TEACHING *with a* PURPOSE

INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL *for* WRITING *with a* PURPOSE, TENTH EDITION; TRIMMER

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Instructor's Resource Manual for

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Tenth Edition

Trimmer

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INTRODUCTION

I got my first writing job in high school. I was hired by a fellow student as a ghostwriter. I wrote the paper; he got the A. I was soon approached by another student to write a second term paper. I said no. I could have been well on my way to a lucrative life of writing papers for students who were willing to pay a lot of money to avoid doing it themselves. Luckily, I saw the light early enough to close down my little ghostwriting business before I got into a lot of trouble. I didn't like the feeling I got when I realized that someone else had received a good grade and all the credit for work I had done. No more ghostwriting for me. But as I think about that experience, especially now as a teacher of writing, my concern is not with students who want to write, even under morally questionable circumstances, but with the students who *don't* want to write—and there are far more who do not want to write than who do. These are the students who do not see themselves as capable of writing or who simply do not identify anything meaningful in the acts of reading, research, and writing.

Fortunately, writing instruction has changed a great deal since my high school days. At that time, students could turn in term papers written by other students because teachers never saw the work in progress. One day, an assignment was handed out, a due date was indicated, and nothing more was said until the day the paper was due. The emphasis was only on the product, never on the process. There were no in-class writing workshops, no trips to the library to learn hands-on research methods, no planning activities, no discovery drafts, no preliminary outlines, no rough drafts that were then read by peers and the teacher and talked about, revised, read, and revised again. I learned to write and got paid to write because I practiced writing. I spent hours writing outside class. Just for fun. I was happy when I was asked to write something for class. I got a reputation for being a little weird because of it. But to me, a writing assignment meant I could do something I liked and get credit for it. My "client," however, had obviously not had the positive experiences I had had reading and writing.

There are still plenty of willing clients out there. As writing teachers, how are we to invite them into the world of writing: the worlds of learning, research, reading, engagement, and wonderment? We should challenge ourselves to make all students want to be ghostwriters because if we can do that, they will experience for themselves that writing is, as Chapter 1 of *Writing with a Purpose* tells us, "opportunity. It allows you to express something about yourself, to explore and explain ideas, and to assess the claims of other people."

As a writer, I know that people learn to write by writing. That's how I learned. As a teacher of writing, I also know this is true, and current theory confirms that students learn to write by writing. Students also learn to write by reading and making connections with written text, by talking about what they are reading and writing with peers, and by planning and organizing their time and their research. Finally, students learn to write under the guidance of more experienced writers—their teachers. As *Writing with a Purpose,* 10th edition, points out, you and other experienced writers can provide excellent advice to student writers on how to break down the tasks required, meet deadlines, and produce the kind of writing demanded in college.

Students learn to write best when given the opportunity to write in learning environments where they feel it is safe to write. With its many guidelines on planning and drafting papers, the text allows students the opportunity to try new strategies, to fail sometimes in trying them but still continue, to revise a piece of work, or to let go of writing that isn't heading anywhere and begin again. Well-informed teachers of writing will recognize that their role has changed from that of information-giver standing in front of the class, to that of listener and responder to student texts. The reading and writing assignments encourage collaborative learning in which students respect their own insights and those of their classmates as they work together to read, respond to, and revise, their writing.

Helping students learn to write means helping students understand there are no magic tricks, no shortcuts, no easy lists of twenty ways to write a paper, no substitute for the hard work of sitting down and facing their own thoughts and getting them onto paper. It also means that teachers must be writers themselves, must understand the recursive processes of writing, and must model for students the struggle of writing through mistakes to discover the real meaning of what they are trying to say.

One way to view *Writing with a Purpose* is as a three-way collaboration among you, the book, and your students. In this relationship, the book serves you and your students not as surrogate teacher, but as a resource of ideas and practices you can tailor to meet the needs of your class. Whether you are a graduate teaching assistant teaching freshman writing for the first time or an experienced teacher of writing, *Writing with a Purpose* can help you structure the course as you walk with students

through the processes of trusting their own instincts as writers and assessing what they have written.

The flexibility of *Writing with a Purpose* allows you to structure your writing classroom to fit whatever theoretical approach you or your program has determined is best for your students. Whatever your philosophy of teaching, *Writing with a Purpose* offers a rich variety of guidelines, exercises, readings, and writing assignments. Nevertheless, the text is offered as a guide only. Certainly, you will want to pick and choose assignments that are most suitable for meeting the needs of the writers in your particular class. Because the textbook offers more apparatus than you can possibly use to structure a single ten- or sixteen-week course in writing, part of your advance preparation for teaching involves making three interrelated decisions: (1) how to organize the syllabus; (2) how to design, sequence, and assess assignments; and (3) how to use class time. This Instructor's Resource Manual offers advice on how you can use the textbook most efficiently and provide your students with the kinds of challenges they need to become competent writers. Although neither the textbook nor the Instructor's Resource Manual is intended to supply "the answers" to all situations, both are intended to help you help your students most effectively.

READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: WAYS TO USE *WRITING WITH A PURPOSE*

Writing with a Purpose has always included ample readings throughout its text, but the 10th edition provides a stronger emphasis on reading and writing connections. The new reader-rhetoric format provides you with a wealth of new material. As a note of caution: do not try to assign all the assignments; if you do, you could spend the entire semester or quarter on Chapter 1! Each chapter of the 10th edition contains three readings of varied lengths and levels of difficulty. Each set of readings is related by theme. (The readings in Chapter 1, for example, all have to do with the creative processes of writing, painting, and building; Chapter 14 presents different points of view on multicultural education in America.) This thematic arrangement models different approaches to the subject for student writers or presents opposing arguments. The material offers ample opportunity for in-class discussion and for integrating reading and writing, and it contains a multitude of voices to which students can respond in their own writing. Because each reading requires a different level of comprehension, the more sustained readings will make appropriate homework assignments, whereas the shorter pieces can be read during class periods.

Following the readings are writing assignments that ask students to narrate, observe, investigate, collaborate, read, respond, analyze, evaluate, or argue. The

assignments are arranged according to a traditionally viewed hierarchy of skills, beginning with narration, which is the most familar type of writing students have encountered (although not necessarily the easiest), and ending with argumentation, which is the goal of most academic writing. As students read and practice writing, the assignments allow them to build on what they have learned previously. The assignments also invite students to concentrate on one strategy at a time, although eventually they will come to understand that writing good essays involves all the strategies at different points.

The assignments create situations for students to learn the craft of writing by doing what real writers do: tell stories, watch people and places, look beyond the surface for the story beneath, work together with other writers and editors, read accounts from various sources, respond to what they read, take apart what they have observed or read, assess the value of what they have discovered, and, finally, present a well-defined argument. The assignments also offer two opportunites for argument because learning to construct persuasive arguments is a major activity required of college writers across the curriculum. All the assignments can be sequenced to help strengthen student writing ability by asking students to write and then revise in light of new requirements. In this way, students continue to build on what they have learned and work to sustain a longer piece of writing that demands more from them as writers. Perhaps the most important issues in writing that your students will glean from the textbook are those of purpose and audience. All writing must have a purpose because all writing has an audience that will demand to know why the text has been generated and why it should be read.

There are many ways to use *Writing with a Purpose* in the classroom. You might want to stress the readings, for example, and structure the class primarily on reading and responding. Or you might want to stress the first four chapters on planning, drafting, and revising and assign the other chapters to individual students as needed. Another option is to read through the first four chapters quickly, then concentrate on Chapters 6, 13, and 14: "Argument," "Planning the Research Paper," and "Writing the Research Paper." In addition to readings by professional writers and researchers, the book contains case histories of student papers, which may be particularly helpful to some students in understanding how writing evolves through revision. Although you may not want to use all the student histories, one or two of them (such as Matt's paper on drug testing in Chapter 6 and Robin's paper on multiculturalism in Chapter 14) can help illustrate writing in progress for your students. The combination of materials in *Writing with a Purpose* allows you to pull together just what you need for your class.

As Ann Berthoff tells us, "We can only teach the composing process by devising writing assignments appropriate to its different phases; to do that, we should

have an understanding of the forming power of mind, or what was once called the imagination. To form the concept of forming, we have to think about thinking and this is, of course, a philosophical challenge, one which teachers of English should be prepared to accept" (95). The writing assignments in *Writing with a Purpose* are devised to promote the kind of thinking in student writers that allows access to the imagination. Writing opens the world for students in ways that other activities do not. *Writing with a Purpose,* 10th edition, helps you open the world for your students.

HINTS TO BEGINNING TEACHERS

The main goal of *Writing with a Purpose* is to promote good writing practice among students and their teachers. Some general teaching practices you might want to try are as follows.

1. Write with your students. Do the assignments with them. Sit down in class, and let them see you struggling to respond to the assignment, too. Share your early drafts so they can see that writing does not just happen. Everyone who writes has to work at it. Refer to yourself as a writer; let your students see that you take this activity seriously.
2. As Tim Donovan points out in his article "Seeing Students as Writers," view your students as writers first and students second; refer to them as writers as well. This will help create a "community of writers" in which writers help writers learn.
3. Encourage critical discussion. Let students tell you which assignments work for them and which do not. Share with them which assignments worked for you and which did not. Try to help students analyze why a particular assignment does not work for them: perhaps they need to read more before writing, perhaps they have not narrowed their focus enough, or perhaps they need more brainstorming and freewriting. Encourage students to talk among themselves about writing.
4. Give students choices whenever possible. Instead of assigning a certain assignment to everyone (which means you have to read the same assignment twenty times), you could ask students to choose their own assignment. You might ask students to choose assignments that direct them toward research on topics in their majors.
5. Occasionally let students choose individually which readings to work on. Not only will students actually do more reading this way because they must peruse the selections to decide what to read, but the class discussions could become

more lively. Students might work in groups according to which essays they have chosen. You might also simply assign all the readings from a particular chapter to the entire class and then assign students to groups or lead whole-group discussions. There is no one right way to use the material offered in *Writing with a Purpose*. Whatever works best for your teaching style and for your students is what's best.

6. Depending on your class, you might want to assign particular writing assignments, especially at first. I wish to stress, however, that you should not be concerned with trying to "cover" all the writing assignments in the book. You should not even attempt to do this. It is usually a good idea to give students a range of choices and talk about the variety of possibilities available to them. By choosing their own assignments, they are taking a more active role in their own learning. Writing is, above all, an activity that involves choice: of topic, of point of view, of evidence, of word choice. The hardest part for many students is in deciding what to write about. By giving them some parameters that can guide their choices but at the same time allowing them the needed practice in making decisions, you can help students gain confidence and strength as writers. Many students hate to write because they feel they are not given a choice about what to write. Give them a choice and see what happens.
7. Be open to what students seem to need, and at the same time set limits in terms of deadlines and procedures. If papers are due on a certain day, do not allow students to turn in work late without some kind of penalty (usually a lowered grade). Some instructors do not accept late homework at all. Some may, depending on circumstances. Whatever your policy, make it clear to students what the expectations are as well as what the consequences are for violating class policies. State your policies clearly in your syllabus. This protects you and your students. You can always ease up on policies, but you cannot make students accountable for policies you have not announced. It is better to come across as demanding in the beginning. They will appreciate the clear guidelines, and you will save yourself headaches by deciding ahead of time how to respond to problems of chronic late papers, tardiness, lack of participation, and so on.
8. Be willing to say, "I don't know" if students ask questions and you do not know the answers. The best teachers model the process of inquiry with their students by going to the library with them, by locating sources, by problem solving, and by sharing their own experiences. Some of my best class periods were spent in searching answers and putting planned lessons on hold to respond to more immediate student needs.
9. Be flexible. Come to class prepared with an agenda, but do not feel so invested in the prepared lesson that you cannot stop to respond to the needs of your

students. If students are not as ready to go to the next chapter as you thought they might be, take additional classroom time to go back over last week's chapters. Take time out to see where your students are. Give them time to practice the advice they receive from the textbook. Allow for a question and answer period and a "catch-up" day.

10. Use the Writing Center! You are not alone in teaching your students. Refer students to the Writing Center whenever they need an audience, are struggling over topic choice, or are trying to understand a reading selection from the textbook. At all stages of the writing process, Writing Center tutors can help your students in one-to-one tutorials. As a teacher of writing, you are part of a team that includes other teachers, department mentors, and the Writing Center staff. Encourage your students to use the Writing Center whenever they have a writing assignment.

WRITING A SYLLABUS AND A COURSE DESCRIPTION

You will, no doubt, receive advice on preparing your syllabus, especially if you are teaching for the first time. Many graduate students are given a syllabus to follow. If you must write your own syllabus, however, and do not know where to start, the following questions and guidelines may help:

1. What are the primary goals for the students in my writing class? In what writing activities must they learn to engage? What kind of products must they complete? Include a course calendar with due dates for reading and writing assignments.
2. How will I teach these students? What is the format most important to the teaching of writing? Will the students understand what I mean by "writing process" and "writing workshop"? Define these approaches in your course description.
3. Include on your syllabus your name and office number, conference hours, required texts, prerequisites (if any) for the course, and a detailed course description that includes an explanation of the class workshop format.
4. Outline your course policies in detail: policies on grading, late work, meeting deadlines, class attendance and maximum number of absences, revisions, portfolios, and presentation of work. Give as much detail as you can. If you require students to present work done on a word processor, for example, let them know in writing that this is a requirement. If you prefer that students staple the pages of their essays together, state it on the syllabus. The more you can tell them in your syllabus about the day-to-day details of the course requirements,

the less you have to repeat yourself, and the more accountable they will be because the requirements will be in writing. Stating your policies in writing prevents misunderstandings and protects you later if problems arise.

USE OF CLASSROOM TIME

Writing classes, like classes in painting or architectural drafting, are essentially studio classes. The central activity in all writing classes is the act of writing. Even if students write only for 10 minutes in their journals, it is important that they write in every class period. The instructor's role in the course is that of coach and experienced practitioner, sharing what knowledge of the craft of writing he or she has learned from direct experience and emphasizing the practice of writing. For many English instructors, it is difficult to take a step back; first-year teachers, especially, often say, "I feel I'm not doing my job if I'm not standing in front of the classroom lecturing." Part of the issue is one of perception: Who is really in control here? Writing classes, when they are most productive, appear chaotic to visitors. The logic lies in the activity of working together on assignments. Learning theory tells us that students learn from each other, not from lectures delivered by brilliant graduate students.

One-to-One Activities

Although some teachers organize their whole class around one-to-one activities, most use it for occasional student-teacher or peer conferences. The purpose of the student-teacher conference is to respond orally to a student's plan or draft. Because these conferences allow you to discover a great deal about the student writer's approach to a particular piece of writing as well as about his or her overall writing processes and development, it is advisable to schedule at least two of these conferences per term, more if possible. These conferences may be held during class time or while the rest of the class writes, or they may be scheduled during your office hours or in lieu of a class meeting. It is a good idea to limit the conferences to about 15 minutes per student. Sign-up sheets allow students to be prepared ahead of time for the meeting.

Conferences are most beneficial when the student's writing is in progress, and you may wish to hold several conferences on the same assignment, each time focusing on a different level of concern—idea, structure, development, style, mechanics. If you are meeting with a student only once to review a particular rough draft, you may wish to use the general conference format recommended by Donald Murray in *A Writer Teaches Writing:*

1. The student comments on the draft.
2. The teacher reads or reviews the draft.
3. The teacher responds to the student's comments.
4. The student responds to the teacher's response. (148)

Another one-to-one strategy you may wish to incorporate into your course is the peer conference. Sometimes called "dyad work," students in peer conferences work in pairs to respond orally or in writing to each other's plans or drafts. Most chapters for this Instructor's Resource Manual include peer response guides that can be the basis for students' written responses to one another's work. Also useful are self-evaluations in which students answer similar questions asked of their peers in response to their own essays, thereby allowing them to assess how they feel the writing is progressing. Students can compare their own answers to those of peer readers to see if their intentions are coming across to an audience.

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Small groups (three to five students is best) can engage in many valuable group activities, including writing groups, problem-solving group activities, and collaborative writing tasks. One instructor I know assigns students to groups for the entire quarter. These groups, called Write Groups, develop into tightly knit units. The higher the level of trust is, the more students are able to take chances with their writing. They become more honest with one another.

Setting Up Groups

How do you decide who goes into what group? Here are some suggestions:

1. Try to place an uneven number of students (three or five is a good number) in each group so groups can avoid split decisions.
2. Assign students randomly, by alphabetical order or by seat in the classroom, for example. This can sometimes create interesting dynamics you could not have forseen.
3. Let students self-select their own groups. They often know their needs better than you do.
4. Assign students to groups according to major—that is, avoid putting all the economics or engineering majors together. This helps students understand audience when they see that not every reader has the same background. This

placement asks students to avoid the use of technical or special terminology or to take the time to explain completely.

5. Assign students who are most likely to help one another. Put a nonnative speaker with a student who is a strong writer. Put two strong writers with less strong writers; stronger writers can help weaker ones and can usually bring up the overall quality of the group. Cultural and ethnic diversity can bring liveliness to groups. Be careful, however, about "overusing" more highly prepared students to tutor others. All students should benefit from the groups.
6. Assign students to groups for the entire quarter.
7. Assign students to different groups for different assignments.
8. Assign students to one group for half the semester or quarter; then assign fresh groups.

Responding in a Writing Group

Make sure students understand the assignment and what is expected of them in the group. They usually need to be socialized to the concept of collaborative learning because students are used to working solo. Collaborating on problem solving feels like cheating to them because they are more accustomed to competitive classrooms where everyone is fighting to find the right answer. Learning to see that situations may yield numerous solutions is an alien concept for many students.

TIPS FOR WRITERS

1. Read your piece, twice if necessary, and allow at least 30 seconds of silence after each reading for impressions to become clearer in the minds of your responders.
2. Do not rush the reading of your piece.
3. Avoid defensiveness. Let the writing stand for itself, and listen openly to the responses from your group members. This will help you revise later.
4. Do not quarrel with your group's reactions. Maybe what you see is truly there, and others do not see it. But maybe what they see is there, too—even if it contradicts what you see. Just listen, take it all in, then make your own decision about what the writing needs.

TIPS FOR RESPONDERS

1. Use active listening. (Do not concentrate on your next comments; concentrate instead on what the speaker is saying.) Tell what you think the writer is trying to say by either paraphrasing or summarizing the gist of what has been written. Read back some of the author's own words.
2. As the piece is being read, underline words or phrases that catch your attention. What is it about those words that makes them stand out? What parts of the piece do you like best? How do those parts work for you? Respond to specific sections of the writing. A general response such as "I like it," or "That's good" does not help the writer find ways to improve the writing.
3. Let the writer know if there is anything in the writing that seems confusing, out of place, or unclear. Explain why you are bothered by that particular section or item.
4. Ask the writer, "What part of the paper do you like best?" "What part was most difficult to write?" "How can the group help you?"

RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

One of the most crucial aspects of writing that students will learn in your class is the importance of revision. Many students come to writing classes with the impression that writers are born, not made, and that if an assignment does not come out right the first time, this is because they are not writers. Students think that real writers "get it right" every time. As writers and teachers of writing, we know this is not true.

When responding to student writing, your approach should focus first on what Thomas Reigstad and Donald McAndrew call higher order concerns (HOCs) and then on lower order concerns (LOCs) (11). As the names imply, some types of problems are more responsible for the low quality of a piece than others are. The four priority concerns identified as HOCs are thesis or focus, appropriate voice or tone, organization, and development. Chapters 1–5 of *Writing with a Purpose* address these issues and offer guidelines and revision agendas for helping students discover their purpose and meaning.

Reigstad and McAndrew identify the LOCs as sentence-level or word-level issues such as sentence structure, punctuation, usage, spelling, and word choice. These concerns should be dealt with only after the higher priority items have been addressed. It does not help students to revise sentences if the essay lacks focus or is inadequately developed. Too much premature attention to sentence-level concerns only ensures that students will not revise the piece to their satisfaction or to yours. They are too invested in the small parts of the essay to see the larger issues because

they have worked too hard at being correct to be able to view the piece holistically. As hard as it is for English teachers to overlook the misspelled word, the dangling modifier, the noun-verb disagreement, you must overlook these issues early in the drafting process. Later, during the final editing workshops, you and your students can focus on these sentence-level problems.

While you work with students, then, first help them clarify what they are writing and why they are writing it—help them follow the advice of the textbook and write with a clear purpose. Once this is established, students can work on presenting information in an appropriate voice as they explore the details and examples that support their central idea. To produce worthwhile texts, students must find meaningful topics.

Only after the HOCs have been successfully met should students examine the LOCs. Very often sentence-level issues can be cleared up when students identify a thesis. Simply asking if something could be said another way can help students rewrite sentences to satisfaction. Asking students to read the piece out loud also helps them catch mistakes, particularly when you insist that they read what they actually wrote, not what they think they wrote.

Text-specific questions are most effective when you are responding to student texts, especially when you first let students know what you like about their writing. "I like your idea here, Joan, about how women athletes do not receive the attention they deserve, but I need a good example. Could you list a couple of athletes here to show what you mean?" This kind of direct questioning involves students in what they are writing. They are less likely to try to find "the right answer" in a situation like this because you have placed them in the position of the expert. They will be much more likely to work on improving the writing when they know you are reading and responding to it.

GRADING CRITERIA

At some point, your students must stop revising and let go of their writing. And at that point, you must assess the quality of the writing—not the effort that went into it, which is usually substantial. You must assess the quality of the completed draft: Does the writing meet the standards set by your institution and by your department? This is the point at which many instructors, particularly those less experienced, protest that they are then grading product, not process. It does look this way, but the point of process is to guide your students through the making of a written product that belies the struggle of the process. They understand how writing is done so that they can produce clear, logical prose.

If you have made it clear in your syllabus and in your daily classroom practice that the reason for the process approach is so students can learn how to shape a finished product, you will not feel a conflict, and your students will not feel betrayed. It is important that your students understand what is being evaluated and how. There is no question that the most difficult part of teaching writing is the assessment of the writing that students produce. Part of the difficulty arises from the "contrariness" of being both ally and judge, mentor and examiner, as Peter Elbow points out in his essay "Embracing Contraries in the Teaching Process." Another contribution to the difficulty is our awareness of the intensity of student anxiety about evaluation. Inexperienced writers, Mina Shaughnessy explains, see their writing as "a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know, then passing into the hands of a stranger who reads it with a lawyer's eyes, searching for flaws" (7) .

With these considerations in mind, here are some criteria (a combination of published standards for freshman writing from Ball State University and Northeastern University) that might help you in grading.

The "A" Paper (Excellent)

The "A" paper is a memorable paper that not only responds to the assigment, but offers fresh, perceptive insight. The writer presents a strong argument that is tightly focused and fully explained. The writing is clear, the ideas are logically organized, the transitions are appropriate, and the details are concrete, substantial, and relevant to the central argument. The writer's voice is strong and guides the reader through a carefully planned text that analyzes and offers creative, original solutions. The ideas emphasize major issues and allow the reader to see the relationships among the points raised. The writer anticipates audience needs. There are virtually no problems with language. Sentences are forceful and skillfully crafted, with good variation. Words are well chosen, simple, and direct. The writer is in complete control. The paper is consistently compelling to read.

The "B" Paper (Very Good)

The "B" paper also responds to the assignment competently and adds a new angle to the problem, although the paper lacks the consistenly high-level delivery of the "A" paper. The writing is carefully focused on its central argument and progresses logically from point to point, allowing the reader to see the issues and the important relationships among them. The writer has anticipated probable arguments and questions and offers a convincing point of view. The details are concrete and substantial but occasionally irrelevant. There are very few, if any, problems with

language. Sentences are well crafted but lack the forcefulness of the "A" paper. The writing goes beyond the minimum and creatively analyzes the situation. The writer is in control. Occasional lapses in logic or syntax are a result of attempts to stretch beyond the writer's present level of competence.

The "C" Paper (Fully Competent)

The work addresses the assignment and shows that the writer understands how to formulate an idea, organize the supporting material, and present an argument. The central argument is trite or too general and needs further refinement and focus. The purpose is not entirely clear to the reader. The writing is generally clear, although transitions are often abrupt or nonexistent. Ideas are not as logically organized as they might be. Details are predictable and monotonous, are sometimes irrelevant, or are in need of further explanation. The writer does not always anticipate audience needs. The paper completes the assignment, although the solutions are predictable. The paper contains no new ideas. There are no serious problems with the usage and conventions of written English, although the language could be more controlled. The paper contains occasional deviations from standard usage. Sentences need more variation. Words are needlessly repeated and limited in range. The voice is generic, with no sense of a person behind the words. The paper is correct but lacks distinction. Work with a Writing Center tutor could help the student on the next assignment.

The "D" Paper (Weak)

The writing responds vaguely to the assignment, although it is difficult to see the point the writer is trying to make. The paper lacks a clear, central argument. There may be several inadequately developed points instead of one strong focus. Details are inadequately explained; the reader has difficulty understanding the relevance of the examples. The logic of the rhetorical plan is mysterious and hard to follow. Errors in syntax, spelling, and punctuation interfere with the reader's ability to understand what the writer is saying. The writing does not make connections for the reader; the paper shows little awareness of the needs of the audience. It is clear that the writer was not entirely sure what he or she was trying to say. More time needs to be spent planning and writing. A trip to the Writing Center would be helpful. The writer may have had something to say but did not present the ideas in a way that a reader is able to understand. If the writer is to continue work on this paper, she or he could either develop the work through subsequent drafts or abandon the ideas and begin again.