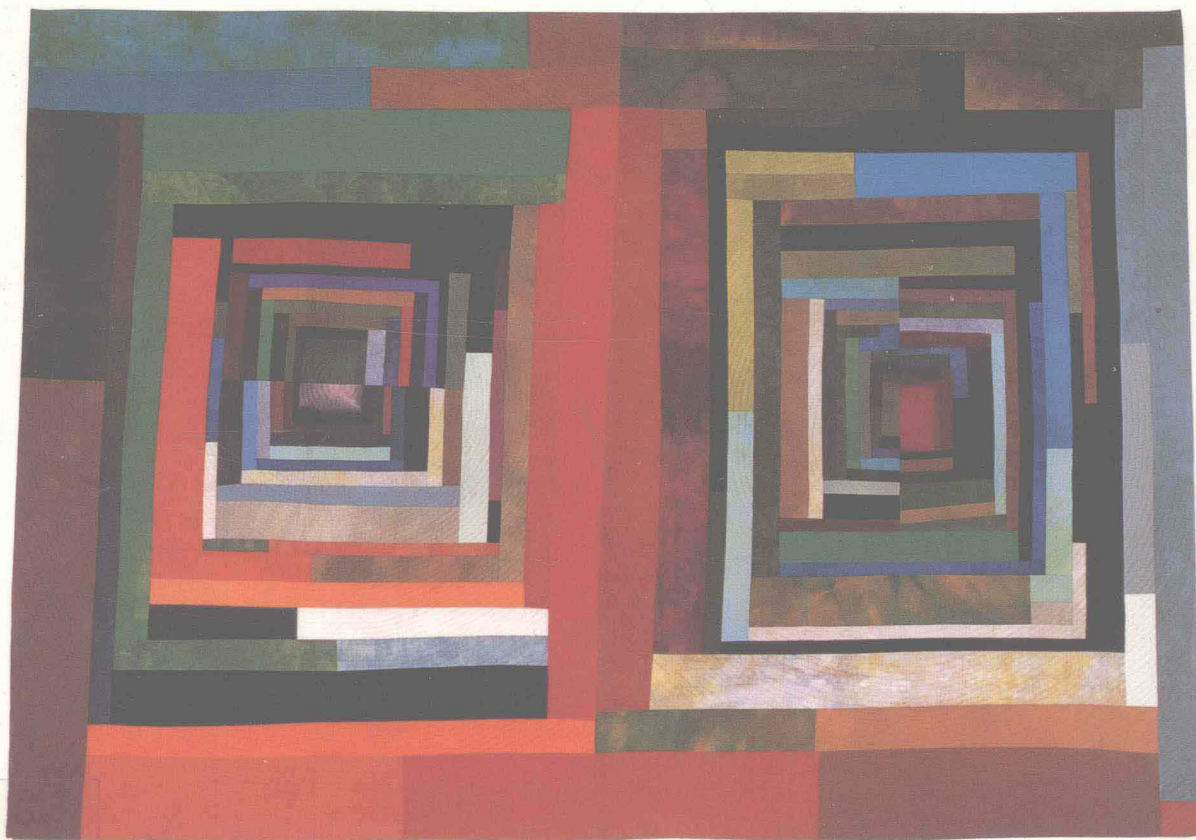


Frame Work

CULTURE, STORYTELLING, AND
COLLEGE WRITING



GARY COLOMBO / BONNIE LISLE / SANDRA MANO

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Gary Colombo

Los Angeles City College

Bonnie Lisle

University of California, Los Angeles

Sandra Mano

University of California, Los Angeles

Bedford Books



Boston

For Bedford Books

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Preface for Instructors

A Fresh Approach to Writing

Four years ago we began working on a new approach to composition instruction for entering college students. We wanted to develop an approach that would be process oriented and revision based, but that would also incorporate recent insights concerning the impact of culture on language and writing. *Frame Work* is the result of that experiment in curricular design. Recent research in anthropology, linguistics, cognitive science, and women's and ethnic studies suggests that our understanding of the world is mediated by story frames—culturally constructed narrative patterns that filter, organize, and interpret all of our experiences. The concept of the story frame offers a powerful alternative to pedagogies based on personal/academic or narrative/analytic oppositions. A story frame approach to composition allows students to appreciate the impact that culture and craft have on even the most personal memoir; it also helps students see that narrative patterns underlie and organize the most abstract academic analysis. The story frame approach in *Frame Work* gives writing instructors a new language for teaching composition, a language that demystifies academic discourse by reconnecting it with the kind of storytelling students practice naturally every day.

Critical Thinking/in Cultural Contexts

Frame Work moves from familiar narrative forms to more complex academic analysis. As students work through the book, they use the story frame approach to explore how the many cultures they participate in influence their

development as thinkers and writers. *Frame Work* invites students to examine the interrelations of cultural narratives and identity, write essays based on readings and their own experience, assess the demands of writing in academic contexts, and revise their essays. Throughout, students are encouraged to question how the “official stories” of the cultures they belong to shape their identities, their ideas, and their responses to the works they read. *Frame Work* helps students see that critical thinking extends beyond classroom walls and that every act of critical analysis involves serious self-examination as well as critical appraisal of the cultural stories that shape us and our ideas.

Academia 101

Students often come to college unsure about how they fit into the intellectual culture of higher education. *Frame Work* explicitly addresses the assumptions, values, and expectations that students are likely to encounter when they join the college community. Specially designed chapters titled “Academically Speaking” challenge students to consider the power—and the limitations—of academic writing; they address student expectations about what academic discourse is supposed to “look” and “sound” like; and they encourage students to compare academic styles of thinking and writing with styles available in other cultural contexts. *Frame Work* also introduces students to the complexities of theoretical thinking and helps them appreciate the dialogical nature of academic discourse. Approaching academia as one of many cultures helps demystify it, particularly for those students who may consider themselves “outsiders” in a perplexingly new intellectual environment.

Highlighting Language and Voice

Frame Work places issues of language and voice at the center of the composition curriculum. Because the stories that make up a culture are inseparable from the voice they’re told in, we’ve built *Frame Work* around questions of language and identity. As they work through the text, students will explore the genesis of the many different “Englishes” they speak and map the different speech communities they belong to. They’ll consider their home languages as well as the languages they learn on the street, at work, in school, and from the media. *Frame Work* encourages students to experiment with different voices and to evaluate for themselves the impact that language standardization has on their identity and their development as academic writers.

Diversity in Principle

Because the idea of cultural diversity lies at the heart of our approach to composition, *Frame Work* weaves a broad selection of readings into its cultural storytelling approach to college writing. Each chapter contains several readings that complement the text's rhetorical apparatus—in all some thirty-six selections, including stories, essays, and poems by students, scholars, and professional writers. Most of the selections we've included are by authors who stand outside the dominant culture, and more than half are by women. We've also made it a principle to feature a diverse range of rhetorical styles and forms. In fact, you may be surprised at the amount of professional academic writing you'll find here: we've included selections by anthropologists, psychologists, biologists, educators, and historians because students need to see models of academic inquiry in action if they're expected to enter "the conversation of ideas" that's associated with thinking and writing in the academic disciplines.

An Emphasis on Process and Revision

In each section of the book, *Frame Work* offers a "Revision Workshop" built around student responses to one or more of the writing assignments in that section. Complete chapters devoted to revision, these workshops blend example, discussion, and activities to help students rethink their own writing. Throughout the book, writing process and revision skills are taught in the context of specific assignments. Among other topics covered, students learn how to shape effective introductions and conclusions, how to develop paragraphs and build solid transitions, how to analyze and respond to different audiences, how to quote and paraphrase from sources, and how to evaluate and marshal evidence—all in relation to writing problems they are currently encountering. Journal assignments, classroom activities, and essay options help students gain confidence as they write, revise, and collaborate with their peers.

Acknowledgments

A good textbook depends on the labor of many hands, and *Frame Work* is no exception. During the months we've spent on this project, we've relied time and again on the encouragement and critical insight of many friends and colleagues. We owe special thanks to Karen Rowe and the participants in the Curriculum Writing Integration Project seminars at UCLA for sparking ideas that led us to explore a story-based approach to composition. In

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Introduction for Students

Why Storytelling?

Exposition: What a chilly, uninviting word. It's hard to get excited about studying something called exposition. For generations, composition teachers have labored to interest students in the intricacies of the expository essay, but all too often students have responded by concluding that exposition is what's left over when you squeeze all the life—and all the story—out of a piece of writing. There's a chance you've already bumped into this traditional composition classroom distinction. Narrative writing is portrayed as personal and down-to-earth; it focuses on people, actions, events and objects; and it typically follows a straightforward time sequence. Narrative writing assignments range from no-brainers like how you spent your summer vacation to imaginative challenges like creating your own science fiction adventure. In short, narrative writing involves storytelling. Expository writing, by contrast, is typically seen as impersonal, abstract, and conceptual—serious academic stuff like explaining the structure of DNA, interpreting the meaning of a novel, or analyzing the causes of the Spanish-American War. If you've survived writing assignments like these, you too may feel that narrative writing is fun and expository writing is hard work; that narrative taps your creativity while exposition requires rigor and discipline; that narrative belongs to you while while exposition is strictly for teachers.

In reality, though, the distinction between storytelling and expository writing is never this clear-cut. Stories and storytelling are central to the way that all people understand and interpret their experiences. People tell sto-

ries to make sense of the world and to explain their actions and ideas. If you try to suppress the storytelling instinct college writing is bound to become a mystifying, even an impossible, task. *Frame Work* is dedicated to the idea that storytelling forms the foundation of *all* writing, including the “serious” expository and analytical writing demanded in many college classrooms.

Of course, the idea of writing a bunch of stories might feel just as intimidating as the idea of writing abstract analytical essays. After all, what if you’re not the creative, storytelling type? Where are you going to get all this inspiration from? Worries like these generally stem from the erroneous idea that storytelling involves a type of “creative” or expressive writing that “wells up” from deep within the writer’s psyche. But *Frame Work* suggests a different way to think about stories. We all possess a wealth of cultural stories, stories that shape our ideas, values, and tastes—stories that we inherit from the many different cultures we participate in. In effect, we don’t create stories so much as they create us. Our stories come *to* us: we hear them around kitchen tables, at holiday gatherings, on neighborhood streets, and on the job. The readings and the writing assignments you’ll encounter in *Frame Work* encourage you to become critically aware of the way these cultural stories shape your own ideas, attitudes, and beliefs.

Cultural Frames and Quilting

For an example of what we mean by cultural stories, take another look at the quilt, created by Nancy Crow, that’s pictured on the front cover of this book. Most people who’ve grown up in the United States already have some general knowledge about quilts. You might know, for instance, that in the past quilts were often made by groups of women working collaboratively during a quilting “bee.” You might know that quilts were “pieced” from bits of old clothes and other fabric and that the patterns used in quilting were passed down from generation to generation. Equipped with this general knowledge framework or *story frame* for quilting, you’d probably have no trouble recognizing the pattern of colorful patches on our cover for what it is, and not assume that it’s just an abstract pattern of random stripes. An even more detailed story frame would be possessed by someone who was part of the “culture” of quilting—someone who is an experienced quilter or a collector of quilts. An experienced quilter might recognize the work on our cover as a variation on the traditional “log cabin” pattern and might even wonder why its piecing is so “irregular” and “uneven.” But to fully appreciate the significance of Nancy Crow’s achievement, you’ve got to have

other cultural story frames at your disposal. You have to recognize, for example, that her art is deliberately playful. Crow isn't interested in simply reproducing traditional quilting patterns and motifs; she's using—and breaking—quilting traditions to express a personal sense of movement, energy, and rhythm. In short, you're likely to understand Crow's work better if you're also familiar with improvisational art forms like jazz or modern painting. If you don't know the stories embedded in these contemporary artistic cultures, you might end up assuming that Crow just couldn't get her sewing to come out straight.

Since all perception is shaped by the cultural knowledge you bring to it, in-depth understanding almost always involves expanding that knowledge by crossing cultural boundaries. *Frame Work* invites you to hone your abilities as a cultural border crosser. Learning to operate in a new culture means learning the stories that it contains, and this kind of cultural awareness is particularly important when you're entering unfamiliar cultural territory. The intellectual culture of American higher education can be a distressing puzzle for many first-year students. Attitudes and expectations about your work, your behavior, your relation to authority—even about your language and the way you speak—can be disturbingly unclear. A major part of *Frame Work* is devoted to guiding you as you negotiate your way among the new customs and values you'll encounter in college. We'll explore what professors in the United States typically expect of themselves and of their students, and we'll contrast these expectations with alternative approaches to thinking and writing. By explicitly examining the story frames that dominate intellectual inquiry in the United States, we hope to take some of the mystery out of your entry into college, and we hope to help you become an effective and critically aware member of the culture of higher education.

Speaking of Pieces

Frame Work is divided into four major sections. The first part, "The Power of Stories," introduces the role that stories and storytelling play in shaping our ideas and identities. Here you'll begin exploring the interaction between stories, story frames, and the cultures they're associated with. The second section, "How Stories Shape Us," takes up the challenge of telling stories across cultural boundaries. In this section you'll consider the difference between story frames and stereotypes and you'll experiment with techniques for "listening" across cultural borders. "Framing Language," the book's

third section, invites you to consider the many different “Englishes” you speak and to think seriously about how the cultures you participate in affect your development as a writer. The last section, “Framing Ideas: Analytic Storytelling,” focuses exclusively on the role that storytelling plays in college-level academic analysis. Here you’ll learn about the “official stories” that dominate our perceptions and interpretations. You’ll also be invited to enter into the conversation of ideas that characterizes academic thinking by critically analyzing the work of established scholars.

Each major section of the book is further subdivided into four chapters. Within each section, the first chapter introduces key ideas and concepts necessary to understanding the section’s central theme. The second chapter expands on these key ideas, typically with readings that offer alternative perspectives or that explore cultural complications. It’s in these introductory chapters that you’ll read about the role that story frames play in cross-cultural conflicts, about the relationship between story frames and stereotypes, or about culturally dominant “official stories” that channel thought and make it difficult to perceive alternative points of view. These introductory chapters also provide you with reading and study skills necessary for extended writing assignments—things like brainstorming techniques, note-taking strategies, hints for conducting successful interviews, and approaches to critical reading.

The third chapter of each section applies ideas introduced earlier to the culture of American higher education. In these chapters, titled “Academically Speaking,” you’ll have the chance to consider how teacher authority influences the way you tell and censor stories in school and how the stories told in college culture differ from those told in the home cultures you inhabit. You’ll be invited to experiment with writing in different voices and styles for different audiences, and you’ll have the opportunity to observe how academic writers use stories and storytelling to build their own theories and analyses.

The fourth and final chapter of each section is a “Revision Workshop” that introduces specific approaches for revising your major papers. These Revision Workshops will help you strengthen your essays by providing you with strategies for shaping effective paragraphs, introductions, and conclusions. They’ll offer hints about how to select and use evidence and how to quote effectively. They’ll guide you as you structure more complicated comparisons and shape your own academic analyses. They’ll even invite you to take chances and break some of the so-called rules of composition. We’ve devoted a fourth of the book to these revision activities because we’re convinced that writers learn best when they have the chance to rethink and rewrite their

work. Revision Workshops also include many opportunities for collaborative learning because thinking and writing are often more productive when you work with others than when you struggle in isolation. Learning to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses in another person's paper is often the first step toward learning how to improve your own writing and thinking.

Opportunities for Writing

Frame Work offers you a variety of opportunities to try your own hand at storytelling and academic analysis. Each of the book's four sections contains two major "Essay Options." Typically, each Essay Option gives you the choice of several individual writing topics, each topic responding to one or more of the readings appearing earlier in the section. These Essay Options lie at the heart of *Frame Work*'s approach to writing. Think of them as a laboratory where you can experiment with the concepts and ideas you encounter in the text. As you work through these major assignments you'll be asked to write your own family stories, to interview people of different cultures, to compare the different speech communities you belong to, and to explore alternative ways of analyzing media images, personal conflicts, and historical events. Because they usually require more than a week to complete, we recommend that you plan on tackling only one Essay Option per section. However, you'll probably want to read through both options before you decide on the one that's right for you.

You'll also find ample opportunity for shorter, more informal excursions into writing in *Frame Work*. After every reading selection we've included a series of "Discussion Questions" that can be reviewed in small groups or answered in learning logs. These questions are meant to deepen your understanding of the readings and help you apply some of the concepts we'll be introducing. In addition, most reading selections in the book are followed by "Journal Options" that offer suggestions for productive entries in reading response journals. We've designed these Journal Options to help you prepare for the more ambitious Essay Options that follow. Often you'll find that we'll ask you to return to a journal topic as a starting point for brainstorming a more extensive essay. As with the Essay Options, we've included more Journal Options than you're likely to complete in a single term, so your class or your instructor may want to approach them selectively. There are also a number of "Optional Activities" throughout the book that can be used as the focus of collaborative group work or as points of departure for informal writing assignments.

Readings

One of the first things you'll notice about the readings in *Frame Work* is their diversity. As you browse through the book you'll find selections by writers representing a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In the first section, for example, you'll read about a young Italian American teenager who decides to "go bad," about the meaning of storytelling in Laguna-Pueblo tribal culture, and about the role that stories play in the memories of a Mormon family's Christmas. You'll follow along as a four-year-old African American ventures into the icy atmosphere of a parochial school classroom; you'll hear how a Japanese American writer celebrates and shapes the stories told about his grandparents; and you'll learn about the meaning of *Las Mañanitas* in Mexican American culture. *Frame Work* includes a variety of perspectives not because it's politically correct or pedagogically fashionable, but because the notion of cultural story frames is central to our approach to college writing. Communicating is easy as long as you're talking to someone who knows all of your cultural stories; but venturing across cultural borders can become a serious intellectual and emotional challenge. The diverse reading selections we've included are meant to help you develop your own skills as a writer and cultural border crosser.

Frame Work also provides readings that feature a variety of different voices, styles, and purposes. As you might expect, the book's early chapters are dominated by personal stories that will probably strike you as relatively straightforward and easy to comprehend. But as you begin to explore the conventions of academic thinking and writing, you'll encounter more complicated analytic and interpretive readings. These more formal academic selections are likely to stretch your reading skills: you may not have trouble with a straightforward narrative, but an academic analysis of the impact of gender on biological theories of sexual reproduction may leave you breathless. To help you decipher these demanding academic texts, we've provided tips and techniques for active reading, note-taking, and the use of reading response journals. The discussion questions and journal options that follow the reading selections will help you to connect readings with your own experiences and to deepen your comprehension through collaborative learning activities. And, particularly in the "Academically Speaking" chapters, we've tried to explain, as explicitly as possible, the conventions that are often associated with academic thinking and writing in the United States.

Of course, not all academic writing is dull, dense, or deadeningly abstract. Although some scholarly prose deserves this reputation, academic writing at its best is smart, lively, and deeply engaged in issues that matter. *Frame Work* encourages you to see academic thinking as real "critical"

thinking—thinking that’s capable of making a difference and changing the world. That’s why we’ve included readings that challenge the “official stories” told in academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, and biology; and it’s also why we’ve tried to offer examples of solid scholarly writing that test the limits of academic discourse. We want you to see that effective writers, even those who work in the confines of academic culture, are always ready to challenge the expectations of their audience. We want you to move beyond the idea that there’s a single “correct” model of academic writing, so that you can also “enter into the conversation” of competing stories and story frames that underlies academic discourse.

Finally, because about a half century of collective experience has taught us that nothing helps students more than clear examples of effective student writing, we’ve filled the “Revision Workshop” chapters with sample revisions of real student papers. In some cases, we’ve included multiple drafts of a whole essay so that you can see how a paper develops during the revision process. Elsewhere, we include selected passages, ranging from a paragraph to a page, as examples of how you might structure an introduction, shape an effective paragraph, or marshal evidence in support of an interpretation. These student-authored readings offer you live examples of how students have approached the “Essay Options” outlined in each of the book’s four sections. But they are also meant to do more: the student writing featured in *Frame Work* gives you a first-hand view of someone like yourself, someone who is learning to adapt to, and even to challenge, the story frames of a new intellectual culture.

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