



The Student Writer

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The Student Writer

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Preface

We wrote this book to meet specific needs that we felt were not met in currently available process-oriented textbooks for beginning college writers. First, we wanted a book that *really* taught the writing process; that is, one that guided students through a series of full-length writing assignments, not one that focused on components of the process divorced from the product. Second, we wanted a text that prepared students for academic writing, and that made students aware of how the writing they were doing in our classes would directly contribute to improved writing in other college courses. Third, we wanted a text that began each writing assignment by having students explore ideas and then find the forms to fit the ideas, rather than fitting ideas to forms. Finally, we wanted our students to feel in control of their own writing processes by the time they completed our courses, so that they no longer had to rely on teachers' feedback to write and revise their own texts.

Organization

Each chapter of this text coaches students through the process of writing a full-length essay. Each chapter's assignments progress from the kinds of writing with which students tend to be familiar to the genres more specific to the college setting. The table of contents, therefore, looks familiar, moving from descriptive and narrative writing through expository essays and summary writing to a documented expository essay.

Actually, each assignment pushes students to use analytical processes by asking them to examine their subject matter to find a point of interest appropriate to a larger audience. In this way, from the beginning, students are working with a fundamental requirement of college writing, that they move beyond subject matter itself to consider it in the context of larger issues and audiences.

Chapters are sequenced in other ways. Later chapters build on the skills learned in earlier chapters. For instance, Chapter 5, on narrative, incorporates descriptive and anecdotal writing about objects, places, and people practiced in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Chapters 6 and 7, each of which makes assignments dealing with advertising, use descriptive techniques

while introducing students to the organizational structures of expository writing. The assignment in Chapter 8, an expository essay about a topic of the students' own choosing, explicitly defines expository structures and introduces various kinds of evidence students can develop to support their own points. Chapter 9 teaches summary techniques at the same time that it reviews various expository formats. Chapter 10 requires students to write an expository essay using evidence from their research and personal experience and serves as a culmination of the work of the course.

Though each chapter works with sentence and diction concerns appropriate to its assignment, we have provided a handbook as the final section of the textbook to allow teachers to offer students additional instruction in specific areas of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Special Features

Each chapter integrates prewriting and drafting activities into its full-length writing assignment. Prewriting begins with the reading at the beginning of each chapter, which serves both as stimulus for ideas and as a model for student writing. Readings address thought-provoking topics like self-understanding, familial relationships, stereotyping, racism, advertising, and ability grouping in schools. As models, the readings demonstrate the style, structure, and format of a variety of genres (essay, newspaper story, textbook, and scholarly writing), some of which the students themselves will attempt. Authors vary from students to scholars and from frequently anthologized writers to some who, we are fairly certain, have never been anthologized.

The reading questions are designed to do more than simply help students to understand content and theme. They also address the issues of audience, point, structure (unity, cohesion, sequence), and evidence with which students will be working in their own writing. In other words, they learn about the writing concerns they must address in their own writing through discussing the reading questions.

As students discuss the reading questions, they are already moving toward the invention stage of writing. While the discussion questions and class brainstorming exercises provide a public forum for exchanging ideas, journal writing assignments encourage students to think privately about their responses to readings and their own related experiences.

The heart of each chapter is the collaborative activities that support the drafting stages of writing. Every chapter (except the first) guides students through at least two drafts before the final draft. Students' attention is focused on the development of the content and point in the first draft and on meeting the more conventional requirements for form and organization in the second. Surface error editing is reserved for the third and final draft.

All but two chapters (the introductory and summary chapters) conclude with unedited examples of our own students' final drafts of each assignment. Also, we include a set of criteria for students to use to evaluate the examples, their peers' writing, and their own drafts. Instructors can use these samples of student writing in a variety of ways, for instance, as a model for productive peer-group discussions as editing exercises.

The text includes enough material for a two-quarter or two-semester sequence of courses. If the course is only one quarter or semester, however, the wealth of material allows teachers to select and sequence the chapters to meet their own students' needs best.

The accompanying instructor's manual discusses in greater depth the purposes and rationale for each writing assignment, suggests ways of using the materials, and offers advice for handling the typical problems students encounter as they attempt to write the various assignments.

We have developed and used this manuscript over the past several years, and we are convinced that this approach helps students to understand and meet the requirements of college writing. The students will also gain confidence in their own ability to continue writing independently in other courses and no longer have to rely on the instructor's feedback to write and revise their own texts.

Acknowledgments

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KATHRYN R. FITZGERALD
JAMIE MCBETH SMITH

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Beginning the Process

INTRODUCTION

It is probably not much of an exaggeration to say that the process of writing is a lot like that of living—we learn about the process by doing it, and by having some fun along the way. Sometimes the process is joyful, seemingly effortless; sometimes it is worrisome and difficult; sometimes it is humdrum, its meaning elusive; sometimes it is clear and defined; sometimes we know what we want from it, and sometimes we do not.

Sometimes when writing, we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves. We expect to know exactly what we think about a topic, exactly why we think the way we do, and exactly how to convince our readers of the importance of our thoughts. We develop these expectations because of what we read. When we read published writing, it seems clear that the writers knew from the beginning their opinion about a topic and what evidence to use to convince us of its importance. We must realize, however, that we are reading the final version of the author's writing, a version that has been reached after a careful process of writing and rewriting.

To become more realistic about what to expect from ourselves as we write, we must learn what the writing process entails and how to use that process (1) to make sense of a topic for ourselves and to discover our purpose in writing and (2) to make sense of both the topic and purpose for our readers.

This book is designed to help you master the writing process by teaching you effective strategies to practice as you write college essays. The essay is a particularly useful writing form to master because it is widely used not only in colleges and universities, but also outside academia as well: many articles in magazines and some articles in newspapers are essays. Regardless of where successful essays appear—in a classroom, in a newspaper, as an