WRITING READING & RESEARCH

RICHARD VEIT JOHN CLIFFORD

WRITING, READING, AND RESEARCH

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WRITING, READING, AND RESEARCH

To our mothers, wives, and daughters—

Margaret and Rita,
Anita and Joan,
Nell, Pam, and Chris

TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Writing, Reading, and Research arose out of our dissatisfaction with other composition textbooks, especially those concerned with research writing. We found two consistent flaws, both in research-paper handbooks and in rhetoric texts with research sections: (1) they treat the research paper as an autonomous entity, as if it were just one in a series of unrelated writing types; and (2) they concentrate almost exclusively on matters of procedure and format, seeming to assume that college students already possess the skills needed to conduct research and put their findings in writing.

We are convinced that both assumptions are wrong. Rather than being a peripheral task, research is at the center of a college education. For the student, it means formulating questions about a subject of real interest, discovering and analyzing information about that subject, and writing about these discoveries and the ideas they inspire. Research, in the sense we mean, includes activities both small and large. In fact, every task involving sources is a research activity: reading a textbook, using a library, asking questions, taking notes, and writing a summary and analysis in answer to an essay exam question. A research textbook, as we see it, needs to introduce students to research in this inclusive sense, to engage them in its value and excitement, and to prepare them for doing it well.

It follows that students need to develop the many skills involved in college research. Writing an essay based on library research, for example, employs a wide range of skills, many of which, in our experience, college freshmen have not yet developed. Most basic of all is the need to read well. Students need to employ efficient reading strategies, to read with perception and understanding, to analyze and critique what they read, and to make productive use of the information and ideas that result from their reading.

For these reasons, we believe that writing, reading, and research skills should be taught and practiced together. A composition course that prepares students for the actual tasks they will face in their college and profes-

sional careers can and should be a unified whole. That unity is the principle that informs this book.

Learning the skills of writing, reading, and research is itself a process that can be analyzed into its parts. We have attempted to take a commonsense approach to this process by introducing concepts sequentially. Although each chapter has its own integrity, each also builds on the concepts developed in preceding chapters.

In general the book's movement is from simpler to more complex tasks—from working with a single source to working with multiple sources, from basic reading strategies to analytical and critical reading, from paraphrase and summary to simple synthesis and then to more advanced creative and synthetic writing skills.

We had many specific goals in writing this book:

- ☐ to broaden the traditional notion of freshman research
- ☐ to teach the process of college research in a practical sequence
- ☐ to blend the best features of a contemporary rhetoric text with an interdisciplinary reader and a research guide
- ☐ to provide a book that teachers would find a serviceable teaching instrument and that students would find readable, instructive as a text, and useful as a research handbook
- ☐ to illustrate writing activities with student examples and to show the process the writers went through to achieve their finished products
- ☐ to provide many exercises, frequent opportunities to write, and numerous occasions for discussion and critical interaction
- ☐ to present the latest MLA documentation style (with parenthetical notes replacing footnotes, among other changes)
- ☐ to provide appendices offering alternative documentation styles, including the APA style and the traditional MLA footnote style.

We would like to thank the many people who offered their help and suggestions. We are indebted to our colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, especially Robert Byington, Jo Ann Seiple, Elizabeth Pearsall, Sue Hiatt, Joanna Wright, Clark Holtzman, and Rick Dixon. Other readers and consultants to whom we owe thanks include Walter Minot of Gannon University, Richard L. Larson of Herbert H. Lehman College, Robert Schwegler of the University of Rhode Island, Thomas R. Lyons of the University of Colorado, Julia Dietrich of the University of Louisville, C. Jeriel Howard of Northeastern Illinois University, Joseph Gibaldi of MLA, and Deborah Sommer of the University of Georgia. Finally, we owe our thanks to Paul O'Connell of Bobbs-Merrill for his support and encouragement and to John Gastineau for his expertise.

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INTRODUCTION TO WRITING, READING, AND RESEARCH

Writing, reading, and research are the three most important skills you can learn in college. It follows, then, that a course that teaches those skills—the course you are now taking—is as important and valuable as any in the curriculum.

You might well be skeptical. If you are planning a career in forestry, for example, or in biology, theology, or accounting, the courses in your major field are the ones that seem most important to you now. Yet every college course presupposes that you have certain skills. And the most essential skills of all—the ones most vital to your success in your courses and career—are writing, reading, and research. You have an enormous advantage if you are an articulate writer, an observant and insightful reader, and a resourceful researcher.

Writing, reading, and research are important not just in terms of higher grades and bigger paychecks; they are essential for your own education and development as well. Once you have mastered them, you are able to discover and teach yourself anything you care to learn. And teaching yourself, surprising as it may seem, is what college is about.

A college education must do more than pour information into your head. It must teach you how to learn on your own. The store of information in any field is too vast and the world is changing too rapidly for an education that only presents you with quantities of information to do much lasting good. Instead, an education worthy of the name must give you access to whatever information you need to know, both now and after you graduate. It must prepare you to learn what people have discovered in the past, to understand what you read today, to receive and adapt tomorrow's ideas. It must train you to think, to find out other people's ideas and information, to evaluate and use them, and to make a contribution of new ideas and discoveries of your own. These are the skills we mean by writing, reading, and research. You can see why we say they are important.

The good news is that there is nothing mysterious, or even terribly difficult, about these skills. You are perfectly capable of acquiring them. For one thing, you have been reading and writing for years, and (whether you know it or not) you have been doing research tasks all your life, both in and out of school. For example, when you were deciding where to attend college, you probably researched the subject by examining college catalogs, consulting with your guidance counsellor, talking with friends, or making campus visits. In fact, if you found and read a catalog and then wrote for an application, you used all three skills.

The aim of this book is to develop and expand those skills to meet the needs of your college career. Writing, reading, and research are interrelated activities, so it makes sense to study them together. Doing research often involves finding what other people have written, reading it, and then writing in response. Even as you write, you must read and reread what you have written, deciding whether further research and rewriting are needed. And finally, what you have written about your research becomes someone else's reading.

Because these skills can be learned only through experience, this book will give you considerable practice in using them. In addition, since they can most easily be learned in a progression, with one accomplishment building on others already mastered, the book is arranged in a reasonable, practical sequence. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief introduction to these three essential and interrelated areas.

WRITING

Unlike speaking, writing is almost always learned in school. And it takes time to master. Writing is a complex skill, made up of dozens of previously acquired subskills—from handwriting and spelling to syntax and organization. Professional writers have, in a sense, mastered writing. But it would probably be more accurate to say they have mastered their own ***writing processes***, having learned how to control a frustrating journey from confusion to order. Many people mistakenly believe that good writers create polished essays in a single try. The reality is that, like beginning writers, they start out with vague, half-formed bits and pieces of an idea; these thoughts are not focused or developed, and they are certainly not expressed in language that is ready to be someone else's reading. It is a rough, tentative beginning. And at this stage of the writing process, your writing and theirs are probably not too far apart.

The difference between experienced writers and most college freshmen is that the former have learned through trial and error to break the complexity of writing into manageable steps, so that what starts out confused and awkward ends up, several steps later, as a polished editorial or a crafted report. If you strive for early perfection in your writing, you are

doomed to failure and frustration. Polish and clarity are earned only through hard work. That is the secret of professional writers. Writing is not any easier for them than it is for you. But they have confidence in the writing process. They know that if they are patient, then good ideas, good sentences, and even good grammar will come. So they relax and get to the hardest part of the writing process—getting started.

We are assuming in this book that you already have had experience with writing. Perhaps you have had a course in college or high school that introduced you to the stages of the writing process. Even so, we think it is important to outline and review a typical sequence of steps used by seasoned writers. Your writing habits are different from everyone else's, and every time you write, the circumstances are different, so be prepared to make adjustments when necessary. But remember there are no shortcuts to good thinking and clear writing.

We will illustrate the evolution of a short essay by tracing one student's composing sequence in writing for a class assignment. Students were asked to "Explain an attitude that is characteristic of your generation." The paper was to be based on the writers' personal experiences and observations, and it did not call for further research.

Prewriting

It is much easier to begin drafting a paper when you already have many ideas about what you want to say. It makes sense, before you write, to use techniques that will help you to discover ideas and put them in writing. Four widely used ***invention techniques*** are ***brainstorming***, ***mapping***, ***freewriting***, and ***outlining***. When one student, Lorraine Wessel, wrote on the assigned topic, she used all four techniques as a sequence to help her get started.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming is used by writers, business people, and scientists to help them unblock their thinking. It is a way of bringing to mind as many ideas about a topic as you can. Brainstorming not only provides you with raw material to work with, but it also gets your creative juices flowing. You can brainstorm out loud or on paper. One way is to write down all the words or phrases about a topic that pop into your head, listing them down the page, one after the other as they occur to you. Don't judge them or worry about being consistent. Sometimes you have to go through three or four or even a dozen useless ideas before a good one comes along. The purpose of this technique is to let associations connect with one another in the mind, like rubbing sticks together to create a spark.

When Lorraine was given the assigned topic about an attitude characteristic of her generation, she was unsure at first what specific attitude to write about, so she brainstormed, producing this list:

☐ what is a generation? 10 years? any time period?
☐ characteristic of me or my friends?
☐ rock music
☐ they like MTV, pizza, Crazy Zack's, sports, movies (escape?)
☐ but is that so different from other generations?
☐ more open about sex
☐ attitudes? optimistic, pessimistic, loyal
☐ caring for others—no!
☐ developing inner resources—maybe
☐ doing something important
☐ wanting to succeed
☐ money, cars, success, JOB
☐ being practical, afraid to take risks
☐ tuned into technology

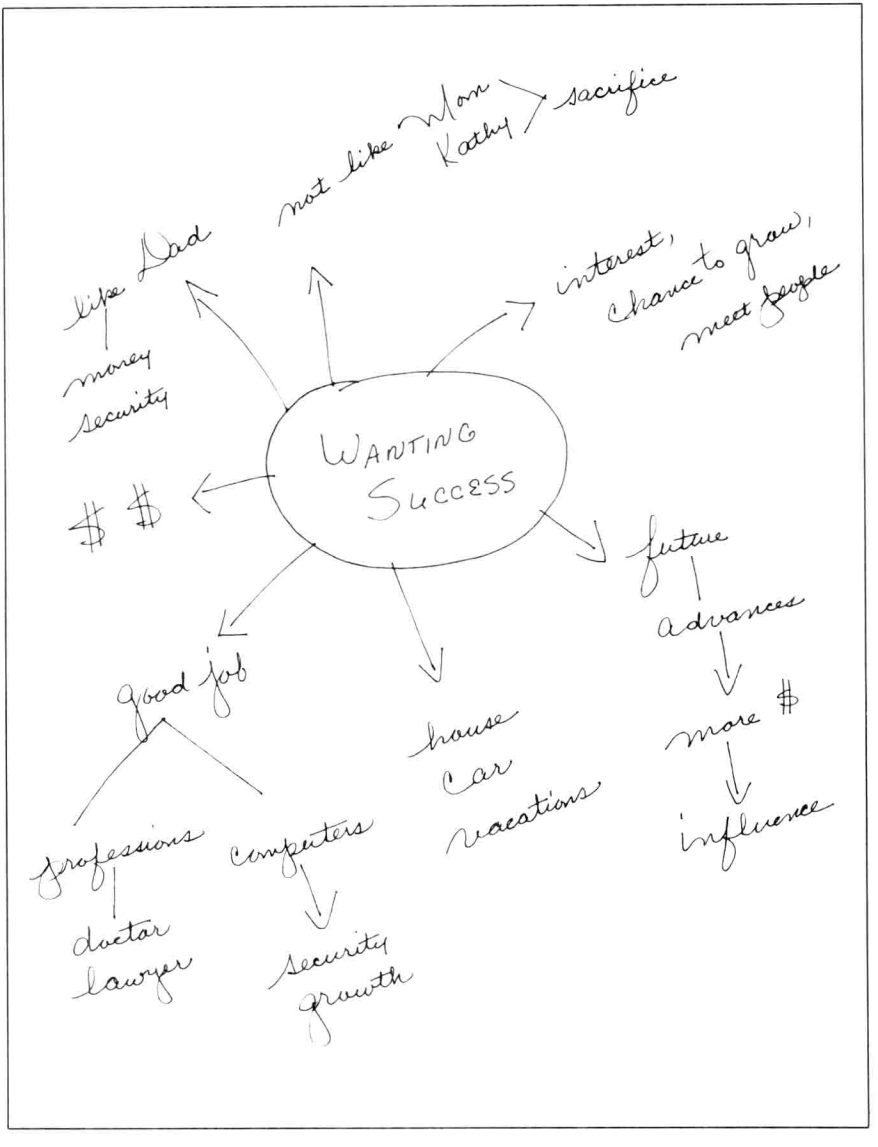
Some of the items on Lorraine's list have meaning only for her. She was writing down ideas as they came, and her brainstorming helped her to make up her mind. The idea of students' wanting success interested her most, and she decided that this was the attitude she would write about.

Mapping. When you map your thinking, you try to make ideas external, to get them down in black and white so you can look at them and see the relationship of one thought to another. You try to make a pattern of words and phrases that radiate out from a central thought. In doing this, writers are often surprised how the process of linking helps them discover other ideas. Sometimes the visual pattern itself can suggest the idea for the essay's basic organization. As in brainstorming, it is best to jot ideas down fast and not try to decide whether each idea is good or bad.

Having decided on her topic, Lorraine mapped her ideas. Her map is shown on page 5.

Free-Writing. After an unfocused invention activity like brainstorming or mapping, the best way to discover more focused ideas for use in your writing is to free-write. Begin writing about your topic at a steady, normal pace, jotting down whatever comes to mind, and continue without stopping for a planned amount of time, perhaps five or ten minutes. Do not try to screen or organize your ideas; simply let them flow. Don't worry about spelling or repetition or punctuation or even making sense. You don't do free-writing for others to read; rather, you do it for yourself to think through your topic and come up with ideas that you can use later. Lorraine's five-minute free-writing looked like this:

> I think my generation is interested in getting ahead. That's why I came to college anyway—to get a good job so I don't have to work hard with my hands like my father or in a job I hate like my mother. She's a teacher—a job that requires training and skill and is supposed to give satisfaction but she is exhausted each night and she can't wait for the weekends and hates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lawyer
computers
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her principal. She wasn't meant to be a teacher. She thought it would be the right thing to do—she liked school— and what else could an educated woman do then but be a nurse or a librarian—Now I think there is more opportunity, more chances for a woman and I want to make money on my own, not depend on a husband. The world is too uncertain. I think most people I know feel the same way. A good job, success is important. College is so expensive anyway, you've got to come out of it with something you can hold on to. Something you can cash at the bank. Interesting work, getting satisfaction from it, even helping people—they are important, but beggars can't be choosers and I don't want to end up begging. My mother tells me I'm materialistic but I look at her life and I know I'm right.

Lorraine's is a typical piece of free-writing—conversational, honest, and rambling. That is as it should be. If it were tightly organized and carefully written, it would miss the point of prewriting. Lorraine is trying to discover ideas, so she jumps from one possibility to another. She is, however, onto a central idea that means something to her—success.

Outlining. After these preliminary steps, it is wise to make a brief, tentative outline, putting the main ideas you have discovered into a general organization. At this point you should not try for a detailed outline. You will still discover much more about what you have to say later, as you write the essay. The preliminary outline is to provide you with signposts—general ideas and their support. It is a guide, not a rigid blueprint; you should feel free as you write to change your outline whenever you discover new ideas or a better organization. Here in Lorraine's outline she focuses on her insight from her free-writing: she and her generation want success.

Interested in success
—occupation
—money
—interest
—advancement
—personal
—friends
—security

As it turned out, when Lorraine began writing, her ideas took her in a different direction from her intentions, and her first draft did not follow her outline very closely at all.

First Draft

Having explored your topic in your mind and on paper through prewriting, you have a tremendous headstart in writing your essay. You are ready to begin a first draft. When writing this draft, keep your prewriting plans in mind, but do not be rigidly bound to them. Stay flexible. Since you are

still discovering ideas and since this is a first version, not the finished product, do not worry unduly now about spelling or grammatical correctness. The time to put your paper into flawless form is later, as you revise and proofread. Taking time at this stage to look up the spelling of a word or to ponder the punctuation of a sentence will only interrupt your train of thought.

Unlike free-writing, however, your first draft should be written in paragraphs. Begin a new paragraph whenever you change to a new idea, and support your general ideas with specific examples, reasons, or illustrations. Here is Lorraine's first draft:

> My generation, and I'm including myself, is mainly interested in being successful. My mother and sister call my friends the "me generation." I guess other generations could be included in this attitude, but not all of them. My sister who is eleven years older than me is a social worker in Atlanta and is always complaining about the government and how they don't care about poor people. When she comes home for holidays, she and my mother, who is a teacher, are always arguing with my father, who is a carpenter. I take my father's side: your first obligation is to take care of your family and yourself.
>
> Maybe my generation is trying to be different from people like my sister, who wants to change the world or save it. Most of the classmates I know are concerned with learning something more practical in college. I'm interested in a career in computer science. That is where the future is, and I think in the long run I can have more impact there than in the ghettos of Atlanta or in a classroom.
>
> The older generation often says that my generation is not as filled with idealism and good will as they were. Maybe we can't afford to be. There are situations in America that dictate various attitudes. When the economy is in bad shape and jobs are scarce, who can be noble? In the future the jobs that will be secure are not service type ones but those connected to making the economy stronger, like those in management and computer related positions.
>
> My generation is focused on their own needs, but I don't think in a negative way. If there was a course that had some chance for success then my generation would probably respond. But today there only seems to be causes that can't succeed, like being against nuclear energy or for disarmament. It makes more sense to build a strong economy, then other things can follow. A strong future for this country begins with the knowledge and technical skill learned in college. A nation of competent technical people is the way to solve problems.
>
> It is characteristic of my generation to want financial and personal success and to understand that this is best brought about by relying on oneself and making oneself competent in technology.

Notice that this draft is more organized and disciplined than Lorraine's free-writing. She does, for example, try to begin each paragraph with a general statement that she sticks with and develops. And she has certainly

enlarged on her free-writing idea of getting ahead. There is work to be done here on focus and support, but because of Lorraine's use of the writing process, she is off to a promising start.

□ □ □

Imagine that Lorraine Wessell is your classmate and that she has asked you for suggestions to help her improve her paper. What specific advice could you offer? The following questions might help you focus your comments:

1. What is Lorraine's central idea? Is it stated or just implied? Does it seem reasonable, and do you agree with it? Has the connection between her beliefs and those of her generation been made clear enough? Does Lorraine make more than one point in her essay? If so, does she need to narrow her focus?
2. What concrete support does Lorraine provide for the points she raises? Is it enough? For example, in the third paragraph, does she give us either examples or reasons for what she says in the first two sentences? What about the fourth paragraph; does she tell us what the needs are?
3. How effective is the last paragraph as a conclusion? Does it state an idea that has been the focus of the whole essay, or is this a newly formulated idea that she seems to have reached only at the end? Can you offer suggestions to give her revision more focus?

□ □ □

Rewriting

Rewriting is the stage that distinguishes the experienced writer from the novice. The experienced writer spends a large amount of time rereading, changing words, rearranging sentences and paragraphs, adding new material, and writing again. Some papers require more revision than others. Based on the comments she received from her classmates, Lorraine Wessell decided to write an entirely new draft of her essay.

Of course not all writers are alike, and different writers prefer different ***revision*** strategies. Some, like Lorraine, prefer all-at-once revisions. They write a first draft all the way through, and then they compose a completely revised second draft. Other writers engage in ongoing revisions. They write a brief passage and then, before going on, reread what they have written, make changes, and then continue. One author of this book, John Clifford, is an all-at-once reviser. The other, Richard Veit, uses the ongoing method. You will need to discover which works best for you.

To make a good revision of your work, you need comments from an objective reader. You can be that reader yourself, provided that you can step back and view your work as an outside reader would. After you have

completed a draft, it is wise to let your paper sit (for a few days if possible, but at least overnight) so that you can see it from a fresh perspective. Some writers like to read their work aloud, either for themselves or to someone else. Some get ideas for revising as they recopy or retype what they have written, since it forces them to read their work slowly and attentively. Another good tactic is to have a friend read your draft and offer suggestions. In the writing of this book, for example, each author has read and edited the sections written by the other, and many outside readers have also offered suggestions.

Your goals in revising are traditional ones—to have a clear thesis, a narrow focus, and good support. You will probably need to cut, rearrange, and redo. And you will also want to add, substitute, and rethink. Revision means seeing again, not just making cosmetic corrections.

Before you begin a final draft, you can write another brief outline, since you now know generally what you want to say. Lorraine's outline, built around her revised thesis, has become more structured and detailed, but it is still open to change as she writes her next draft:

> Theme: My generation differs from the previous generation in its focus on success, technology, and ourselves.
>
> 1. Introduction: contrast with my sister's generation which believed in self-sacrifice.
> 2. Need for different view:
>   a. Economy makes old situation impractical, forces interest in technology.
>   b. Japanese advances offer a model.
> 3. Problems with our view:
>   a. Drinking
>   b. Pressure
> 4. Conclusion: Our view is necessary and offers hope.

Final Draft

The next step is to write your final draft. Lorraine Wessell wrote a new draft of her paper, revised it, got comments from readers, and revised it some more. Here is her final version:

The Technological Generation

All generations have their special personality. Some are carefree, others are rebels. But most try to be different from the one that preceded them. My generation, raised in the seventies and eighties, is unlike the generation raised in the sixties. My older sister, a social worker, believes that we have a responsibility to sacrifice ourselves to care for the poor. My generation does