

# Resources in the Teaching of Composition

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## Theory

The following books compile an impressive variety of articles from several disciplines, drawing on research and proposing theories about writing and the learning of writing skills.

The Rhetorical Tradition and Modern Writing. (Ed.) James J. Murphy. NY: The Modern Language Association, 1982.

An interesting collection of essays on rhetoric and its applicability to the modern curriculum, including articles on historical figures like Plato, Aristotle, Locke, and Bain, and on rhetorical development in Classical Greece and Rome, and nineteenth-century Scotland and England.

What Writers Know: The Language, Process, and Structure of Written Discourse. (Ed.) Martin Nystrand. NY: Academic Press, 1982.

Part One, "On the Language of Written Discourse," offers articles on written language and society, errors, textual space, thematic progression and reader comprehension, and context, among others. Part Two, "On the Processes and Structure of Written Discourse," offers chapters on production factors, psychology and composition, real-time production of discourse, speech-act theory, and writing and learning in school settings. A solid, wide-ranging collection.

Writing: The Nature, Development, and Teaching of Written Communication. Vol. 1. Variation in Writing: Functional and Linguistic-Cultural Differences. (Ed.) Marcia Farr Whiteman. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981.

This volume of readings is divided into two parts. Part One, "Socio-Cultural Functions

of Writing," offers articles on the ethnography of literacy, an ethno-history of writing in American education, the status of writing in our society, and the politics of writing instruction, among others. Part Two, "Language Differences and Writing," focuses on the teaching of writing to students who do not come from standard-

English speaking backgrounds, treating dialect influence in writing, Black, Hispanic, and deaf students, and bias in composition texts.

Writing: The Nature, Development, and Teaching of Written Communication. Vol. 2. Writing: Process, Development, and Communication. (Eds.) Carl H. Frederiksen and Joseph F. Dominic. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981.

The second volume offers sixteen papers on writing as a cognitive act, a form of language, a communicative process, and a contextual activity. Individual articles deal with such topics as the relation of speech and writing or writing and reading, revising, development in writing, the requirements of written text, and national assessments of writing ability. Together the two volumes offer a thorough overview of current theories and trends in the teaching of writing.

## Practice

The following books are by experienced and well-known teachers and give us a wealth of insight and suggestion about teaching.

Britton, James. Prospect and Retrospect: Selected Essays of James Britton. (Ed.) Gordon M. Pradl. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1982.

An anthology of Britton's writing from 1953 to 1982, twenty articles divided into three

sections: "Literature and the Shaping of Experience," "Language and Intention," and "Perspectives on the Profession." The essential ideas of Britton, selected to avoid repetition, are here, as well as a selected bibliography of his other publications.

Murray, Donald M. Learning By Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1982.

Twenty-nine articles, half on the process of writing, half on the process of teaching, and one on writing for teachers, all by a writer/teacher who has consistently applied what he learns from writing to teaching, and vice-versa. An up-dating of his fine early book, A Writer Teaches Writing, (1968).

Tibberts, A.M. Working Papers: A Teacher's Observations on Composition. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1982.

Co-author of a successful traditional rhetoric, Tibberts' comments on teaching writing in this short book are a sensible, valuable antidote to the abuses of traditional rhetorical instruction as well as a distillation of its more effective practices. The postscript, "What Researchers Say, What Teachers Do," is a provocative look at the conflicts between theory and practice.

The next two books are both on the writing laboratory and complement one another.

Steward, Joyce S., and Mary K. Croft. The Writing Laboratory: Organization, Management, and Methods. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1982.

Discusses the background--history, philosophy, financing, and variety of approaches--before offering detailed sections on lab organization, lab process, and lab management. A lengthy appendix contains training aids, promotional materials, forms, handouts, and module outlines. Also has a useful bibliography.

Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs. (Ed.) Muriel Harris. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1982.

Collects articles on the writing lab from teachers throughout the United States and Canada, offering detailed discussions of every aspect, including the one-to-one process, diagnosis of writing problems, training of tutors, multi-media and self-instruction, structuring, and maintenance. The appendix is a sampler of writing lab forms.

An interesting and appealing new book has come out from the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, under the auspices of the Michigan Department of Education.

A Two-Way Street--Reading to Write, Writing to Read: Using Literature to Generate Writing in the Elementary Classroom, Grades K-6. (Ed.) Maryellen Haines. MCTE, PO Box 892, Rochester, MI 48063, 1982.

A team of writers from around the state, including elementary teachers and school district and university specialists in language arts, reading, and children's literature, have created what is essentially an annotated bibliography of children's literature with classroom suggestions to generate writing in the elementary school. The introduction discusses writing and provides a selected bibliography while the remainder of the

book offers a wealth of practical teaching suggestions for an integration of reading and writing.

An excellent collection of articles on revising has also been published this year.

Revising: New Essays for Teachers of Writing.  
(Ed.) Ronald A. Sudol. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1982.

Six theoretical and historical articles and ten classroom-oriented essays on revising and the relationship between editor and writer, teacher and student, at this point in the composing process. Includes Anne Gere's article on the composing process of a blind writer.

#### From the Journals

A number of articles on adult writers and writing on the job were gathered in a recent issue of College Composition and Communication. Together with an article from College English they give us a many-faceted perspective on adult writers, both as students and as workers, and on the effect of composition courses beyond graduation.

Aldrich, Pearl G. "Adult Writers: Some Reasons for Ineffective Writing on the Job," in CCC. Vol. 33, No. 3, (October, 1982), pp. 284-287.

Bataille, Robert R. "Writing in the World of Work: What Our Graduates Report," in CCC. Vol. 33, No. 3, (October, 1982), pp. 276-280.

Connors, Patricia. "Some Attitudes of Returning Older Students of Composition," in CCC. Vol. 33, No. 3, (October, 1982), pp. 263-267.

Faigley, Lester, and Thomas P. Miller. "What We Learn from Writing on the Job," in CE. Vol. 44, No. 6, (October, 1982), pp. 557-569.

Harwood, John T. "Freshman English Ten Years After: Writing in the World," in CCC. Vol. 33, No. 3, (October, 1982), pp. 281-283.

In addition to these articles attention should also be paid to the following essay, which has implications for the teaching of both literature and composition.

Petersen, Bruce T. "Writing About Responses: A Unified Model of Reading, Interpretation, and Composition," in CE, Vol. 44, No. 5, (September, 1982), pp. 459-468.

Relates the work of Britton and Flower in composition and Bleich and Rosenblatt in reading to create a composite theory and suggests ways to draw upon this unified model in composition-literature courses. The article is suggestive of how literature can enhance the learning of composition and how composition can enhance responding to literature.

A great deal of writing is produced each year which deals with the teaching of composition. A good source for continuing knowledge of that research is the following:

Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English," in Research in the Teaching of English, May and December issues.

Twice a year, RTE offers a six-month annotated bibliography of research, providing a thorough overview of the work being done on the teaching of English reported in a broad spectrum of sources.

#### Announcements

The Writing Instructor announces a special issue, "Basic Writing and the Profession," dealing with composition from political, administrative, and pedagogical viewpoints. Articles by James Sledd and Andrea Lundsford are featured. Winter '82 single issue: \$3.00; yearly subscription: \$8.00. The Writing Instructor, c/o Freshman Writing

Program, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089.

Crosscut: Writing Across the Disciplines is a newsletter devoted to theory and practice, research and methods, programs and approaches for writing in all disciplines, published three times a year. Helen Koon, Editor, Crosscut, California State College, 5500 State College Parkway, San Bernadino, CA 92407.

Praxis: A Journal and Review about Writing invites mss. concerning teaching/learning/experiencing of the writing act in all its educational functions. Levels: senior high school, college, vocational, adult, personal. Write for Suggestions for Contributors and/or send mss. to Editor, Praxis, Department of English, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, WI 53190.

The Writing Centers Association announces its Fifth Annual WCA Conference, to be

held May 6, 1983, at Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana. Requests for further information and registration materials should be sent to Muriel Harris, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

Conference on College Composition and Communication will hold its 34th Annual Convention March 16-19, 1983, at the Westin Hotel in the Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan. For more information write: 1983 CCCC Convention Information, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Teaching English is a Bright Idea: MSU/MCTE Spring Conference on the English Language Arts will be held April 30, 1983, at Michigan State University. Proposals accepted up until February 10 and information available from Marilyn Wilson, MSU English Department, Morrill Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.