ones. The text is organized in four concentrated sections, each furthering the development of writing competency.

Section One, "The Process," covers in detail the stages of planning, drafting, and revising essays. Students develop rhetorical awareness by learning what any writer should know about writing as a decision-making process — how to invent, select, organize, and express material recursively and how decisions about purpose and audience naturally affect decisions about content. Here students confront all the decisions needed to produce effective writing — including writing about reading. They come to see "writing" as inseparable from "thinking."

Section Two, "The Product," expands on composition and evaluation skills, and promotes rhetorical effectiveness by focusing on the essential features of content, organization, and style. Students learn to support assertions with material that advances their exact meanings, study paragraph structure as a model for any discourse, and practice strategies for achieving prose maturity and efficiency, while sharpening their diction and adjusting their tone.

Section Three, "Essays for Various Goals," shows how the *strategies* (or modes) of discourse serve its *goals*; that is, how description, narration, exposition, and argument should express, refer, or persuade. Offering an array of variations on the standard "formula-essay" structure, this section functions as a concise reader; a balance of student and professional selections touch on a wide range of current and lasting issues. Beyond studying these samples as models, students are asked to respond to the issues presented — that is, to write in response to a specific rhetorical situation.

Section Four, "Research and Correspondence," expands rhetorical awareness beyond the classroom by applying the concepts and strategies learned earlier to a variety of practical writing tasks. The chapter on library research, fully revised and expanded, covers automated literature searches and MLA's in-text citations, and offers a new and fully annotated research report, along with a rich assortment of provocative topics. In addition, a new, thorough chapter on business letters and memoranda focuses on addressing the typical audiences, the persuasive challenges, and the composing decisions faced in business writing. Topics include inquiry and complaint letters, résumés and job applications, and informational and recommendation reports — all with abundant short-case exercises.

Finally, the appendix contains a concise handbook, complete with exercises, for easy reference.

The rationale for the sequence and substance of chapters is based on these assumptions:

- Although no single, predictable sequence characterizes the writing process, it is nonetheless a deliberate act of problem solving. As well as studying various essay models, students need guidance in active reading and in recursive decision making – guidance that is explicit without being prescriptive.
- Students do better with discourse that is writer-centered (description/narration) rather than reader-centered (exposition/argument) presumably because they have been conditioned to write for no apparent audience other than teachers, and for no apparent purpose other than the completion of assignments. As long as they view writing as an academic exercise in which neither writer nor reader has any real stake or interest, students cannot possibly understand that each writing situation poses its own rhetorical problem. Outside the classroom situation, we write about subjects only in context. We write to particular audiences who will use our writing as a basis for some specific human contact.
- Students who lack rhetorical awareness begin “writing” too early, and thus ignore the decisions essential to any kind of effective writing. Only by defining their writing situation and asking the right questions can they find the right answers. The mistake of a too-quick start is compounded by the failure to write deliberately and revise incisively. Students write deliberately only when they see writing as a form of problem solving.
- All students can learn to recognize and incorporate within their work the generic rhetorical features indispensable to good writing: content that is *worthwhile* – unified, credible, informative, and complete; organization that is *accessible* – a distinct introduction, body, and conclusion, each arranged for unity, coherence, and emphasis; and a style that is *readable* – clear, concise, fluent, exact, and engaging.
- Teachers should not waste class time in a writing course with lectures that reiterate information readily found in textbooks. Instead, workshops can apply textbook knowledge by focusing on the writing samples composed by students in the course. The workshop approach then calls for a student-centered, comprehensive, and concise text. Suggestions for workshop design are in the Instructor’s Manual.
- Finally, many writing classes are grouped heterogeneously, with students of widely varying abilities. Because books are ordered far in advance, instructors can only hope that their choices will match the general caliber of the classes they end up with. The diversity of student weaknesses and

strengths calls for accessible explanations, broadly engaging and intelligible examples, and challenging but achievable goals—in short, such diverse strengths call for a textbook flexible enough to allow individualized assignments.

This book offers a pattern of cumulative skills, moving from writer-centered to reader-centered discourse. Beginning with personal subjects and a basic essay structure, the focus shifts to increasingly complex tasks in rhetorical problem solving. Section Three culminates with argumentation, a task that draws upon the skills developed earlier. Within this structure, however, each chapter is self-contained for flexibility in course planning. Ample exercises throughout present applications at various levels of challenge and complexity.

Whether your approach is basic or accelerated, this text is easy to teach and learn from. The Instructor's Manual contains syllabi and detailed instructions for either approach. All material has been class-tested.

This new edition has been revised substantially. Specific improvements include:

- A sustained focus throughout on the link between reading and writing, including:

A new chapter, "Writing about Reading"

Readings and discussions in many chapters to help students become consciously aware of discourse forms and strategies. The readings provide a basis from which students can derive, inductively, an understanding of what makes writing work.

Directed assignments throughout in "Responding to Your Reading"

- A new section on organizing for readers.
- An expanded section on evaluating one's writing for its informative value.
- Greater emphasis on sentence combining as a way of achieving prose maturity.
- Individual chapters for each expository strategy, with more sample essays to serve as models and to provoke responses.
- A new section on four specific goals of argument: to influence reader opinion, to enlist reader support, to make a proposal, to change reader behavior.

Many changes in this edition were inspired by helpful reviews by Patsy MacDonald, Northeastern University; Jack W. Schneider, Midland College; Holace J. Drake, Buena Vista College; Robert McCoy, Kent State University; Sara Brown, Tulsa Junior College; Robert Schwegler, University of Rhode Island;

Arnold J. Bradford, Northern Virginia Community College; Cary Ser, Miami Dade Community College; Dr. Luetta C. Milledge, Savannah State College. Thank you all. I am especially grateful to Robert Schwegler, University of Rhode Island, for keen insights and excellent suggestions.

For examples, advice, and support, I thank friends and colleagues at South-eastern Massachusetts University, especially Tish Dace, Louise Habicht, Richard Larschan, Jean Morgan, and Margaret Panos. As always, Raymond Dumont was a constant help and inspiration.

A special thanks to the students who allowed me to reproduce versions of their work: Chris Adey for selections on privacy in America, Mike Creeden for a paragraph on physical fitness, Kim Fonteneau for "Suffering through Gym Class," Suzanne Gilbertson for selections on New Guinea, Shirley Haley for "Sailboats" and other excellent work, Jeff Leonard for "Walk but Don't Run," and many other writers whose selections and essays appear throughout.

At Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, Joe Opiela once again did a superb job of directing this project; Dorothy Paschal was gracious and helpful with countless matters; and Janice Friedman and Victoria Keirnan were most efficient in guiding the manuscript expertly through production.

Thanks to Chega, Daniel, Sarah, and Patrick — without whom not.

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INDEX

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SECTION ONE

**THE PROCESS—
PLANNING,
DRAFTING,
REVISING**

Writing as Decision Making

Success comes from good decision making. People who succeed usually are those who make the right decisions—about a career, an investment, a relationship, or anything else. Instead of letting things happen, these decision makers take control of their situation—and they stay in control. In one respect, writing is no different from life in general: successful writers stay in control by making the right decisions.

How Writing Occurs

Like any decision making, good writing is hard work. If we had one recipe for all writing, one sure-fire way of doing it, our labors would be small. We could learn the recipe (“Do this, then do that”), then apply it to every writing task—from love letters to scholarship applications. (With a cookbook approach of that kind, I might have spent only an hour or two writing this introduction, instead of almost a week!) But no two writing tasks are identical; we write about different subjects for different audiences for different purposes—at home, at school, on the job. For every task, writers have to make their own decisions.

Even though we have no one recipe for writing well, most writers in most situations face common problems: they need to decide who their audience is and how to make real contact with it; they need to decide what goal they want their writing to achieve and how to make sure the writing achieves that goal; they need to decide what to say and how to say it. Each writer struggles alone, but there *are* decision-making strategies that can work for most writing tasks. This book will introduce you to these strategies.

Most writing is a conscious and deliberate process—not the result of divine intervention, magic, miracles, or last-minute inspiration. Nothing ever leaps from the mind to the page in one neat and painless motion—not even for creative geniuses. Instead, worthwhile writing progresses and improves in stages: we plan, draft, and revise—repeating this cycle of decisions until our thinking takes shape, until the writing does precisely what we want it to do. Sometimes we know exactly what we want to do and say as we begin to write, and sometimes we discover our purpose and meaning only as we write. But our finished product inevitably takes shape through the decisions we make at different stages in the writing process.

This book provides the ingredients for decision making, but you have to create your own recipes. So that you can make the right decisions, you will be shown how to plan, draft, and revise in a suggested sequence of activities. But just as no two people use an identical sequence of activities to drive, ski, or play tennis, no two people write in the same way. Good writing occurs in many ways, but *each* way requires careful decision making. How you decide to use the advice in this book will depend on your writing task.