



新 世 纪 高 等 学 校 本 科 教 材

English Writing Textbook for  
Chinese College Students

# 中国大学生英语写作教材

刘军利 编著



首都师范大学出版社  
CAPITAL NORMAL UNIVERSITY PRESS

新世纪高等学校本科教材  
首都师范大学资助出版

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**图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据**

中国大学生英语写作教材/刘军利编著. —北京: 首都师范大学出版社, 2008. 7

新世纪高等学校本科教材

ISBN 978-7-81119-351-0

I. 中… II. 刘… III. 英语—写作—高等学校—教材 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 107828 号

ZHONGGUO DAXUESHENG YINGYU XIEZUO JIAOCAI

**中国大学生英语写作教材**

刘军利 编著

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责任编辑 杨林玉

首都师范大学出版社出版发行

地 址 北京西三环北路 105 号

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北京嘉实印刷有限公司印刷

全国新华书店发行

版 次 2008 年 9 月第 1 版

印 次 2008 年 9 月第 1 次印刷

开 本 787mm×1 092mm 1/16

印 张 32.75

字 数 543 千

定 价 66.00 元

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## About this Book

*English Writing Textbook for Chinese College Students* consists of 30 lessons with 9 parts to each lesson: Question & Answer about writing, Writing task, Reading time, Talk time, Prewriting time, Comments time, Copying time, Editing time and Exercise time.

“Question & Answer about writing” deals with writing skills.

“Writing task” is the writing assignment. It is actually a simulated TEM test, with exactly the same requirements and prompts as the TEM test.

“Reading time” provides the writing learner with articles downloaded from the Internet and websites for more articles, from which the student can get either the background information or expressions needed to accomplish the writing task. “Talk time” requires the student to answer questions related to the writing topic and the given reading materials, helping him or her to get more insights into the topic.

“Prewriting time” prompts the students to do the necessary prewriting activities.

“Comments time” offers a chance to study one or more passages used as either negative or positive examples.

“Copying time” is a list of effective sentences with expressions or sentences patterns which can be used in the student’s writing.

In “Editing time” there are either faulty sentences or ineffective passages for the student to revise, and in “Exercise time” there are varieties of excises.

The book ignores the training of skills which can only be acquired but cannot be learned, for example, description, creative use

of words, and so on. At the time, the book doesn't make any distinction between paragraph writing and essay writing. For one thing, in real writing situations, no one will set any limit on the number of paragraphs. No one would say, "You can only write one paragraph," or "You must write at least 3 paragraphs." For another, almost all the rules for effective paragraph writing are applicable to effective essay writing.

*English Writing Textbook for Chinese College Students* is based on the first-hand materials the writer gets from her 15 years' writing teaching of English majors. It contains the following distinguishing features.

First, the lessons are directed at the common writing problems of the first and second students from Chinese universities, aiming to help native Chinese students of English to improve their writing skills.

Second, the negative examples all come from the essays written by Chinese university students, truly reflecting what Chinese university students need.

Third, with the guidance of "Model Approach" and "Process Approach," the textbook has included some classic sentences and passages, related reading materials from the Internet, and the complete process of pre-writing activities, providing ideal writing models and useful expressions and sentence patterns for the learners; helping the student foster the right habit of making pre-writing preparations.

Fourth, the writing topics typify the major concerns of the contemporary university students, therefore of great interest to them, motivating them to devote time and efforts to the course.

The textbook has been used in English Education Department, Capital Normal University, for 6 semesters before publication and received recognition from both the students and teachers.

I would like to thank Ms Catherine Mettillle and Professor Michael Lazich from Buffalo State College, for their valuable suggestions and all the hours spent on the improvement of this textbook. I also owe much of the success of the book to my colleague Professor

Mu Linhua, who offers some excellent model paragraphs and essays for the book. Special thanks also go to Professor He Xiangming from Capital Normal University and Professor Wang Zhenya from Beijing Languages University for their approval of the project. Without the help, advice and encouragement by the colleagues and friends, much of this work that is presented in the textbook would not have been possible.

## To the Student

**Writing Can be Learned; Writing Cannot be Learned, either.**

You may all hope to become a good writer. So staying aware of the following tips may be helpful to you

Be confident. The mastery of the writing skills included in the textbook will help you improve your writing dramatically.

Be practical. Only part of writing can be learned; the rest of it can only be acquired, for example, how to use a word creatively, how to make a vivid description, or how to get the feel of the English language.

Be patient. There is no short cut to or “wonder drug” for writing. It takes time.

Be wise. Remember what effective writing in English is like and strive for it. Forget about Chinese. It is worthless to spend time on Chinglish writing style.

Be diligent. Read extensively to enlarge your vocabulary. Study the examples and learn from them. As we know, not all professional writers have received high education in writing, but all professional writers take interest in literature and read a lot.

Be efficient. But efficiency lies in every second, every minute and every hour, not in the end of the end or the end of the semester. Work like the clock in the “Story of a Clock.”

**A Story of a Clock**

*A new little clock is placed between two old clocks. The old ones are constantly walking, giving rhythmic sounds of “tick, tock, tick, tock” every day. One of the two said to the little clock, “Come on. It’s time for you to start work. But I’m afraid you will*

*be worn out when you walk a long way by swinging 32 million times."*

*"My! 32 million times!" exclaimed the new clock with shock. "That's a tough task. I can't manage it. I can't."*

*The other old clock said, "What a nonsense he is making! Don't be afraid, boy. If you can swing once per second, you will have accomplished your task." "Is it that easy?" said the little clock doubtfully. "If so, I'll have a try."*

*Then the little clock makes a single swinging movement every second and he does it without any difficulty. Very soon one year is gone and he has swung 32 million times before he realizes it.*

## About this Book

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## Lesson 1

## What types of essays are we supposed to write?

## Question &amp; Answer about writing

## What types of essays are we supposed to write?

In basic Chinese writing, articles are classified into 记叙文, 描写文, 说明文, 议论文 and 应用文. In basic English writing, articles can be generally classified into narrative, descriptive, expositive / expository, argumentative essays and practical writings. However, the Chinese 说明文 is not exactly the same as the English expositive / expository essay, nor is the Chinese 议论文 the English argumentative essay. Roughly speaking, the Chinese 说明文 and 议论文 altogether make up expositive / expository essays and argumentative essays in English. In both English and Chinese short essays, the technique of narration, description, exposition and / or argumentation can be used.

**Narration** is a way of telling a story as it happens. If we develop our ideas in chronological sequence, and if we are telling when and where an incident happened, how it went on, who was involved in it, and how it ended up, then we are narrating a story. A story is characterized by a plot.

**Description** is a way of telling about what someone or something looks like, or what something sounds, smells, tastes, or feels like. By describing, we can tell what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

**Practical writing** is a way of writing in a set format, and sometimes with fixed wording, as in an invitation card.

**Exposition** is a way of explaining what, why, or how. For example, “My Ideal of University Life” is a typical expository essay and is supposedly about “what my ideal of university life is” and probably “why I think in this way.”

**Argumentation** is a way of explaining our viewpoint or persuading the reader to accept our opinion. It is different from exposition, in that it is based on the prerequisite that the writing topic is a controversial one and that we have a readership who takes a stand against our view. Consequently, we must explain why we hold such a view and at the same time refute those ideas which we think “wrong” to ultimately persuade those who are against us to accept our viewpoint.

However, it is rare the case that we can classify our essays or paragraphs into a narrative one, a descriptive one, an expository one, or an argumentative one. Very often, we have to combine narration, description, and exposition for the explanation of our views or attitudes. Can you tell, for example, what method is used in “My Mother,” narration, description or exposition? As a matter of fact, in such a composition as “My Mother,” we can give a description of my mother (description), or tell a story of my mother (narration), or explain the thesis that I love my mother (exposition). We can also combine some or all these ideas in one composition; in this case, our composition is neither a piece of narrative writing, nor descriptive, or expository; it is a mixture! For example, the following models essays “A Little Girl” and “The Man I Respect Most” seem to be of the same type—they are both about a person, but the former is a pure description of a little girl while the latter turned out to be an exposition—a general introduction of Zhou Enlai, an explanation of why I respect him. The third model essay “The Tiger” can be a description, but here it is an exposition, too, with description used.

### ***A Little Girl***

— *From Aylwin by Theodore Watts-Dunton*

*Sitting on a grassy grave, beneath one of the windows of the church, was a little girl. With her head bent back she was gazing up at the sky and singing, while one of her little hands was point-*

ing to a tiny cloud that hovered like a golden feather above her head. The sun, which had suddenly become very bright, shining on her glossy hair, gave it a metallic luster, and it was difficult to say what was the color, dark bronze or black. So completely absorbed was she in watching the cloud to which her strange song or incantation seemed addressed, that she did not observe me when I rose and went towards her. Over her head, high up in the blue, a lark that was soaring towards the same gauzy cloud was singing, as if in rivalry. As I slowly approached the child, I could see by her forehead, which in the sunshine seemed like a globe of pearl, and especially by her complexion, that she was uncommonly lovely. Her eyes, which at one moment seemed blue-gray, at another violet, were shaded by long black lashes, curving backward in a most peculiar way, and these matched in hue her eyebrows, and the tresses that were tossed about her tender throat and were quivering in the sunlight. All this I did not take in at once; for at first I could see nothing but those quivering, glittering, changeful eyes turned up into my face. Gradually the other features, especially the sensitive full-lipped mouth, grew upon me as I stood silently gazing. Here seemed to me a more perfect beauty than had ever come to me in my loveliest dreams of beauty. Yet it was not her beauty so much as the look she gave me that fascinated me, melted me.

### **The Man I Respect Most**

Ex-premier Zhou Enlai is the man I respect most. I respect him for his looks, his talent and his simple way of life. Zhou Enlai was one of those who attracted one like magnet at the very first sight. His thick brows carried thoughtfulness. His bright eyes emitted intelligence. His clear-cut face displayed justice and will power. His gait was always full of vitality. Zhou Enlai was one of most eloquent statesmen in the world. Many of the most complicated problems in China and in the world were solved by the touch of his hand. His talent was best shown during the "Cultural Revolution", when he balanced the disaster with his artful resistance. He was therefore compared to a giant rock obstructing that peril-

ous current. Zhou Enlai was one of the top leaders of China, but his life was simple. He never took advantage of his position to benefit himself. This sharp contrast to many notorious bureaucrats is praised by the Chinese people. One foreign ambassador once remarked, "Countless foreign leaders have visited China, but none is as great as Zhou Enlai is." This is indeed very true.

### **The Tiger**

The tiger is very much like the wild-cat in appearance; in fact, our domestic pet is sometimes called a miniature tiger. Its length, from the tip of the tail to the nose, is about twelve feet. Its fur is of an orange color stripped with black, and thus it is not easily distinguished from the trunks of the trees among which it has its haunts (生息地, 常去的地方). Its paws are soft and padded (有肉趾), so that it can move about with little noise. The tiger is chiefly found in India and the other countries in the south of Asia. It frequents (出没于) the neighborhood of springs where other animals come to drink. It prowls (暗中觅食; 潜行) about in the nighttime, and for this its eyes are extremely well adapted. Its claws are strong and sharp, and its strength is very great. It has been known to drag a buffalo from a quagmire (沼泽地, 泥潭), which several men are unable to do.

When we are given a writing topic, we may have different ways of dealing with it. For example, when the topic is about a person, the article can be treated as a descriptive one in which we make a pure description of the person's appearance or personality; or an expository one in which we give our opinion about the person, and explain why; or a combination of description or exposition in which we give an overall introduction of the person about his appearance, age, personality, occupation, hobby, and our opinion about him or her. These rules can be extended to other topics. For example, "A Little Girl" is pure description, while "The Man I Respect Most" is a mixture of description and exposition! Usually, what kind of articles we are supposed to write will be specified when we are given the writing topic.

Expository essays are the most common in English tests, as is

shown in the following list of writing topics from the Test for English Majors. According to the directions, they are supposed to be written in the method of exposition. However, since some of the topics are controversial, they can also be dealt with as argumentation.

(TEM-4 1994) TV: a good thing or a bad thing (exposition or argumentation)

(TEM-4 1995) Advantages and disadvantages of doing a part time job (exposition)

(TEM-4 1996) The Main Difference Between My College Life and My Middle School Life (exposition)

(TEM-4 1997) More Pressure From Academic Studies Does (or Does No) Good to Us (exposition or argumentation)

(TEM-4 1998) One Way to Solve the Problem of Air Pollution in Cities (exposition)

(TEM-4 1999) A Major Advantage / Disadvantage of Advertising on Television (exposition)

(TEM-4 2000) The Importance of Extracurricular Activities (exposition)

(TEM-4 2001) Travel Broadens the Mind (exposition)

(TEM-4 2002) The Best Way to Stay Healthy (exposition)

(TEM-4 2004) Will Phones Kill Letter Writing? (exposition or argumentation)

(TEM-4 2005) My Idea of a University Arts Festival (exposition)

(TEM-4 2006) Saving Money or Using Tomorrow's Money Today (exposition or argumentation)

Exposition is the most commonly used in English writings. As we can see in the list of TEM-4 writing topics above, the vast majority of essays we are asked to write in English tests, as well as in college writing textbooks, are expository ones. A lot of books such as history books, geography books, and academic books are expository writings. According to statistics, 80% of English short articles are expository ones, which explain what, why and how. That may be the reason that almost all the books available in bookstores which are intended for college students teach us how to write an expository

essay (and sometimes an argumentative essay as well). Therefore, how to write the expository essay is also the main theme of the following lessons.

### Writing task

We started to learn to write when we were very young. Then why is writing so important? Write a composition of about 200 words on the following topic:

#### The Importance of Writing

You are to write in three parts.

In the first part, state what your general view is.

In the second part, support your view with explanations.

In the last part, bring what you have written to a natural conclusion or a summary.

*Points will be awarded for content, organization, grammar and appropriateness. Failure to follow the instructions may result in a loss of points.*

#### Reading time

<http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop4a.cfm>

#### Writing to Learn

Although how writing fosters critical thinking is not clear, theoreticians and practitioners alike agree that writing promotes both critical thinking and learning as Toby Fulwiler and Art Young explain in their “Introduction” to *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*:

Writing to communicate—or what James Britton calls “transactional writing”—means writing to accomplish something, to inform, instruct, or persuade... Writing to learn is different. We write to ourselves as well as talk with others to objectify our perceptions of reality; the primary function of this “expressive” language is not to communicate, but to order and represent the experience to our own understanding. In this sense language provides us with a unique way of knowing and becomes a tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding.

In "Writing to Learn Means Learning to Think," Syrene Forsman makes the same point, but she directs her attention not to a theoretical justification but a practical rationale for writing to learn:

As teachers we can choose between (a) sentencing students to thoughtless mechanical operations and (b) facilitating their ability to think. If students' readiness for more involved thought processes is bypassed in favor of jamming more facts and figures into their heads, they will stagnate at the lower levels of thinking. But if students are encouraged to try a variety of thought processes in classes, they can, regardless of their ages, develop considerable mental power. Writing is one of the most effective ways to develop thinking.

*The Consequences of Writing* by Robert P. Parker and Vera Goodkin is an especially good resource on writing to learn. Following a detailed discussion of the theoretical links between language (especially writing) and learning, these authors outline projects that focus on writing in entomology, clinical nursing, psychology, and mathematics, all with similar results: students learned key concepts and understood material more fully while also practicing some features of discourse for the specified discourse community. Thus, writing to learn can have additional positive effects in helping students mature as effective communicators even though the initial goal is to help students become better learners.

#### Notes:

- 1) foster = promote; help a skill, feeling, idea etc develop over a period of time

*foster the sense of community*

- 2) facilitate: make it easier for a process or activity to happen

*facilitate language learning*

- 3) rationale; *usu. sing. fml.* the reasons for a decision, belief, etc:

*The rationale for using this teaching method is to encourage student confidence.*

- 4) sentence sb to sth.: confine sb to sth., keep sb in a place that they cannot leave, such as a prison

- 5) bypass; *vt.* avoid obeying a rule system, or someone in an offi-