

# Resources in the Teaching of Composition

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## Basic Books

Previous RTC features in forum have described classroom-oriented collections; this month I'd like to turn to some basic books for the composition teacher's library, books sometimes of theory but most often of theory meant to be put into practice.

The following collections give a range of current and traditional responses to theory and practice in the teaching of composition:

**Cooper, Charles R., & Lee Odell, eds.** Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1977.

*An important collection of articles on evaluation of writing, including Richard Lloyd-Jones' influential explanation of primary trait scoring plus Cooper on holistic evaluation, Kellogg Hunt on syntactic structures, and Mary Beaven on "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation, and Peer Evaluation."*

**Cooper, Charles R., & Lee Odell, eds.** Research on Composing: Points of Departure. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1978.

*A very useful anthology attempting to bring us up-to-date on developments in composition theory and pedagogy and related fields. Chapters include one by the editors on discourse theory, one by Britton on the functions of writing, one by Donald Murray on revision, one by Walter Petty on the writing of young children. Janet Emig writes on hand, eye, and brain; Barritt and Kroll, on cognitive-developmental psychology; Young, on invention.*

**Graves, Richard L., ed.** Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company, 1976.

*A fine collection of articles for "practicing and prospective" teachers of writing on all levels, with appeals to both theory and pedagogy. Part Five is particularly on pedagogy; Part Two is on Motivating Student Writing. Part One includes a useful overview by Squire and Applebee. Other sections are on the sentence, the paragraph, and classical rhetoric.*

**Larson, Richard L., ed.** Children and Writing in the Elementary School: Theories and Techniques. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

*Moffett and Britton both make clear the developmental nature of writing ability; Larson's collection of articles and excerpts reinforces their findings and offers on-target readings in theories of written discourse and teaching techniques, and responding to student writing.*

**Petty, Walter T., & Finn, Patrick, eds.** The Writing Processes of Students. Report of the Annual Conference on Language Arts No. 1. Buffalo: State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975.

*Directed toward writing in elementary and secondary schools and also valuable for college teachers. Articles deal with research on how students actually write. Samples: Emig, "The Biology of Writing"; Graves, "The Child, The Writing Process, and the Role of the Professional"; Sawkins, "What Children Say About Their Writing"; Bodkin, "Observed Differences in the Written*

*Expression of Boys and Girls"; others by Squire, Cooper, Odell, Clapp.*

**Tate, Gary, ed.** Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

*An indispensable research tool, including essays by top scholars on research in such areas as invention, structure and form, style, modes of discourse, basic writing, media, linguistics, rhetorical analysis, dialects, and related fields (philosophy, speech, education).*

In addition to these collections are several landmark studies which deserve attention. These include three books described elsewhere in this issue, The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (Britton et al), Language and Learning (Britton), and Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Moffett). Other landmark studies are:

**Emig, Janet.** The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders. NCTE Research Report No. 13. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1971.

*Emig based her understanding of how children write upon an observed process rather than a prescribed procedure grounded upon analysis of a finished product. Her research methods are being widely imitated and refined, with fascinating results at all levels, elementary through college. She concludes with recommendations concerning changes in the way composition is taught in secondary school and the ways writing teachers are taught in college.*

**Shaughnessy, Mina.** Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing. NY: Oxford University Press, 1977.

*Because she understands the logic underlying error, Shaughnessy is more capable of responding constructively to it than the teacher who can merely spot error. An indispensable book for the teacher of basic writing and a valuable resource for all writing teachers.*

#### **New and Recommended**

Two new books both seem to be essential reading at this moment, for they both discuss the responses of educators and the public to language and the language of students.

**Gere, Ann Ruggles, & Eugene Smith.** Attitudes, Language, & Change. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1979.

*Explores the attitudes teachers hold about language, their sources, the ways of understanding attitudes and implementing change not only in ourselves but also in our colleagues and our community. A fascinating, challenging book.*

**Judy, Stephen.** The ABCs of Literacy: A Guide for Parents and Educators. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

*An accessible book aimed at a wide audience, not only educators but members of the community as well. Its premises--that change in literacy instruction needs an overhaul of aims and alteration of teaching conditions, that the time is right for such a change, that it must begin in the schools and the communities, and that it must involve other disciplines--lead to a vital review of attitudes toward literacy instruction and sound approaches to improving it.*

#### **Events**

**October 10, 1980 - October Engfest,** Western Michigan University, conference for elementary, middle school, and secondary language arts teachers. Theme: Teacher Processing. Sponsored by WMU and MCTE. Contact Maryellen Hains or Kathy Drzick, WMU English Department, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

**October 10, 11, 12 - MCTE Boyne Highlands Conference.** Theme: Winds of Change--Problems and Practices in the Teaching of English. Boyne Highlands Inn, Harbor Springs, MI. Guest consultant: John C. Maxwell, NCTE. Contact Stephen Judy, English, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

**October 24 - MCEA Conference,** Central Michigan University. Includes a Writing Across the Curriculum workshop. Contact Hans Fetting, Dept. of English, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

**Fall Meeting (Date to be Announced) - Flint Area English Society (FLARES).** Contact Donna Cummings, 1069 River Forest Drive, Flint, MI 48504.