



MOSAICS

FOCUSING ON PARAGRAPHS IN CONTEXT

FLACHMANN

MAHER ■ CAMPBELL

JOHNSON ■ MAGEE

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Students everywhere must learn to respond to the varying intellectual demands made on them throughout the college curriculum so that they have the best possible chance of succeeding in higher education. One extremely important part of this process is being able to analyze ideas and think critically about issues in many different subject areas. *Mosaics: Focusing on Paragraphs in Context* is the second in a series of three books that teaches the basic skills so necessary to all good academic writing. By focusing on eight primary purposes for writing in each book, this series illustrates how the companion skills of reading and writing are parts of a larger process that moves back and forth through the tasks of prereading/reading, prewriting/writing, and revising/editing. In other words, the *Mosaics* series shows how these tasks are integrated at every stage of the writing process.

ASSUMPTIONS

This text is based on the following fundamental assumptions:

1. Thinking, reading, and writing are intricately related.
2. Students learn best from discovery and experimentation rather than from instruction and abstract discussion.
3. Students must be able to transfer their writing skills to all their college courses.
4. Students profit immeasurably from studying models of both professional and student writing.
5. Students perform better in college when they learn to think critically and analytically.
6. Students learn both individually and collaboratively.

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

This book begins with a general introduction to the writing process (Chapter 1) outlining the scope and sequence of the volume. The eight chapters that follow are each divided into three carefully integrated sections:

Reading and Writing for a Reason

Tips for Revising

Tips for Editing

Reading and Writing for a Reason. Each chapter focuses on one of the eight primary purposes for writing: recalling, observing, explaining, investigating, restating, analyzing, persuading, and problem solving. The purpose is explained and then featured in a professional essay and a student essay before the readers are asked to compose an essay of their own.

- *Learning from Published Writers* focuses on a provocative professional essay with a controlled reading level in order to introduce students to a specific purpose for writing. Each essay was chosen for its high interest and moderate readability level and serves as a springboard in form and content for the rest of the chapter.
- *Learning from Your Peers* walks students through the writing process using an actual student essay. Your students witness the development of a student essay that moves through the general recursive tasks of thinking, planning, developing, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing. The revised draft is printed in each chapter with the student changes highlighted.
- *Writing Your Own Essay* asks students to compose their own essays focusing on the purpose they have just studied. Following a brief review of the highlights of the chapter and the composing process, students are given four writing topics to choose from. After they draft, revise, and edit their essays, students are then asked some specific questions that require them to pause and reflect on their own composing process before they start another chapter.

Tips for Revising and Tips for Editing. The second and third sections of each chapter, Tips for Revising and Tips for Editing, can be taught by themselves or in conjunction with the first section. The revising sections focus on effective paragraphs in the context of essays; they progress from fairly simple to more complex revision strategies. The editing sections then serve as brief but thorough reference guides to grammar and usage; they move from the most basic usage and syntactic problems to more sophisticated writing conventions. The strategies in these sections are integrated into the first part of each chapter. In addition, the Tips for Revising and Tips for Editing include instruction and focused exercises (on both the sentence and paragraph levels) that are drawn from the professional and student essays featured in the chapter. Each Tips section begins with a checklist summarizing the tasks to be covered and ends with collaborative work for individual, small group, or entire class projects.

The specific skills taught in the three main sections of this second book in the *Mosaics* series are listed here so that you can see in abbreviated form how this particular book works:

Chapter	Reading and Writing	Tips for Revising	Tips for Editing
1	Introduction		
2	Recalling	Paragraphs	Words/Phrases/Clauses

Chapter	Reading and Writing	Tips for Revising	Tips for Editing
3	Observing	Topic Sentences	Sentence Structure
4	Explaining	Focused Paragraphs	Fragments/Run-ons
5	Investigating	Paragraph Development	Agreement
6	Restating	Paragraph Organization	Verbs/Nouns/Modifiers
7	Analyzing	Unified Paragraphs	Punctuation/Mechanics
8	Persuading	Titles/Introductions	Diction/Spelling
9	Problem Solving	Supporting/Concluding Paragraphs	Successful Sentences

UNIQUE FEATURES

Several unique and exciting features separate this book from other basic writing texts:

1. It moves students systematically from personal to academic writing.
2. It gives student writing the same attention as professional writing.
3. It illustrates all aspects of the writing process.
4. It integrates reading and writing throughout the text.
5. It teaches revising and editing through the student essays in each chapter.
6. It features culturally diverse reading selections that are of high interest to students.

THE MOSAICS SERIES

All three books in the *Mosaics* series (*Focusing on Sentences in Context*, *Focusing on Paragraphs in Context*, and *Focusing on Essays*) introduce the writing process as a unified whole and ask students to begin writing full essays in the very first chapter. The Tips for Revising sections, however, change the emphasis of each book: The first book highlights sentence structure, the second book paragraph development, and the third the composition of essays. The books also differ in the length and level of their reading selections, the complexity of their writing assignments, the degree of difficulty of their revising and editing strategies, and the length and level of their student writing samples. Each volume moves from personal to more academic writing in various disciplines throughout the curriculum.

The books are fully integrated in two significant ways: (1) The revising and editing strategies for each chapter are integrated into the demonstration of the writing process in the first part of each chapter, and, in turn, (2) the Tips for Revising and Tips for Editing draw examples and exercises from the professional and student essays in the first section of each chapter. This constant cross-reference and repetition of ideas and skills in different contexts throughout each chapter will help students grasp the basic procedures and potential power of the entire writing process.

Ultimately, each book in the *Mosaics* series portrays writing as a way of thinking and processing information. One by one, these books encourage students to discover how the “mosaics” of their own writing process work together to form a coherent whole. By demonstrating the interrelationship among thinking, reading, and writing on progressively more difficult levels, these books promise to help prepare your students for success in college throughout the curriculum.

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Preface xiii

1

THE WRITING PROCESS

1

Getting Started 1

- A Time and Place to Write 1
- Writing Equipment and Supplies 2
- Journal Keeping 2

Prewriting 3

- Thinking 3
- Planning 4
- Developing 5
- Organizing 5

Putting Words on Paper 5

- Drafting 5
- Revising 6
- Checklist for Revising 6
- Editing 7
- Checklist for Editing 7

How to Use This Book 7

- The Writing Process 8

2

RECALLING

10

READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON

Learning from Published Writers 11

- Before You Read 11
- "The Sissy" by Tobias Wolf 12

Learning from Your Peers 16

- Robert's Writing Assignment: Recalling 16
- Thinking 17
- Planning 17
- Developing 17
- Organizing 18
- Drafting 19
- Robert's Essay: First Draft 19
- Revising 21
- Editing 22
- Robert's Revised Essay: "The Great Fishing Expedition" 23

Writing Your Own Recalling Essay 25

What Have You Discovered? 25

Your Writing Topic 26

Your Writing Process 27

Some Final Thoughts 27

TIPS FOR REVISING: RECOGNIZING PARAGRAPHS 28**Checklist for Recognizing Paragraphs 28**

Basic Features 28

Types of Paragraphs 28

Topic Sentences 29

Supporting Sentences 31

TIPS FOR EDITING: WORDS, PHRASES, AND CLAUSES 36**Checklist for Editing Words, Phrases, and Clauses 36**

Words: Identifying Parts of Speech 36

Phrases 57

Clauses 62

3

OBSERVING

66

READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON**Learning from Published Writers 67**

Before You Read 67

“Magpies” by Amy Tan 68

Learning from Your Peers 72

Nathalie’s Writing Assignment: Observing 72

Thinking 73

Planning 73

Developing 73

Organizing 74

Drafting 75

Nathalie’s Essay: *First Draft* 75

Revising 77

Editing 78

Nathalie’s Revised Essay: “Mr. Traditional and Ms. Trendy: Fashion’s Influence on the College Classroom” 80

Writing Your Own Observing Essay 82

What Have You Discovered? 82

Your Writing Topic 83

Your Writing Process 84

Some Final Thoughts 84

TIPS FOR REVISING: COMPOSING TOPIC SENTENCES 85

Checklist for Composing Topic Sentences 85

Clear Topic Sentences 85

Focused Topic Sentences 87

Specific Topic Sentences 90

**TIPS FOR EDITING: SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND SENTENCE
COMBINING 93****Checklist for Editing Sentences 93**

Subjects 93

Predicates 96

Basic Sentence Patterns 97

Pattern Variations 99

Sentence Structure 102

4

EXPLAINING**111****READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON****Learning from Published Writers 112**

Before You Read 112

"The Burden of Race" by Arthur Ashe 113**Learning from Your Peers 119**

Victor's Writing Assignment: Explaining 119

Thinking 119

Planning 120

Developing 120

Organizing 121

Drafting 122

Victor's Essay: First Draft 122

Revising 124

Editing 125

Victor's Revised Essay: "How Furniture Gets from the Store to Your Door" 126**Writing Your Own Explaining Essay 128**

What Have You Discovered? 128

Your Writing Topic 129

Your Writing Process 130

Some Final Thoughts 130

TIPS FOR REVISING: WRITING FOCUSED PARAGRAPHS 131**Checklist for Writing Focused Paragraphs 131**

Focus 131

Unity 133

TIPS FOR EDITING: FRAGMENTS AND RUN-ONS 138

Checklist for Correcting Fragments and Run-ons 138

Fragments 138

Run-on Sentences 143

5**INVESTIGATING****149****READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON****Learning from Published Writers 150**

Before You Read 150

“America’s New Merchants of Death” by William Ecenbarger 150

Learning from Your Peers 159

LaKesha’s Writing Assignment: Investigating 160

Thinking 160

Planning 160

Developing 161

Organizing 163

Drafting 163

LaKesha’s Essay: *First Draft* 163

Revising 167

Editing 168

LaKesha’s Revised Essay: “Designing Decisions” 169

Writing Your Own Investigating Essay 173

What Have You Discovered? 173

Your Writing Topic 173

Your Writing Process 174

Some Final Thoughts 175

TIPS FOR REVISING: DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS 176**Checklist for Developing Paragraphs 176**

Kinds of Paragraphs 176

Supporting Details 183

TIPS FOR EDITING: AGREEMENT 187**Checklist for Correcting Agreement Problems 187**

Subject-Verb Agreement 187

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement 199

6**RESTATING****207****READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON****Learning from Published Writers 208**

Before You Read 208

“Surge in Hispanic Student Enrollment Predicted” by Jeff Archer 209

Restatement of “Surge in Hispanic Student Enrollment
Predicted” 211

Interpreting Graphics	213
Before You Read	213
“When the Juniors Are Senior”	214
Restatement of “When the Juniors Are Senior”	215
Learning from Your Peers	216
Inez’s Writing Assignment: Restating Information from a Professional Essay	217
“Teaching About Racial and Ethnic Differences” by Lawrence Kutner	217
Thinking	219
Planning	219
Developing	220
Organizing	221
Drafting	221
Inez’s Essay: First Draft: Restating Information from an Essay	221
Inez’s Writing Assignment: Restating Information from a Graph	222
“Federal Spending on AIDS Research”	223
Thinking	223
Planning	224
Developing	224
Organizing	224
Drafting	225
Inez’s Essay: First Draft: Restating Information from a Graph	225
Revising	225
Editing	226
Inez’s Revised Essay: Restating Information from an Essay: “Learning About Stereotypes”	227
Inez’s Revised Essay: Restating Information from a Graph: “Funding of AIDS Research”	229
Writing Your Own Restating Essay	229
What Have You Discovered?	230
Your Writing Topic	230
Your Writing Process	231
Some Final Thoughts	231
TIPS FOR REVISING: ORGANIZING PARAGRAPHS	232
Checklist for Organizing Paragraphs	232
General-to-Particular Order	232
Particular-to-General Order	234
Time Order	235
Space Order	237
Movement from One Extreme to Another	237
TIPS FOR EDITING: VERB FORMS, NOUN FORMS, AND MODIFIERS	241
Checklist for Editing Verb Forms, Noun Forms, and Modifiers	241
Verb Forms	241

Noun Forms 251

Modifiers 253

7

ANALYZING

260

READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON

Learning from Published Writers 261

Before You Read 261

“Life Sentences: Rage and Survival Behind Bars” by Corky Clifton 262

Learning from Your Peers 265

Matthew’s Writing Assignment: Analyzing 265

Thinking 266

Planning 266

Developing 267

Organizing 268

Drafting 269

Matthew’s Essay: First Draft 269

Revising 273

Editing 274

Matthew’s Revised Essay: “A Matter of Life and Death” 274

Writing Your Own Analyzing Essay 278

What Have You Discovered? 278

Your Writing Topic 278

Your Writing Process 279

Some Final Thoughts 280

TIPS FOR REVISING: WRITING UNIFIED PARAGRAPHS 281

Checklist for Writing Unified Paragraphs 281

Pronoun Reference 281

Transitions 282

Synonyms 284

Parallelism 285

Repetitions 286

TIPS FOR EDITING: PUNCTUATION AND MECHANICS 289

Checklist for Editing Punctuation and Mechanics 289

Punctuation 289

Mechanics 310

8

PERSUADING

322

READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON

Learning from Published Writers 323

Before You Read 323

“The Neglected Heart” by Thomas Lickona 325

Arguing a Position	337
Before You Read	338
“The Death Penalty Is an Effective Punishment” by Robert W. Lee	340
“The Death Penalty Is Not an Effective Punishment” by Matthew L. Stephens	347
Learning from Your Peers	354
Anthony’s Writing Assignment: Persuading	354
Thinking	355
Planning	355
Developing	356
Organizing	357
Drafting	358
Anthony’s Essay: First Draft	359
Revising	361
Editing	362
Anthony’s Revised Essay: “School Should Be at School”	363
Writing Your Own Persuading Essay	365
What Have You Discovered?	366
Your Writing Topic	366
Your Writing Process	367
Some Final Thoughts	367
TIPS FOR REVISING: WRITING TITLES AND INTRODUCTIONS	368
Checklist for Writing Titles and Introductions	368
Titles	368
Introductions	369
Thesis Statements	371
TIPS FOR EDITING: DICTION AND SPELLING	376
Checklist for Correcting Diction and Spelling	376
Levels of Language	376
Choosing the Right Word	385
Spelling	397

9

PROBLEM SOLVING

403

READING AND WRITING FOR A REASON

Learning from Published Writers 404

Before You Read 404

“Access Activism” by Geeta Dardick 405

Learning from Your Peers 410

Amanda’s Writing Assignment: Problem Solving 410

Thinking 410

Planning	411
Developing	411
Organizing	412
Drafting	413
<i>Amanda's Essay: First Draft</i>	413
Revising	415
Editing	417
<i>Amanda's Revised Essay: "Inventing the Perfect Holiday"</i>	418
Writing Your Own Problem-Solving Essay	421
What Have You Discovered?	421
Your Writing Topic	421
Your Writing Process	422
Some Final Thoughts	423
TIPS FOR REVISING: WRITING SUPPORTING AND CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS	424
Checklist for Writing Supporting and Concluding Paragraphs	424
Supporting Paragraphs	424
Concluding Paragraphs	427
TIPS FOR EDITING: SUCCESSFUL SENTENCES	429
Checklist for Writing Successful Sentences	429
Pronoun Reference	429
Modifier Problems	433
Parallelism	437
Unnecessary Shifts	439
Sentence Variety	442
Credits	449
Index	451

The Writing Process

What student's mind—what writer's mind—has not begun to write without knowing really where it will go, only to learn at the end where it meant to start?

—VICTOR KANTOR BURG

The simple act of using the written word to communicate makes a writer. Whether we use writing to list what we need when we shop, to send a message to a friend, to fulfill an assignment in school, or to earn a living, we are all part of a community of writers.

Any piece of writing more formal than a grocery list, however, is usually the result of a sequence of activities that seems on the surface to have nothing directly to do with the act of writing itself. This sequence of activities is called **the writing process**, and learning to follow this process to write essays is what this book is all about.

GETTING STARTED

To begin with, you should be aware of the many choices involved in the writing process. Though all writers are different, some general principles apply to everyone—students and professional writers alike. Before you can begin the process of composing an essay, you need to set aside a time and place for your writing, gather supplies, and establish a routine.

A Time and Place to Write

In her famous *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that all writers have a basic need for space, privacy, and time. You need to set up your own place that suits your needs as a writer, and it should be a place where you are not distracted or interrupted. You should also set aside a special time for your writing tasks and plan

to do nothing else in that time period. The dog's bath will wait until tomorrow; the kitchen appliances don't have to be polished today; drawers can be cleaned and organized some other time; the dirt on the car won't turn to concrete overnight. (These are all some of the activities that writers confess they have done to put off the inevitable beginning.)

Even if you are lucky enough to have a private study area, you may find that you still need to make some adjustments. You may decide to unplug your phone during the time you spend on your composition assignments. Or you may discover that tuning your radio to an all-night jazz station helps you shut out noises from other parts of the house but doesn't distract you in the way talk shows and rock music do. (One well-known biographer owns a "white noise" machine that he cannot write without.) The first general principle for all writers is logical: *Find a place that is comfortable where distractions can be kept to a minimum.*

Writing Equipment and Supplies

Some writers use a legal pad and a pencil to get started on a writing task; some use typewriters or word processors. Some people work best at a desk in a straight chair, while others relax in a big armchair or on a bed. Ernest Hemingway and Virginia Woolf both wrote standing at a big desk, but Woolf used pen and ink for her early drafts, whereas Hemingway worked on a typewriter. The biographer with the white noise machine types on the battered portable typewriter that H. L. Mencken, a famous journalist of the 1920s, used to write his reports and essays. If you find you are most comfortable with your computer, you may want to use it even for your prewriting and early drafts. The next general principle remains the same for all writers and for all writing tasks: *Gather your supplies before you begin work.* Who knows what great idea might escape while you search for a pen that writes, scour the house for paper, or try to find a formatted disk?

Journal Keeping

The word *journal* means "a place for daily writing." The southern novelist Frances Newman kept a purple leather notebook with her at all times. (It had to be purple, and it had to be real leather.) In this little notebook she recorded ideas, snatches of conversation, dreams, and descriptions of people, places, or objects that caught her attention. According to Newman, her last novel developed entirely from a brief description she jotted down of the figure of a young man in Michelangelo's mural on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Even though most people aren't as particular as Newman about the type of notebook they write in, journal keeping is a very popular activity. For your life as a writer, you will find a personal journal to be an invaluable tool. Now, with the advent of notebook-sized computers, your journal can even be electronic. Just be sure to back up computer entries fairly often so you don't run the risk of losing everything in a power failure or through some other unforeseen problem. Also, you may need to print hard copies to take with you to class.

A good way to establish the habit of journal writing is to use your journal for answering the questions that accompany the readings in this text. You can also jot down in your journal ideas and plans for essays as they occur to you. In addition, you can do all your prewriting activities in your journal. It is much easier to keep up with a notebook than to keep track of assorted scraps of paper. You might want to buy a loose-leaf binder or a notebook divided into several sections so that different types of entries can have their own place.

Keeping a section of your journal private is also a good idea. Sometimes, when you think on paper or let your imagination loose, you don't want to share the results—yet these notes can be very important in finding a subject to write about or developing a topic.

Now that you've chosen your time and place for writing, your writing tools, and your journal, you're ready to embark on your own writing process. In the course of this journey, you'll discover your own preferences and routines as you begin to recognize yourself as a writer.

PREWRITING

Many students are surprised by the fact that a number of vital steps come during the writing process before the act of putting words down on paper. When we speak of **prewriting**, we mean those activities that help us explore a subject, generate ideas about it, settle on a specific topic, establish a purpose, and analyze the audience for an essay. Your reading assignment and journal entries are a first step in this direction. Many writers use one or more of the following activities as an early step to stimulate their thinking in their writing process. You may find that one suits your writing process better than others, or a combination of two or more may work best for you.

Thinking

Thinking is your initial stage of exploration. It's a time to let your mind run free over the material you have to work with. Here are some activities that promise to stimulate your best thoughts:

- **Rereading** Sometimes a good way to jump-start your thinking and writing process is to reread the professional essay in each chapter, along with your notes, your underlining, and your journal entries. Together these might give you new insights into your topic.
- **Listing** Many writers find it helpful to jot down a list of ideas about possible essay topics or ideas for expanding a chosen topic. (See p. 73 for an example.)
- **Freewriting** Writing freely about anything that comes to your mind is the way to *freewrite*. The act of writing itself usually makes writers think of other ideas. (See pp. 17–18 for an example.)