

REVISING ENGLISH 01: THE CREATION OF A
DEVELOPMENTAL READING AND WRITING COURSE

by

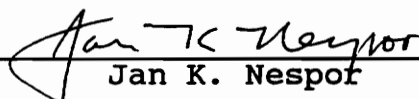
John S. Capps

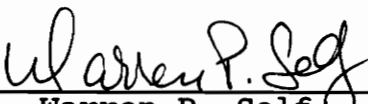
Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
in
Curriculum and Instruction

APPROVED:


Patricia P. Kelly, Chair


Darrel A. Clowes


Jan K. Nespor


Warren P. Self


Robert C. Small, Jr.

July, 1994

Blacksburg, Virginia

C.2

LD
5655
V856
1994
C366
C.2

REVISING ENGLISH 01: THE CREATION OF A
DEVELOPMENTAL READING AND WRITING CLASS

by

John S. Capps

Chair: Dr. Patricia P. Kelly

Curriculum and Instruction

(ABSTRACT)

Bartholomae contends that "a reading course is necessarily a writing course and a writing course must be a course in reading." At most community colleges, however, reading and writing are still taught as if they were independent of each other. The course on which this curriculum study is based, English 07, Writing and Reading Improvement, represents a revision of that traditional approach, for it combines instruction in reading and writing to create a comprehensive class in developmental English. This dissertation describes the salient pedagogical features of English 07, from its rejection of the skills approach to language instruction to its treatment of reading and writing as complementary activities.

The results of this study indicate that teaching reading with writing in the same course can be a viable alternative to teaching these skills separately. Success rates of students in English 07 consistently exceeded those of students enrolled in more traditional classes in which reading and writing remained isolated from one another. English 07 students also

enjoyed a relatively high rate of success in subsequent first-year English classes, approaching a level of achievement equal to that of students in the general population of the college. In addition, the study revealed several curricular elements that seem to have been unusually important in helping students develop their literate abilities. The course's emphasis upon reading and writing as complementary processes of composition, its thematic focus upon the self, the structure and sequence of reading and writing assignments, and the social relations in the classroom all emerged as significant influences in students' attempts to transform themselves into literate members of the academy.

Clowes notes that "little evidence exists for the successful integration of developmental theory into the practice of remediation," and Berthoff asserts that "we need more research in teaching reading and writing together." This study answers those calls by demonstrating how reading and writing can be melded together to create an effective developmental English course. This dissertation should thus provide other community-college practitioners with an immediate theoretical framework and a model curriculum for helping students become more proficient readers and more accomplished writers.

To Margaret, Ryan, and Elizabeth

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people are present in this dissertation, and to each of them I owe a lasting debt of gratitude. I wish to thank Bill Salyers, who helped form my conception of developmental studies classes from the first days we taught English 01 together. Both he and Patsy Starnes served as co-authors of the grant that originally funded English 07, and both were instrumental in the development of that first version of the course. I am likewise indebted to Clarence Mays and Pat Price, my colleagues and friends, who read and reread draft after draft of this manuscript, offering thoughtful criticism that was tempered always by generous concern. Whatever its shortcomings, this dissertation is certainly better for their contributions.

I am also deeply grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, who succeeded in making what might have been a travail into the richest of educations. Robert Small served as my mentor during my internship as a novice--and struggling--student teacher. Because I first learned the art of teaching English from him, it seems especially appropriate that he played a comparable role in the creation of this work these many years later. Warren Self helped guide my earliest vision of English 07 during my participation in the Southwest Virginia Writing Project. His expansive knowledge and incisive suggestions have influenced not only my

philosophies about teaching English but also the specific content and composition of this document. Darrel Clowes, whose own scholarship informs this study from beginning to end, has been a source of constant support as well. His counsel and advice, always penetrating and constructive, are reflected in every chapter of the work.

To Jan Nesor, I owe an especial debt, since it was under his tutelage that the contours of this project began to assume form. He guided my approach without dictating a direction and offered his insights without imposing his views. In the process, he introduced me to the means and ends of ethnographic research, helping me develop the skills and the confidence I needed to conduct this study. Finally, I offer my deepest appreciation to Patricia Kelly. Throughout many years, her unfailing encouragement has bolstered my determination to complete my coursework and this dissertation. She gave of her time when she had little time herself, and she provided me with perspective when my own vision failed. A professor in the truest sense of the word, she has inspired me as both a teacher and a student, for it was she who taught me that education is never a matter of always knowing, but rather always the process of learning to know.

To my family--my wife, Margaret, and my children, Ryan and Elizabeth--I owe the greatest debt of all. They gave me the freedom that allowed me to undertake this study, and they

supplied me with the vitality that enabled me to complete it. For all their understanding and support, I dedicate this dissertation to them. Without them, neither it nor I could ever have been.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER 1	
Introduction.	1
CHAPTER 2	
The Course in Context: An Historical Perspective of Developmental English Programs and English 01.	13
CHAPTER 3	
The Theoretical Connections Between Reading and Writing: Implications for a New Pedagogy	38
CHAPTER 4	
Theory in Practice: The Content of the Curriculum.	59
Placement Procedure	60
The Characteristics of Developmental Readers and Writers.	61
Reading and Writing as Process.	64
The Thematic Structure of the Course.	76
The Nature and Sequence of Reading and Writing Assignments.	78
The Role of Usage and Mechanics	87
The Primacy of Discussion	96

CHAPTER 5

"Awakenings": Voices of Reflection and Revision 101

 Students' Attitudes Toward Reading and Writing 102

 The Importance of Teaching Reading and
 Writing as Complementary Processes 112

 The Value of Reading and Writing Assignments 117

 The Significance of Social Relations
 in the Classroom 127

 Conclusions 136

CHAPTER 6

English 07 Afterwords: Reflections on Reading
and Writing, Teaching and Learning 146

WORKS CITED. 175

APPENDIX A

English 07 Syllabus. 181

APPENDIX B

Reading and Writing Assignments in English 07. 185

APPENDIX C

Success Rates in English 07 and English 01 and 04. 207

VITA 218

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.1 Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students. . .	209
1.2 Success Rate of English 07 Students	209
2.1 Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students (Completers Only)	211
2.2 Success Rate of English 07 Students (Completers Only)	211
3.1 Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students in English 101 and English 111.	213
3.2 Success Rate of English 07 Students in English 101 and English 111.	213
4.1 Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students in English 101 and English 111 (Completers Only)	215
4.2 Success Rate of English 07 Students in English 101 and English 111 (Completers Only)	215

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

William is the first member of his family to attend college. A truck driver who delayed his education for years because he was afraid of taking English, he is now determined that he will earn a degree in psychology so he can give his father "braggin' rights."

Sherry has come to Virginia Western to major in radiography, having earned her high school diploma last year. "When I was in high school," she says, "none of my teachers ever told me that I write well, so I used to do my writing assignments at the last minute. That way I really wouldn't care if I got an F on it because I didn't spend much time, but when you spend a lot of time on it and still get an F, then you don't want to write anymore, and that is how I felt."

Larry was a star athlete in high school. He had hoped to earn a scholarship so he could play football at Virginia Tech, but neither his grades nor his SAT scores qualified him for admission to the university. "At school kids made fun of me for trying to learn," he writes in his first journal entry, "so I gave in and played the part of the dumb jock and know I'am paying for it dearly."

Marie has missed the last four days of English 07. A single parent who must sometimes bring her two-year-old son to class with her, she lives with her mother and brother in

Southeast Roanoke. For the past week she has been afraid to leave their house because her mother's ex-boyfriend has threatened to kill them.

William, Sherry, Larry, Marie, and the many others who populate developmental English classes in community colleges share a similar dilemma while trying to avoid a common fate. Dispatched with the label of "nontraditional," "marginal," or "at-risk," they are attempting to learn in one or two semesters the literate skills they could not be taught in twelve years of schooling. Because their high school records are marked by mediocrity, they are typically regarded as "academic squatters" (Moore, Against 1), certainly not as "college material." And because their backgrounds have left them unprepared for the academic culture of college life, they embody "a spectacularly nonstandard repertoire of behaviors and attitudes" (McGrath and Spear 24) which often result in their failure. For these students, the rituals and customs of the academy, alien to them at the beginning of their enrollment, remain rites of passage which they may never be able to traverse.

No doubt Mina Shaughnessy had these students in mind when she defined a view of remedial English that remains prevalent even today: that it is a course for students who suffer from a plethora of debilitating problems and crippling disorders. "Medical metaphors," such as "clinic," "diagnostic," and

"laboratory," saturate the language of the discipline, and teachers talk about their students in much the same way that doctors talk about their patients ("Diving In" 62). They diagnose problems, consult with colleagues, prescribe remedies, treat symptoms, and chart progress. These are the students whom teachers must change; these, the students whom teachers must cure.

Yet seldom, Shaughnessy reminds us, do teachers consider their own shortcomings and maladies. Like doctors, they discuss their "patients" as if they were not "tinged with mortality themselves and with certainly no expectations that questions will be raised about the state of their health" ("Diving In" 62). As a result, Shaughnessy concludes, teachers tend to focus on the "illnesses" of their students, ignoring the possibility of their own. They believe that "students, not teachers, are the people in education who must do the changing" (62).

The course on which this curriculum study is based, English 07, Writing and Reading Improvement, is the product of an examination that yielded a different conclusion: that teachers and pedagogy must sometimes change as well. English 07 was born out of concern for the low success rate of students in the remedial English program at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, Virginia. By 1985, it had become clear that Virginia Western's remedial writing course,

English 01, had failed to provide students with the skills they needed to be successful in college-level classes. Indeed, for many students the course itself had become a barrier that halted their educational progress. Few students were able to pass it; others dropped it; and many simply disappeared, likely concluding that a higher education was somehow beyond their reach. After a comprehensive assessment of English 01, however, I decided that the poor performance of its students was due not so much to their writing ability as to inherent problems in the class's format and approach. The ultimate result of that assessment has been the evolution of English 01 into English 07, an eight-credit, thematically organized course that combines instruction in reading and writing.

* * *

In many ways, the earliest version of English 01, named Verbal Studies Laboratory, was emblematic of the programs which have existed at community colleges for the past two decades (and which, unfortunately, continue to exist at some colleges even now). Relying primarily upon mastery learning and individualized instruction, English 01 was representative of those programs not only in its mechanical approach to teaching writing but also in its resistance to change and its failure to heed the growing body of literature about remedial education.

The first revision of English 01, which grew out of a paper I wrote for the Southwest Virginia Writing Project in 1985, was decidedly developmental in its approach. Still primarily a course in writing alone, the class added a counselor who was supposed to facilitate students' adjustment to college. Cross, of course, had already classified basic skills programs into two primary categories: remedial classes, which taught only academic skills, and developmental classes, which sought to address academic, personal, and social needs. A developmental course, she wrote, tries to "develop the diverse talents of students, whether academic or not" (31). Echoing a similar theme, Kasden had defined a developmental course as "a cohesive enrichment program that not only provide[s] instruction in individual academic disciplines, but also assist[s] students to better understand themselves, to overcome adverse personality traits and those features of their environments that may interfere with their learning, and, finally, to absorb and integrate all that they learn about their environment, about their various subjects, and about themselves" (2).

The first variation of English 01 was very consciously modelled upon these ideals. A reaction against the mechanistic isolation of the earlier course, the inclusion of the counselor in the classroom reflected the current research on developmental students, whose fears, alienation, and low

self-esteem had been branded as pervasive qualities that hampered their success. Shaughnessy had shown that fear functions as a barrier to writing (Errors 85); Bizzaro had observed that developmental writers have many problems that have nothing to do with writing itself (11); and Lunsford had called for "the concrete and sympathetic help of our colleagues in the social sciences" ("Content" 284). Teaching alongside the instructor, the counselor was supposed to answer this call by helping students with the personal and social problems that might otherwise have doomed them to failure. In its acknowledgment of students' broader needs and its attempt to foster collective identity instead of individual isolation, then, the first variant of English 01 was designed as a true developmental course: one that attempted to help students improve their writing as it promoted self-discovery, personal growth, and social adjustment.

The current version of English 07 was developed under a Funds for Excellence grant from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. It builds upon many of those early precepts but includes one major change: the integration of instruction in reading and writing. My dissertation focuses upon this revision of the course. To define the course in its historical context, Chapter 2 of my study provides an overview of developmental English programs, including a more specific appraisal of the shortcomings of the earliest version of

English 01. Chapter 3 then concentrates on the theoretical bases for combining instruction in reading and writing--the feature that most distinguishes English 07 from other community-college English classes.

Next, Chapter 4, "Theory In Practice: The Content of the Curriculum," describes the pedagogical principles that inform the design of English 07: its attempt to accommodate the qualities of developmental students; its treatment of reading and writing as processes; its insistence upon the importance of discussion; and its emphasis upon active, collaborative learning. This chapter also includes specific information about the class's thematic organization and sequence of assignments, providing, at the same time, a rationale for those elements of the course. This part of my dissertation thus defines English 07 as the heir of its historical predecessors and, even more important, as the practical realization of current theories about teaching reading and writing to developmental students.

Chapter 5, the penultimate section of my discussion, reviews English 07 from the perspective of some of the students who participated in the course. Clowes asserts that one of the shortcomings of research on remedial education stems from a lack of systematic evaluation (479-80). In particular, he notes that "there has been little research on the effect of remedial programs on their students" (484).

Shor agrees with that contention. Observing that "traditionally, the term research has not referred to teachers studying their students' learning," he argues that "effective teachers are those who examine their students' learning process, to discover what is being learned and not learned . . ." (170, 171). This segment of my discussion therefore concentrates on the perceptions of students who took part in English 07, rendering a view of the course that necessarily remains invisible in a syllabus or even the most detailed set of lesson plans. Following the recommendations of Roueche, Clowes, and others, I have included commentaries I gathered during students' enrollment in the class and subsequent to their completion of the course--in some cases, up to two years after their participation. With the inclusion of these later interviews, I have attempted to chart the long-term significance of the course and to identify how English 07 continues to affect students in their everyday lives. In the process of analyzing these various sources of information, I have, moreover, attempted to draw substantive conclusions about the nature of an effective developmental English program.

Finally, Chapter 6, "English 07 Afterwords," represents a personal commentary on the way in which my involvement with English 07 changed my approach to teaching and my attitude toward my students. Too much of the recent literature on

developmental English courses concentrates only on the rationale for teaching reading and writing together. Even Bartholomae and Petrosky's Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts, a veritable primer for remedial English teachers, neglects the crucial role that instructors' attitudes and values play in the success of their students. I have learned a different truth: that the most pedagogically sound course fails in the hands of an inflexible teacher, that no course can succeed unless the teacher recognizes he has more to learn than his students do. To invoke Shaughnessy again, I have learned the falsehood of believing that "the only person who must change in the teaching situation is the student." Teachers, not just students, "are the people in education who must do the changing" ("Diving In" 62).

Like Dan Rose, who admits that his study of Black American street life is tempered by limitations of time and locale, I make no claim that a class which has been successful at Virginia Western Community College will be effective everywhere. The best writing programs, Shaughnessy tells us, develop in response to the individual needs and characteristics of a particular institution (Errors 6); and English 07 is the product of a complex matrix of influences specific to Virginia Western. But I do believe that elements of the course--its emphasis upon reading and writing as complementary processes, for instance--are relevant to other

teachers, other settings, and other developmental English classes. I also believe that the evolution of English 07 may prove instructional to other colleges that face the similar challenge of creating comprehensive and purposeful programs in remedial reading and writing. Tinberg has noted that, too often, the teachers who develop these programs "look outside [their] classroom[s] to learn what theoreticians have to say about what happens in [their] classroom[s]" (36). The consequence is a "deep division" (37) between sometimes arcane university theorists and "beleaguered community-college writing teachers" (36), resulting in a further dichotomy "between theory and classroom practice" (36).

The development of English 07, however, suggests that theory need not be divorced from practice, that they can be bred together to form a vital dialectic which spawns change and reform. The story of English 07 thus demonstrates how practice stems from theory and how theory, which is "rooted in observation, in things observed and people observing," emerges from practice (Tinberg 36). At the very least, then, I hope that my analysis of English 07 will provide other community-college practitioners with an immediate theoretical framework within which they can develop their own approaches for helping students become more proficient readers and more accomplished writers. Such a framework is all the more critical given Berthoff's acknowledgment that "we need more research projects

in teaching reading and writing together" (10) and Clowes's admonition that "little evidence exists for the successful integration of developmental theory into the practice of remediation" (475).

Sundry criticisms have been leveled at remedial English programs, many with good reason. "The failure to synthesize the existing research" (Clowes 480); "the unsystematic treatment of student characteristics, program and instructional design, and criteria for success" (480); and "our [lack of] understanding of the effects of remediation programs upon the students and faculty within them" (487): each represents a significant limitation that has hampered the effectiveness of developmental English courses in the past. English 07 does not represent an answer to all of these concerns any more than it embodies a flawless approach to remediation. But it has been designed with these concerns in mind, and it has proved effective in helping fifty students develop the literate abilities they need to be successful in college and career and life.

From that standpoint, and with those students in mind, I would like to think of my dissertation in the same way that Mike Rose thought of Lives on the Boundary: "as a [hopeful work] about movement: about what happens as people who have failed begin to participate in the educational system that has seemed so harsh and distant to them" (xi). A work dedicated

to the "movement" of students, my dissertation is also a work about the "movement" of a course--a record of the principles that formed it and the students who made it.

CHAPTER 2

THE COURSE IN CONTEXT: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH PROGRAMS AND ENGLISH 01

No theoretical or conceptual basis has been established as an undergirding for program design in remediation. The field appears dominated by an eclectic approach in which promising ideas and practices are identified, modified, adopted, and occasionally assessed. . . . It appears the field is driven by neither theory nor research; rather, it is grounded in practical experience and is eclectic. (Clowes 475)

This conclusion, which Clowes voices about remedial education in general, applies no less to developmental English courses. It applies especially to Verbal Studies Laboratory, the course that preceded English 07 at Virginia Western Community College. The result of an exhaustive review of relevant research, Clowes's assessment is both noteworthy and sobering, for it reflects the halting progress that has been made in the definition and development of effective remedial programs. Indeed, the qualifications inherent in Clowes's statement of purpose--to "identify lines of inquiry which have proven *barren*, some which have advanced our understanding in *modest* ways, and several lines of inquiry that hold *promise*" (460, my italics)--betray the essential state of remediation in the '90s; for it is a field that "has been hampered by a lack of serious attention from higher education scholars" (486). As a result, remedial education is defined not by

expansive theories but by discrete questions ("lines of inquiry"), by "modest" advancements in understanding, and by "promis[ing]" hypotheses which are as yet inconclusive.

That such a statement should have been made in 1992 is remarkable in itself, because John Roueche had voiced similar concerns in 1968. In Salvage, Redirection, or Custody?: Remedial Education in the Community Junior College, Roueche lamented the difficulties that community colleges faced in the early '60s--difficulties that conspired to limit the effectiveness of remedial English programs as well. Unbridled growth; diverse students with various needs; poorly planned programs and curricula; a dearth of research about low-achieving students; and higher admissions standards at four-year colleges, resulting in an influx of less-qualified students--all of these factors hindered community colleges' efforts to address the needs of at-risk students. Exacerbating these problems were other complications related to the faculty who taught (or did not teach) in developmental programs. The vast majority, Roueche observed, tended to be novice teachers who had little or no training in working with nontraditional students. Because of limitations like these, Roueche ultimately pronounced that "the large majority of students who enroll in remedial courses fail to complete those courses satisfactorily and are doomed to failure or forced to terminate their education" (3).

The statistics supported Roueche's judgment. In some cases, attrition rates in remedial programs approached 75 per cent during students' first year of enrollment (2); 40 to 60 per cent of the students who enrolled in developmental English courses in California's community colleges earned a D or an F (13); and in one typical college, only 20 per cent of the students originally placed in remedial English courses eventually enrolled in college-level classes (3). As these data suggest, the shortcomings of developmental courses were rapidly becoming clear. Success rates among remedial students were dismal, and the voices of dissatisfaction, muted during the hopeful years of the community college revolution, were becoming shrill. For many students, the "open door" had become a "revolving door."

Underlying this obvious failure were a number of complex problems, many of which remained latent for years. That some of these problems are being identified only now remains one of the legacies of the earliest research about remedial programs. To be sure, as Clowes has noted, the early years of remedial education were tempered by "few agreed-upon principles or practices upon which to fall back"; consequently, "institutions developed programs in isolation and with very little information about how other institutions coped" (465). Almost by necessity, then, the first investigations of remedial education were descriptive in nature, their

recommendations based not so much upon a proven pedagogy as a realization that traditional methods of instruction were ineffective for nontraditional students. Epitomizing this early survey research was Roueche and Kirk's Catching Up: Remedial Education, a study which sought to identify the characteristics that distinguished "successful" from "unsuccessful" remedial programs. While such research was necessary and laudable, however, it failed to follow rigorous experimental design, failed to exploit statistical tests of significance, failed even to establish clearly defined criteria for determining just what a "successful" program was. As a result, it failed significantly "to advance our understanding of [remedial] programs and their effects" (Clowes 487). The solutions to the problems of remedial education remained primarily a matter of speculation, the product of scant data and few systematic investigations.

Amid this uncertainty, according to Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear, "all major first generation [sic] theorists [became] concerned with devising curricular structures and instructional processes appropriate to the extremely diverse group of nontraditional students who had experienced only limited academic success" (22). Theorists' narrow definition of the problem, however--as the exclusive domain of "individual cognitive psychology" (23)--and their single-minded attraction to novel vehicles of instruction translated

into an equally narrow range of recommended reforms. Moreover, in their obsessive zeal to accommodate students' immediate needs, educators neglected to incorporate discipline-specific research into their conceptualization of developmental studies; they instead applied the same principles to obviously different types of coursework. Learning to read was thus implicitly equated with learning to solve mathematics problems, and the methods effective in teaching algebra were likewise assumed to be the strategies appropriate for teaching English.

The times were desperate: faced with a crisis, lacking a clear identity, and confounded by little reliable research, community colleges found themselves unusually vulnerable to radical proposals that offered hope for revolutionary change. In the collision of all these influences and ideologies, the unconventional became conventional, and dissent dissolved into conformity as individualized instruction, self-paced learning packages, audio-visual support programs, and self-contained developmental studies departments were hailed as universal remedies to the ills of remedial education. As Clowes has observed, the behaviorist tradition at least provided community colleges--and developmental English programs, in particular--with "systematic instructional designs" (475) that could render order from the seemingly random and reactive

techniques that characterized the earliest efforts at remediation.

The ordination of educational technology as minister and savior of remedial education offered initial hope that theorists had found a solution to the fantastic array of problems posed by nontraditional students. In English courses, however, the pervasive adoption of this supposed solution merely masked the deeper problem of devising curricula appropriate for teaching developmental reading and writing, activities which, by their very nature, defy the linear formulae inherent in mastery learning. In that regard, the widespread influence of educational technology, especially in the form of individualized and programmed instruction, is partly to blame for what Clowes decries as a "gradual 'dumbing down' of the curriculum" (483) and what McGrath and Spear identify as "the steady erosion of intellectual life in the open-access college" (11). Shor likewise condemns the effects of educational technology, associating its purveyors--"rote learning and skills drills" (18)--with the "zero paradigm," a destructive tendency that pervades many developmental studies programs:

The zero paradigm is the deficit-model dominant in education. It defines students as deficits to be filled with skills, words, and facts, ignoring the culture they bring to class. . . . Such an approach is the dullest way to teach and learn. . . . When packages of subject matter or lists of facts are

delivered to students, little more than memorizing is expected of them. Because knowledge comes at them in a one-way discourse, they have little need to interact with the teacher, with each other, or with the material. This passive process is so alienating that intellectual life becomes associated with boredom and imposition. (200-201)

Often dull and boring in themselves, as Shor acknowledges, the "pale remedial practices" (McGrath and Spear 37) that define the "zero paradigm" are detrimental not only because they distort the use of language, chiseling it into discrete, arhetorical fragments; they also misrepresent the essential nature of the teaching-learning transaction as it occurs in other college classes. Put simply, the mechanical exercises that dominate remedial courses founded upon the skills approach bear little resemblance to the more sophisticated activities of traditional classrooms. Furthermore, the exclusive use of educational technology and individualized instruction isolates students from one another, denying that literacy is a social construction and denying students themselves the opportunity to establish a new sense of community with their peers. In many cases, this isolation is lethal, since "students who never fully incorporate into the new community typically fail or drop out" (McGrath and Spear 29).

Instead of functioning as a point of entry into traditional college-level studies, then, English courses which

rely upon the skills approach merely prolong the impotent pedagogy that students likely endured in high school. And instead of orienting students to the practices and regimens of the academy, these courses seduce students into a mistaken and misleading conception of the educational enterprise. Ultimately, instead of serving as a bridge or a doorway, helping nontraditional students make the transition to traditional coursework, such classes strengthen the wall that separates them from their goal of educational success:

For [traditional students in academic programs] reading and writing is [sic] not a matter of mastering semantic, syntactic, and orthographic correctness, as in remedial programs. . . . For traditional students, academic reading and writing is [sic] part of a style of life that is rich and meaningful beyond the classroom. Similarly, in community-based literacy programs students' progress with language and thought is usually firmly anchored in what are real world problems, dilemmas, and possibilities.

Not so for remedial or developmental students. For them language and thought are rules to be mastered, so divorced from any meaningful use that one of the great concerns among their teachers is how to find or create appropriate adult materials at grade school levels. Semesters, possibly years, of what has to seem to be drudgery will precede any useful and significant outcomes for them. If traditional students had to engage in countless, essentially pointless exercises before their real engagement with academics could begin, their retention rates might begin to approximate those of remedial students and far fewer bachelor's degrees would be awarded. (McGrath and Spear 54-55)

Richard Richardson, Elizabeth Fisk, and Morris Okun chronicle this systematic deterioration of quality in Literacy in the Open-Access College. The authors spent three years examining literate practices at an open-door community college (identified in the text by the pseudonym of Oakwood), eventually concluding that literacy standards at this institution were characterized by a "leveling-down" process, not by the "leveling-up" process that community colleges in general and developmental English programs in particular are designed to accomplish. Literate standards at Oakwood thus reflected only faintly those traditionally associated with a college education. Although their study focused on virtually every type of educational program at Oakwood, Richardson, Fisk, and Okun's conclusions bear an especial relation to the effectiveness of developmental English courses, which were among the fundamental perpetrators of a pedagogy that Clowes has associated with "skills training" (467) and "academic skill building" (470)--approaches that still dominate many community-college reading and writing programs.

Richardson, Fisk, and Okun's analysis is predicated upon their conception of "critical literacy," the polar opposite of the discrete abilities that emerge from "skills training." The product of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation, "critical literacy" is distinguished by two criteria: first, it is "associated with well-articulated educational goals"; and,

second, it "involve[s] high levels of independent thinking" (5). Against this measure, the authors discovered that most of the literate activities at Oakwood were fragmented and partial and incoherent. They dub this superficial use of language "bitting"--"the use of reading or writing to understand or produce fragmented language when presented with specific external cues" (65). Reading and copying from the blackboard, taking notes during lectures, responding to multiple-choice items, and skimming textbooks for information: these activities represented the typical ways in which Oakwood students used written language in the classroom. Notably missing was the kind of critical literacy that Richardson, Fisk, and Okun advocate as the foundation of a liberal education and of life-long learning. This type of literacy, which they call "texting," "involves the use of reading and writing to comprehend or compose connected language without the assistance of specific cues" (65). Examples might include reading a textbook for genuine understanding or writing an essay on a controversial subject.

Even more specifically, Richardson, Fisk, and Okun determined that instructional practices at Oakwood resulted in a use of language which conflicted with the literate demands traditionally associated with collegiate study--a finding that again functions as an indictment of the way in which reading and writing are taught in many developmental English courses.

Because usage was confined to isolated tasks, "the reading and writing that occurred were not of a type that could be used to communicate information by itself" (69). In addition, "reading and writing almost never stood alone" (70): they were almost always practiced during class time. In other words, students saw little inherent value in these activities, reading and writing only when they were forced to respond to specific assignments (and even then, trying to read and write as little as they could). Finally, the writing the authors observed was distinguished by its "disconnected form," much of what students read and most of what they wrote assuming the form of "discrete words and phrases" (70). Because of all these factors, Richardson, Fisk, and Okun concluded that the "information communicated through written language remained as bits of isolated fact" (71):

[Information] was not integrated or analyzed to achieve more holistic meaning. The college students we observed did not read textbooks to grasp both major themes and supportive detail, nor did they listen actively and critically to lectures and record comprehensive notes. Oakwood students were not required to synthesize, analyze, or evaluate information from texts and lectures. Instead, they learned discrete pieces of information in order to recognize or reproduce them intact on objective exams. . . . In many classrooms, written language was in danger of becoming merely procedural, losing its true communicative function. (71)

The pattern ensuing from this bias against "texting" was circular and hopeless. Because students were ill prepared to complete more sophisticated literate tasks, faculty responded by diluting course requirements instead of encouraging students to improve their abilities. Instructors required fewer and fewer reading and writing assignments, selected texts with lower reading levels, and resorted more and more to the use of standardized multiple-choice tests.

The pattern resulting from these compromises was predictable, too. Because teachers presumed that students could not handle research papers, they eliminated the assignment. The consequence: students failed to learn how to employ research in their writing. And because teachers assumed that students were incapable of synthesizing information, they avoided assignments that required critical reading and writing. The result: students did not learn how to think creatively and synthetically. Indeed, because instructors found themselves dismayed by the paucity of meaningful class participation--the product, they thought, of students' lack of motivation and knowledge--they resorted more and more to lectures. The effect in this case: students asked few questions, motivation deteriorated, and learning suffered. Paradoxically, then, the coping mechanisms that faculty employed to accommodate their students' limitations only intensified the problem, for their concessions denied students

the very instruction that would have fostered their literate development. As Richardson, Fisk, and Okun state, "instructors at Oakwood contributed more to the problem of literacy than to its solutions" (88).

The "bitting" that characterized the general education curriculum at Oakwood was no less pervasive--was, in fact, magnified--in developmental reading and writing courses, which were populated by students with even lower abilities and which relied heavily upon programmed instruction. The courses at Oakwood thus emerge as a tableau of many developmental studies programs, not just during the early '80s when this research was conducted but today as well. Richardson, Fisk, and Okun's study therefore corroborates much of the more recent research in reading and writing pedagogy. It suggests, for instance, that the exclusive use of the skills approach--an approach which is the essence of programmed instruction--is more of a liability than a benefit, for it encourages "bitting" and precludes "texting," or "critical literacy."

Indeed, if one adopts the thesis of this study--that "many current instructional practices in open-access colleges result in a leveling down" (Richardson, Fisk, and Okun 42)--the skills and workbook approaches to teaching reading and writing become primary culprits in students' diminished abilities to use language meaningfully. Not even neutral but truly harmful, these instructional methods promote the belief

that literacy is the product of isolated and discrete tasks. This methodology may well provide students with experience in practicing various superficial components of the reading or writing process (although many theorists would argue even that), but it denies students the experience of reading and writing as holistic processes that effect genuine understanding and meaningful communication. As a result, such an approach fails to provide students with the critical literacy that is essential for more sophisticated coursework and fruitful years of life-long learning. The inadequacy of this approach to developmental education is being exposed more and more often now that researchers have turned their attention to the issue which comprises the second step of Clowes's evaluation model: "the transition from the remedial to the mainstream curriculum" (481).

These admonitions notwithstanding, it was just this type of approach that defined Virginia Western's English 01, Verbal Studies Laboratory, a course which, at once, both reflected and foreshadowed the spiral of decline that McGrath and Spear, Richardson, Fisk, and Okun would later condemn. Relying primarily upon programmed instruction, English 01 professed to improve students' skills in grammar and composition--ultimately, to prepare them for entrance into the college-level English courses required in their respective curricula. To help students realize that goal, the course was divided

into two components: grammar and writing. The grammar segment required students to complete twelve units of programmed instruction in English 3200, a textbook that dealt exclusively with sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. At the completion of each unit, students had to pass a test to demonstrate their "mastery" of the chapter's principles. Students could fulfill the requirements of the writing component of the course by completing ten paragraphs, which were to be free of major and minor mechanical errors. Students who were able to accomplish all these objectives were permitted to enroll in a college-level English class; all others were forced to re-enroll in English 01 for another quarter.

Particularly because it was founded upon the principles of individualized instruction, it seems as if English 01 should have been effective in helping basic writers improve their skills. Just the type of course that Roueche had advocated, it heralded the panacea of the '70s and '80s: "the nuanced, individualized application of educational technology" (McGrath and Spear 23). At Virginia Western, however, the evidence suggested that the class was not as successful in reality as it should have been in theory. During 1982-83, for example, only 21.5 per cent of the students who enrolled in English 01 passed the course--a statistic only slightly lower than the 22.3 per cent who completed the class during 1983-84.

Rates of attrition were dismal as well. Nineteen per cent of the students who were required to re-enroll in English 01 after fall 1981 elected not to return to school in winter 1982; incredibly, almost as many students dropped out between fall and winter as completed the program during the entire 1981-82 academic year. The data therefore revealed a consistent pattern of failure--not just among students but, far more importantly, in the course that was supposed to serve them.

The reasons for the failure of English 01 are now much clearer than they were during those early years when researchers were struggling to construct a coherent theory of developmental education. First, the course's very format promoted misconceptions about the way writers write. The course's emphasis upon writing as a product, coupled with its obsessive preoccupation for grammatical correctness, denied students a working knowledge of writing as a process and distorted their perceptions about the nature of effective composition. Indeed, Shaughnessy has observed that basic writers "do not know how writers behave" (Errors 79), and Elaine Lees has stated that they mistakenly believe that "'good writers' . . . produce 'good writing' from the very beginning and simply have to 'polish' it later" (145). These misconceptions almost inevitably lead to further problems; for basic writers, uncertain of how to develop their thoughts,

reach closure quickly, moving from one idea to another without elaborating on any. Too, since they typically do not engage in meaningful prewriting activities, they often resort to platitudes and personal reverie as substitutes for original thinking. For all of these reasons, the writing of developmental students is characterized by "sentences of thought" instead of "patterns of thought" (Shaughnessy, Errors 227); "rather than being the development of an idea, [it] is the record of an idea developing" (234).

Because it neglected to address concerns like these, English 01 failed to help students develop an active knowledge of the writing process. In fact, relatively few students ever got around to the process of writing, so preoccupied were they with the grammatical component of the course. John Rouse has noted that "teaching grammar as a method of teaching writing has no support whatever in research" (3). And Sarah D'Eloia adds that "whenever it has been seriously researched, the analytical study of grammar has failed to produce significant results in student writing--whether the result was improvement in control of errors, increased sentence length, or increased variety of sentence structure" (225). Yet in its format and emphasis, English 01 stressed the primacy of correct usage and mechanics from the first days of class. It was even possible for students to complete the grammatical segment of the course

before they began the writing component, and most did just that, always with an eye toward avoiding error.

This emphasis upon correctness--a "very restricted model of the composing process," according to Rose ("Remedial" 109)--preyed upon students' insecurities, blinding them to the fundamental truth that "error marks the place where education begins" (Lives 189). The equation of effectiveness with correctness and of writing with grammar also blurred a critical distinction between "open" and "closed" capacities. By its very nature, grammar is a closed capacity that can be mastered. Like the solution to a mathematical problem, the correct answer to a grammatical exercise is inexorable, predetermined from the moment the question is framed. Writing, on the other hand, is an open capacity: an ongoing process which is always unfolding, always creating an open vista of innumerable possibilities. "Teaching an open capacity [like writing] as if it were a closed capacity [like grammar] can be profoundly counterproductive" (4), notes David Foster; for it misrepresents the nature of the writing process and confuses students about productive avenues for learning to write correctly and effectively. Not only do students mistakenly believe that "correct" is "effective"; they may also erroneously assume that one can learn to write in the same way that one learns to cipher grammatical exercises. Process is thus distilled into product and the recursive

activity of writing reduced to the linear progression of grammar. Because they were victims of this flawed pedagogy, students in English 01 naturally came to view writing and mechanics as similar skills with disparate ends--a distortion that the course reinforced in its own consideration of the two.

The nature of English 3200, the primary text in the course, compounded this problem, further distorting students' understanding of the writing process by substituting a sterile knowledge of grammatical terminology for practice at composition. A question on one mastery test, for instance, asked students to indicate, true or false, whether "some sentences have neither direct objects nor subject complements" (Blumenthal 5). Another question asked whether "changing a prepositional phrase to an adjective clause is an example of reduction" (57). A multiple choice question asked students to identify the phrase that best completes the following question: "Compared with adjectives, adverbs are more (a) movable, (b) specific, (c) emphatic" (29). And still another question, again representative of the text's approach, required students to complete the following sentence: "the number of different classes of words an adverb can modify is (a) three, (b) one, (c) two" (33). Other exercises asked students to identify types of phrases and clauses and to correct flawed sentences.

Heavy on terminology and immaterial in content, English 3200 did little or nothing to help students improve their writing. Furthermore, in its assumption that students needed to begin their study of writing from the very beginning--by learning the parts of speech--it denied that students come to a classroom having already mastered a wide array of complex literate tasks. Moore had lamented this contradiction as early as 1976, noting that adult students "resent the subject matter of most . . . English programmed books" and "resent the primary school method of presentation of the material in the books" (Community College 25). More recently, Berthoff has identified this tendency as one of the most destructive of the maxims that turn teachers into taskmasters: "Begin with where they are--as dummies, incapable of understanding anything that isn't factored and reduced to manageable bits" (9). Far better, she advises, to "begin with where they are as language animals, endowed with the form-finding and form-creating powers of mind and language" (9). English 3200 ignored this truth, for it treated English as if it were mathematics and students as if they were literate novitiates: as first-time language-users, they would need to memorize the most complicated of theorems before they could solve the simplest of equations.

By its very approach, English 3200 thus perpetuated the myth that "writing is a skill that . . . can be factored into

subskills" (Berthoff 25). Moreover, in its insistence that students learn to label the language--not necessarily use it--English 3200 reinforced the belief that English is a privileged body of knowledge, somehow alien to the language they used daily, before and after class. For that reason, the text itself may have prevented students from completing the course. Already fearful of writing, they might easily have been overwhelmed by the sheer complexity and mystery of such grammatical theory. Commenting upon this possible consequence, Harvey Wiener advises that "starting the term off with parts of speech, followed by drill aimed at error is wrong for many reasons but especially because it is a miscue. It says that the first order of business in learning how to write is building a command over systems for describing and using language instead of building a command over language itself" (94). Foster substantiates that claim, identifying as well the fundamental problem with the mechanical approach that typified English 01:

An emphasis upon sentence-making and punctuation forces basic writers to function almost entirely with discrete, a-rhetorical writing tasks. . . . Yet especially for unskilled writers, language is not a set of pieces they are anxious to assemble more effectively. It's an open process of meaning-making, significant to them only as it has relevance to their struggle to communicate. (111-112)

A final limitation of English 01 lurked in what appeared to be its primary strength, for its reliance upon individualized instruction isolated students, preventing them from developing a collective identity in the classroom. Its basic approach therefore required at-risk students, some of whom had never been motivated before, suddenly to motivate themselves to complete coursework that was at best peripheral and at worst irrelevant. The format of the course thus opposed research which suggests that literacy is a social construction (Gundlach, Farr, and Cook-Gumperz 101) and that basic writers are "field-dependent" learners who need external motivation and who suffer from a lack of autonomy (Lunsford, "Content" 284). Equally important, the structure of the class encouraged students to become passive learners who depended upon the teacher (or the text) for correct answers. Teachers, on the other hand, became mere "checkers"--or "gatekeepers," to use Bartholomae's term ("Study" 255)--rather than facilitators or partners who were themselves active participants in the learning process. Perhaps worst of all, the course divorced writing (if students did eventually write) from reading and speaking and listening. Consequently, it failed to capitalize upon the advantages made clear by the whole-language approach to language instruction. The artificial environment of English 01--utterly unlike any other that students would encounter in college or in the real

world--rendered writing meaningless, casting it as the object of stifling examination rather than as a medium of purposeful communication.

Due to factors like these, English 01 proved unsuccessful in helping the majority of students learn to write more effectively. Indeed, Rose could just as easily have been summarizing the reasons for the failure of this course when he wrote the following critique of developmental English programs in general:

The curriculum in Developmental English breeds a deep social and intellectual isolation from print; it fosters attitudes and beliefs about written language that, more than anything else, keep students from becoming fully, richly literate. The curriculum teaches students that when it comes to written language use, they are children: they can only perform the most constrained and ordered of tasks, and they must do so under the regimented guidance of a teacher. It teaches them that the most important thing about writing--the very essence of writing--is grammatical correctness, not the communication of something meaningful, or the generative struggle with ideas . . . not even word play. It's a curriculum that rarely raises students' heads from the workbook page to consider the many uses of written language that surround them in their schools, jobs, and neighborhoods. Finally, by its tedium, the curriculum teaches them that writing is a crushing bore. These students traverse course after remedial course, becoming increasingly turned off to writing, increasingly convinced that they are hopelessly inadequate. (Lives 211)

Just such a course, English 01 provided students with a knowledge of gerunds, participial phrases, and adverb clauses--the rhetorical equivalent of a jigsaw puzzle--but it discouraged them from putting those pieces together to form a meaningful picture with depth and definition. A student who had spent an entire semester with those pieces, turning them in her fingers until she knew their shapes by heart, could certainly identify them again at test time, and many students did score well on the tests that accompanied English 3200. But such a student would have little idea of the ultimate purpose of those pieces--mere fragments, to her--since she would never have seen them in a meaningful context. To her, those "bits" and pieces would not even be what they actually are, for she would know them as writing. She would never understand that writing is synthesis and composition, "an instrument, a means of seeing and articulating relationships" (Berthoff 25).

The perpetrator of "bitting," English 01, along with other courses like it, thus emerged as a primary cause of "the academic crisis of the community college" (McGrath and Spear). Recognizing some of these shortcomings, faculty at Virginia Western would revise English 01 during the late '80s--a counseling component was added (only to be later abandoned), and students were introduced to word-processing--but the most important change, a fundamental change in pedagogical

approach, was yet to occur: the integration of instruction in reading and writing.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORETICAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN READING AND WRITING: IMPLICATIONS FOR A NEW PEDAGOGY

In "Reflective Thought: The Connection Between Reading and Writing," June Birnbaum poses a provocative question, one that most reading and writing teachers have probably asked of themselves: "Why are students who are better writers than their peers also usually better readers, and vice versa" (30)? The question itself implies a relationship between reading and writing, lending credence to the idea that reading and writing should be taught together. Other theorists, such as David Bartholomae, Anthony Petrosky, and Louise Rosenblatt, have asserted a similar connection, insisting that both reading and writing are interactive processes of composition. In the view of these researchers, reading and writing are essentially acts of understanding and composing--processes that are, in the end, one and the same. Because of this connection, Nancy Comley contends that "the best and fastest way to change bad reading habits is to introduce writing into the reading process" (193), Andrea Lunsford suggests that "the teacher of writing must automatically and always be a teacher of reading as well" ("What" 49), and David Bartholomae proclaims that "a reading course is necessarily a writing course and a writing course must be a course in reading" ("Reading" 116).

At Virginia Western and at most community colleges, however, reading and writing are still taught as if they were independent activities. Rarely do writing teachers discuss with their students the process of reading; nor do reading teachers explore with their students the process of writing. Students in developmental writing classes inevitably read, to be sure--they at least read sample essays and their own papers. But reading is relegated to the corners of the course; it is an invisible activity, something that is done but never acknowledged. Students in reading classes invariably write as well--they at least write answers to the exercises in their workbooks. But the extent of their writing is usually a discrete sentence to respond to a question, a phrase to fill in the blank, or a letter to identify the correct answer to a multiple-choice item. Seldom are they asked to compose extended responses to the already-written texts that remain primary in the course. The most dramatic change that occurred as English 01 evolved into English 07 was the integration of instruction in both reading and writing. More than merely a reading class combined with a writing class, English 07 is designed as a curricular alloy in which reading and writing are melded into complementary activities, both dependent upon the other, neither one possible without the other.

At the heart of this conception of literacy is the belief that reading and writing are transactional processes that enable a person to create meaning and understanding. Both, according to Bartholomae and Petrosky, are essentially rhetorical, demanding active involvement and individual interpretation; both thus emerge as primary forms of composition. Indeed, although teachers typically (and unthinkingly) equate writing with composition, they rarely associate reading with composition. Yet to Bartholomae and Petrosky, Rosenblatt and Berthoff, Flower and Meyer, reading is writing, and writing is reading, for they are coincident processes of making meaning. Bartholomae and Petrosky, for example, dismiss at once the notion that reading is a matter of decoding a "thing residing fixed in the text" (Facts 11). They argue instead that readers compose their own understanding of a text in much the same way that writers compose an essay: by recognizing or establishing purpose, by inferring or creating plans, by determining or asserting relationships among ideas, and by discovering or developing hierarchical patterns of information. Likewise, Paulo Friere contends that "reading is re-writing what we are reading" (Shor and Friere 10), and Robert Small insists that readers "write" their own texts in a creative process akin to that which writers themselves use:

As the author does in the first creation, we, if we are active readers in

the new creation, bring the richness of our lives to the act of creating the novel or poem or story. We bring all we've done, said, suffered, or celebrated. Our parents are there, our childhood friends, the people we work with, our enemies. We pour into this creative act our politics, our religion, our tastes in plays, people, cars, houses, dogs, cats, cakes, and pies. We strike each cue the author has given us, ring it into life, blend it into melody, and go on to the next cue, the next character, the next event, the next place.

Without our steady advance of creation, there is no novel, no play, no story, not for us in our reading. (4)

Whether they are derived from reading or writing, then, "the world that we know and the texts that we know are compositions that we write, languages about languages, stories we write based on stories we recall. . ." (Bartholomae and Petrosky 15). Put another way, readers must be able to recast the writer's language into their own language as they make a text their own, just as writers must find the language that will connect their stories with the stories of their readers. In either case, reading and writing emerge as coincident processes that construct meaning--as tensive members of a dialectic whose lively interaction creates significance and understanding. Ultimately, writes Petrosky, "Reading . . . and composing [are] similar processes sharing both the dependence on people's models of reality (or, schemata) and the essential 'putting together' as the act of constructing meaning from words, text, prior knowledge, and feelings" (22).

Adds Flower, texts are a "complex web of meaning which writers build and which readers in their own, independently constructive way infer" ("Construction" 549).

This equation between reading and writing--as complex processes that prompt meaning with and from words--holds enormous implications for any pedagogy that strives to be comprehensive and purposeful. At the very least, it provides a unifying theme for any developmental English course, for it asserts that whether students are reading or writing, they are engaged in the process of establishing personal relevance. The connections between reading and writing provide a framework for a more consistent approach to helping students develop their literate abilities as well. If reading and writing are, at once and indeed, processes of comprehension and composition, then there must be other underlying similarities that teachers can exploit to demonstrate a meaningful correspondence between the two. Loosely speaking, these similarities can be seen in the recursive activities that comprise both the reading and writing processes. Previewing finds its theoretical and practical counterpart in prewriting; reading, in writing; and reviewing, in revising.

The similarities between reading and writing extend more deeply than the general relationship between those various (and, admittedly, artificially defined) steps, too. During

the prewriting phase of the writing process, for instance, a writer must explore his knowledge of his topic--comprehend the depth of his knowledge about it--as he attempts to discover what he wants to write. In much the same way, a reader must explore her prior knowledge of a subject--compose an understanding of what she already knows--if she is to grasp the fullest possible meaning of a text. Once again implicit in both of these processes is the pervasive theme of "connection": both readers and writers must activate appropriate schemata if they are to participate meaningfully in the communication process, or, as some theorists would say, if there is to be a "transaction" between reader and writer. Thus, one can no more separate reading from writing than he can isolate listening from speaking. By consistently exploring connections like these--correspondences which link the surface structure and the deep structure of reading and writing--teachers can demystify the processes inherent in both and make them more accessible to purposeful practice. I also believe that research will eventually prove that as students systematically practice these correspondences by reading and writing, their understanding of the one contributing to a working knowledge of the other, they will improve as readers and as writers. Mariolina Salvatori suggests as much when she contends that "the activity of reading seems to subsume the

activity of writing to a greater extent than most composition pedagogy presumes" (666).

Other practical benefits that emerge from teaching reading and writing together relate to the generative influence that each can have upon the other, especially for developmental students. Yet another effect stemming from the parallels between reading and writing, these benefits range from a more comprehensive knowledge of text structure to the cultivation of more elaborate schemata which enrich comprehension and composition. Barbey Dougherty, for instance, advocates acquainting both readers and writers with rhetorical plans. Like Flower, who advocates "rhetorical reading" ("Construction" 540), and Meyer, who stresses the significance of text structure (38), Dougherty argues that various purposes--informing, classifying, or exploring--necessarily entail various patterns of development. Acknowledging, like the others, that reading and writing are acts of composing, she maintains that "we can help students write better and read more effectively if we give them specific strategies for building texts, making sure they are familiar with the conventional patterns of text building" (95). And in a statement that relates directly to developmental students, Dougherty adds, "students not ready for introductory composition are frequently identified by their inability to use conventional rhetorical patterns" (95).

Since studies have shown that readers who can identify and exploit the plans inherent in a text better understand its content (Vacca, Vacca, and Gove 142), Dougherty's statement represents a mandate for teachers to explore those plans with their students.

Prose models therefore emerge as powerful schemata for various text structures, promoting reading comprehension. If they are taught in the context of meaningful assignments, these rhetorical modes can also foster fluency and clarity in composition. For when methods of development are viewed as patterns of thought, they can help students give form to their thinking--an expedient of "considerable value [especially] in the beginning stages of learning to write" (D'Angelo 29). Moreover, when these modes are approached as means instead of ends, as adaptable instead of rigid, they can alert students to the possibilities of language and stimulate them to experiment with form as they modify the models to serve their own unique purposes. As an echo of Rose's insistence that developmental writers learn the forms of discourse specific to academic writing, Dougherty's perspective on rhetorical patterns provides further reason to teach reading and writing together, a study of the two processes reinforcing a goal common to both.

In addition, since "reading words" is a means of "reading the world" (Shor and Friere 183), teaching reading with

writing can help students develop more elaborate schemata about the world itself. Like an awareness of text structure, these schemata provide students with a network of knowledge which aids both comprehension and composition. Especially in this regard, though, developmental students often find themselves at a distinct disadvantage. Because they have typically not read extensively, they often lack the prior knowledge that is crucial for constructing meaning from a text. Indeed, since prior knowledge is sometimes more influential than the readability of the text in fostering comprehension, remedial students' underdeveloped schemata of the world sometimes translate into a crippling liability. The effects are equally apparent in their writing, assuming the form of shallow, relatively unsophisticated prose.

When students consistently read and write in their English classes, however, their reading invigorates their writing, and their writing animates their reading. The consequence of these complementary processes of discovery is a deeper, broader knowledge that enlivens the act of composing for students as both readers and writers. Reading and writing thus emerge as the type of generative combination that Burton Hatlen associates with a dialectical rhetoric--as "a rhetoric [or via media] which will see the relationship between the antecedent form and the individual act of creation as truly dialectical, a breathing in of one or more exemplary texts,

and a breathing out of something new, remade" (79). Betraying a similar conviction, and serving as a further testimonial to the exponential power of teaching reading with writing, Donald Murray states eloquently, "Behind paragraphs I have read stand hundreds of other paragraphs waiting to be read before they are written" ("Reading" 244).

When reading is taught with writing in a thematic context, the potential for a generative rhetoric is even greater, for students can develop a more realistic sense of audience which shapes their views of their subject and of themselves as writers and readers. Deborah Brandt endorses just this type of approach when she observes that all writing in a given class (like writing in general) is influenced by context. If writing is to be genuine, not artificial, and if it is to be purposeful, not incidental, it must stem from a meaningful context that is shared by members of the writer's audience. Readings and discussions that revolve around common themes create that context for writers, enabling them to draw upon an enriched body of knowledge as they compose their papers. And when their writings later become readings, students' familiarity with the themes that have been explored in class allows them to respond to content as well as form. Never in a class like this do students read and write in a vacuum--a circumstance that leads to vacuous writing and meaningless reading. On the contrary, a text becomes an

opportunity for meanings that are negotiated by groups through discussion and by individuals through writing. For this reason, Brandt believes that "ideally a writing class should undertake common pursuits, form social relationships, establish channels of communication, agree upon terms, develop a common history--create, in other words, a public context through which to make known private experience" (122).

Brandt's implied thesis that writers define their tasks in terms of their audiences--that they, in fact, define themselves as writers based on their conceptions of their readers--is amplified by Richard Beach and JoAnne Liebman-Kleine in "The Writing/Reading Relationship: Becoming One's Own Best Reader." Beach and Liebman-Kleine contend that many writers (and one might add, especially developmental writers) are handicapped by their inability to envision members of their audience. Ignorant of their readers' characteristics, they find it difficult to adopt their audience's perspectives, a limitation that leaves them writing, as it were, in another kind of vacuum: a rhetorical vacuum. Nor is a teacher's cliched rejoinder to "consider the needs of your audience" enough. "Simply thinking about the reader," claim the authors, "doesn't help students apply what they infer about their readers in order to assess and revise their writing. In addition to thinking about readers, [writers] need to think as readers" (64). As Bartholomae and Petrosky state, they must

"invent" themselves as readers (8)--a goal they can best accomplish, of course, when they are engaged in the practice of reading. More justification for teaching reading and writing together, Beach and Liebman-Kleine's argument complements Brandt's belief that writers should be readers and readers should be writers, all working in the same community and struggling to define the same themes, for themselves and for the members of their audience.

In "Writing Based on Reading," Marilyn Sternglass pushes this perspective even further. Again invoking the implicit belief that writers define themselves in terms of their audience, Sternglass explains that writing sometimes fails because writers either underestimate or overestimate their readers' prior knowledge of a subject. If a writer underestimates the reader's knowledge, he will provide much more information and far more detail than the reader needs or wants. The consequence is predictability, boredom, and a lack of dynamic engagement with the text. On the other hand, if a writer overestimates the reader's familiarity with his topic, he will omit information that may be critical to the reader's understanding. The effect in this case is unpredictability, frustration, and a lack of meaningful engagement with the text (153-56). It is even possible that some of the common errors that teachers mark thoughtlessly--ambiguous pronoun reference and lack of clear transitions, for example--stem not from

carelessness or ignorance but from a student's inability to write as a reader, from his overestimation of his audience's ability to make the connections that seem so apparent to him.

To help students gauge the needs of their audience more accurately, Sternglass advocates that teachers design "tasks . . . requiring the student to draw on outside reading materials" but which allow "each writer to formulate a unique contribution" (159). If all students have read similar materials, then the writer will be better able to judge his audience's knowledge; he will be less likely to provide too little or too much information. Yet he will also have a chance to respond in novel ways to his subject, to recast it in relation to his own experience so that he will be providing his readers with fresh points of view and establishing his right to speak as an authority on his topic. "From this unique perspective," Sternglass concludes, "the writer has an opportunity to introduce something original to the reader even if the reader is already familiar with the sources" (159). Thus, when students use readings as a stimulus for their writing, they are able to combine the information in texts with their experiences to create their own personally meaningful texts. At the same time, writing becomes a means of "composing" or "comprehending" the texts they have read. In the convergences between reading and writing, speaking and

listening, writer and audience, prior knowledge and constructed knowledge are born discovery and insight.

As I have suggested, then, a class that combines vigorous discussion with a transactional approach to reading and writing should benefit students in a number of important ways: students will be alerted to the similarities between reading and writing, in concept as well as in practice; they should develop a better understanding of text features and patterns of development as they practice in writing what they encounter in reading; and they should be able to exploit the storehouse of ideas in thematically related reading materials to help them compose their own texts--texts which stem from a common ground of experience and which therefore expect neither too much nor too little of their readers. Finally, because students will be reading as they are writing, they should be better able to read with a writer's eye and to write with a reader's eye. When a teacher facilitates this type of "how-to" understanding among his students, when he awakens them to the many parallels and intersections between reading and writing, he has provided them with the most potent knowledge of all: a dynamic knowledge of language which is based upon self-confidence, which transcends situation, and which invigorates itself because it thrives on exploration and discovery.

* * *

The theoretical connections between reading and writing suggest the need for other fundamental revisions in reading-and-writing pedagogy, too--revisions that are perhaps more abstract but certainly no less important. One of the most prominent of these revisions focuses upon the issue of control, both in the text and in the classroom, and upon the limits of certainty, both in reading and in writing. Ultimately, it strikes at an essential question related to the development of literate abilities: are reading and writing the products of discrete skills which can be taught until they are mastered--what Foster has termed "closed capacities"--or are they "open capacities"--processes which students must continuously learn and which they can never fully master?

These issues are especially important for developmental readers and writers, who, more than most, typically see themselves as lacking control and view certainty as a sanctuary from the disgrace of error and the torment of ambiguity. Indeed, as Berthoff states in The Making of Meaning, for many developmental English teachers, "the most difficult aspect of teaching writing as a process and of considering it the result of something that is nurtured and brought along, not mechanically produced, is that our students do not like uncertainty (who does?); they find it hard to tolerate ambiguity and are tempted to what psychologists call 'premature closure'" (22). If students in a reading-and-

writing classroom can learn through the exploration of texts that reading, which is sometimes taught as a closed capacity, is truly an open capacity, they can then apply that understanding to their writing. Or as Salvatori notes, implicitly acknowledging the advantage of teaching reading with writing, "by enabling students to confront ambiguities and to tolerate uncertainties in the reading process, we can help them eventually to learn to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities that they themselves generate in the process of writing their own texts" (662).

Preventing students from suspending this need for closure is what Bartholomae and Petrosky call "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" (Facts 10). A perspective that clings to an essentialist vision of absolute truth, "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" presumes that a reading selection contains but one main idea that is easily located and universally accepted. An expository text develops around a controlling idea, to be sure--a statement that both expresses and reflects the writer's intention in composing the work. However, "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" begins and ends with that statement, denying a reader any further transaction with the text. When translated into the classroom as a pedagogical approach, "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" thus narrows the possible meanings of a text, effectively ending any dialogue that might result from students' exploring their

differing interpretations of a reading. At best, such a perspective distorts the nature of the reading process itself, for reading becomes an artificial exercise of identifying only thesis statements and topic sentences, major and minor support. At worst, this approach negates the very essence of reading, for it forces students to read for answers that have already been established, "[denying them] their own transaction with a text and . . . the understanding that reading is such a transaction rather than an attempt to guess at a meaning that belongs to someone else" (12). As a result, the skills approach to reading instruction, nourished by "the rhetoric of the controlling idea," encourages students to become passive learners because it implies that reading is a matter of right and wrong. The teacher assumes the role of an authority who is endowed with the right answer--the only right answer--at which students must guess. Later, they are told whether they have guessed correctly or incorrectly.

"The rhetoric of the controlling idea" therefore places the control for learning firmly in the grasp of the teacher, just the opposite of where it should be in a student-centered classroom. It conditions students to "simply swallow" what they read or to "be submissive in front of the text" instead of "assum[ing] a critical posture as readers" (Shor and Friere 11). At the same time, it perpetuates the sort of "banking pedagogy," to use Freire's term (Shor and Friere 39), that has

likely victimized developmental students in earlier English classes, classes in which students remain unheard because they are never given a voice. Arguing against this tendency, Bartholomae and Petrosky insist that such an approach urges marginal students (who are already "outside what we take to be 'common' culture") to believe that reading is an alien and privileged skill, ultimately beyond their reach (10). It encourages them to believe that learning to read effectively is a mechanical act of memorizing everything in an exalted text, the teacher acting as the agent of knowledge, the student functioning as the recipient of that knowledge. Denied to them is the liberating knowledge that reading is an active process that demands their active participation--a process that endows students themselves with the capacity to create meaning in the texts they compose.

Detrimental to students as readers, the most extreme form of "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" is equally harmful to students as writers. Because it is founded upon cultural commonplaces and cliched platitudes, this rhetoric encourages students not to think for themselves as they try to mimic the thinking of others. Writing consequently becomes a perfunctory rehearsal of others' beliefs or opinions or experiences, "a demonstration of knowledge rather than a discovery of knowledge or any new insight" (Sternglass 160). Writing like this, inherently monotonous and mechanical, is

all the more problematic for developmental students, who, due to cultural deprivation and a paucity of reading and writing experience, may find it difficult to identify with the subjects on which such texts are typically based. And when students are asked to respond in writing to a text they have read, "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" becomes even more incapacitating. For when a student believes that a reader is "one who tells what he is told," "he has little motive to say much at all" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 27). Hence, whether a student is reading or writing, control of the composing process is wrested from him, not by the teacher but by the medium and the text itself. In both cases, whether the "authority" is the teacher or the text, "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" breeds insecurity and uncertainty, qualities with which developmental readers and writers are already too familiar.

For students who are incapacitated by apprehension and impulsiveness, then, neither reading nor writing functions as a creative activity; each represents but another invitation to possible failure. Unlike better readers and writers who view a text as a challenge, who "seem to take control of the written language" (Birnbaum 30), remedial students view language as a threat and remain unable to control the texts they should be creating. Instead, the threat embodied in the text influences their every response, perhaps even to the

extent that students' past experiences with language have made them into certain kinds of readers and writers--created them, as it were. If that is the case, it is little wonder that developmental students avoid reading and writing. Not just behavioral symptoms, their superficial reading and their truncated writing reflect a deeply significant motive in their attempts to dodge the failure and to escape the anxiety they have experienced on earlier occasions when they were asked to read or to write. Both as readers and as writers, they seek closure--an unhealthy end that "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" encourages since it implies that reading and writing are "closed" capacities and therefore inevitably matters of rigid correctness.

Rebelling against this conception of literacy, Bartholomae and Petrosky advocate an "alternative pedagogy" that would not only combine instruction in reading and writing but also "place 'control' in readers or writers and in what they can do with the material before them" (10). A basic reading and writing course that embraces this pedagogical approach repudiates "the rhetoric of the controlling idea," replacing it with the doctrine that readers and writers interact with texts to create their own meanings and truths. Students are the beneficiaries. Liberated from the conception of reading and writing as closed capacities--a specific benefit that stems from teaching reading and writing

together--students experience the freedom that enables them to explore and to experiment, to take risks, to fail and to succeed. Learning becomes a process of expanding possibilities, not the reduction of complex processes into an established point of view or, even worse, a single correct answer. Indeed, because a student's reasoned perspective cannot be measured against the sole "truth" of either the text or the teacher--"there is no such thing as the answer," Friere reminds us (Shor and Friere 183)--it cannot be "wrong." Given this freedom to reflect and to learn, the pedagogical opposite of the restrictiveness that results from "being taught," students discover that they can assume responsibility for their own learning, that they can find their own solutions, that they can assume control of their efforts to read and write more effectively.

CHAPTER 4

THEORY IN PRACTICE: THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM

Berthoff states that "theory is not the antithesis of practice and, in fact, can only serve an authentic purpose if it is continually brought into relationship with practice so that each can inform the other" (3). Speaking further about the value of this alliance, she adds,

Theory gives us perspective; just as it allows us to determine sequences, it saves us from too much particularity. Teachers have to be pragmatic; they have to be down-to-earth, but being down-to-earth without knowing the theoretical coordinates for the landscape is a good way to lose your sense of direction.
(33)

Chapter 3 examined the theoretical bases for teaching reading and writing together, as transactional processes that complement one another. This chapter discusses how those theories, along with others, were put into practice in English 07. The placement of students, the special needs of the remedial learner, the structure of the class, the nature and sequence of assignments, the importance of usage and mechanics, the teacher's stance toward evaluation, the role of class discussion--all represent critical concerns that a comprehensive course in reading and writing must address. More than a mere syllabus or set of untested lesson plans, this section of my dissertation analyzes the salient

pedagogical features of English 07, attempting, in Berthoff's words, to plot its "theoretical coordinates" in the "landscape" of the classroom.

* * *

Placement Procedure

A student's potential enrollment in English 07 begins with his participation in Virginia Western's placement procedure. All students who are admitted to the college must first meet with a counselor, who reviews their high school transcripts and other pertinent records to determine their preparedness for college-level work. To qualify for admission to a college composition course, students must have achieved a score of 400 or above on the verbal section of the SAT or have maintained a B average in high school English classes (or a C average in advanced English classes). A student who fails to meet one of these criteria must complete a writing sample, which is evaluated on the basis of its content, development, organization, and grammatical correctness. If the sample is judged satisfactory, the student is permitted to enroll in English 101, Practical Writing I, or English 111, College Composition I. If the sample is deemed unsatisfactory, the student is administered the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. A student whom the test identifies as reading at the tenth-grade level or above is placed in English 01, Preparing for College Writing. A student who is assessed as reading below the

tenth-grade level must enroll either in English 01 and English 04, Reading Improvement, or in English 07, Writing and Reading Improvement. Students must successfully complete these developmental courses before they are eligible for college-level English classes.

The Characteristics of Developmental Readers and Writers

For the most part, students who enroll in English 07 embody the qualities that Shaughnessy attributes to basic writers. Different from their colleagues in regular composition classes, these students possess unique characteristics that exert an important influence on their efforts to read and write more effectively. From the outset, then, a course that aspires to facilitate literate development must consider the special needs of its audience, first acknowledging them and then attempting to accommodate them. An understanding of those needs is crucial since, as Shaughnessy argues, one of "the greatest barriers to our work with [remedial students] is our ignorance of them" ("Diving In" 68).

Several major qualities distinguish developmental students from more able readers and writers. Not true of every individual, of course, these characteristics represent instead a profile of the typical remedial student. Cross, for example, has documented that developmental students tend to be handicapped by low motivation, poor study habits, and a poor

mastery of basic academic skills--factors that may be magnified by generally low scholastic ability (31). In addition, developmental students may suffer from what McGrath and Spear call "cultural disarticulation," a schism between the values of the academy and those of its students (24). Keenly aware of past educational failures, students may feel isolated and alienated, intruders in an academic environment. The basic reader and writer may be especially sensitive to this stigma, for he has been singled out, quite literally, and thrust, often unwillingly, into a remedial English class. Because he is well aware that he is "different" from his peers in regular classes, "self-doubt may well be the lesson he has learned in school" (Shaughnessy, Errors 85).

As a consequence of all these factors, developmental students suffer from a feeling of powerlessness. They are intimidated by the challenge of adapting to a collegiate environment and unsure of the strategies that will bring them success. Just as debilitating are a lack of confidence and a poor self-concept (Roueche and Kirk 69). Indeed, McGrath and Spear have noted that remedial students "have little sense of controlling their lives; they see themselves as having little command of the resources that might improve their prospects" (24). And Marie Lederman has found that basic writers, in particular, tend to view themselves as inadequate, overwhelmed by the pressures of academic life and insecure about their

capacity to cope with them: "they [see] themselves as alone, frightened, oppressed, limited" (686).

Summarizing the importance of these various influences, Shaughnessy asserts that the developmental student fears English more than any other course he takes because "he lacks confidence in himself in academic situations and fears that writing will not only expose, but magnify his inadequacies" (Errors 85). In essence, the basic writer thinks that writing makes him vulnerable, revealing to others the inadequacies he hides within himself. As a result, he is conditioned to believe that "academic writing is a trap, not a way of saying something to someone. . . .":

Writing is but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know, then passing into the hands of a stranger who reads it with a lawyer's eyes, searching for flaws. By the time he reaches college, the [basic writing] student both resents and resists his vulnerability as a writer. . . . Writing puts him on a line, and he doesn't want to be there. (Errors 7)

Given this battery of insecurities and fears, the place where a basic reader and writer should be is in a non-threatening environment, one built upon individual identity and group unity. Shaughnessy has shown that fear functions as a barrier to writing, and Carl Rogers has stated that learning is facilitated when threat is at a minimum; in fact, he asserts that students resist learning any skill they find

threatening (159-60). Donald Graves echoes that statement, insisting that "the art of teaching is to ask questions *in the midst of the person's competence*" (213). Trust, acceptance, security, and understanding--these, then, become the invisible ingredients of a classroom that helps students realize their fullest potential as readers and writers. As I have suggested in Chapter 3, they are ingredients that are best fostered in a course which approaches reading and writing as transactional processes of composition, which engages students in a sequence of relevant reading and writing assignments, which consistently involves them in vigorous discussion, and which ultimately encourages them to become more reflective about themselves as readers, writers, and learners.

Reading and Writing as Process

Harvey Wiener states that "one of the first tasks for the instructor of beginning writers is to oversee investigation in the process of writing. . . . This concept of stages is essential for the novice, for whom a word or a sentence set down on paper with appropriate agony is sacrosanct" (88). Similarly, William Stafford observes that "a writer is not so much someone who has found something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them" (128). As a group, however, developmental writers are unaware of this truth. They have little conception of the writing

process--they "do not know how writers behave," says Shaughnessy (Errors 79)--and this ignorance creates many problems for them whenever they bring pen to paper. Chief among those problems is their failure to engage in many--or any--prewriting activities. Given an assignment, remedial writers typically procrastinate as long as they can and then impulsively begin to write. They devote little or no time to exploring their topics, nor do they hypothesize about a logical pattern of organization prior to composing their essays. Consequently, their writing is distinguished by frequent false starts, a lack of unity, and a marked lack of development. Better writers, in contrast, "tend to delay longer to develop a plan for their writing, pause at major turning points in their drafts to consider a wider range of rhetorical choices, and view their drafts as tentative and subject to their own revision" (Birnbaum 31).

Misconceptions about the sequence of stages in the writing process can also create problems for basic writers. Specifically, their concern for grammatical correctness at the beginning of the process--a concern that English 01 perpetuated--sometimes results in apprehension and paralysis. Mike Rose has suggested that a teacher's vigilance for error actually hinders students in their attempt to write fluently ("Remedial" 109), and Sondra Perl has demonstrated empirically that a preoccupation with error at the outset of the writing

process manifests itself in frequent stops that disrupt the activity of writing. Perl found premature editing to be pervasive among remedial writers, intruding into their writing so often that they lost track of their ideas (29). At the stage of the writing process when they should be most concerned with invention, basic writers tend instead to brood about correctness. Revision does not function as a generative strategy for these writers either, for they typically limit changes in a draft to minor corrections in usage and mechanics: major revisions represent an invitation to begin all over again the painstaking process they have tried first to avoid and then to abbreviate. "Writing is so painful to [them]," Cynthia Selfe declares, "that [they gallop] through the composing process at breakneck pace, taking time for little or no planning and only minor revisions" (50).

Just as lack of familiarity with the writing process precludes students from writing well, so, too, do misunderstandings about the reading process prevent them from reading effectively. Once again, fear and a corresponding impulsiveness emerge as primary culprits, for remedial readers are victims of a misconception about the nature of reading that shortens the circuit of comprehension. As Birnbaum notes, for weaker readers, "reading seems to be a passive process in which they cast their eyes over the text but do not assess their comprehension of it" (39). Like a writer who

strives to limit his time on task, such a reader takes time neither to preview nor to review--both essential steps in the reading process. In terms of interpretation and comprehension, the consequence of this abbreviated approach is an inevitable spiral of diminished possibilities: there are fewer possible readings of the text, resulting in a complacent sense of closure and less material to remember and control; thus, the text can be dispensed with more quickly. In terms of the student's development as a reader, the effects are more severe and far more pervasive. Writing about "Jim," who was just such a reader, Selfe defines these consequences in words that could serve as both epigraph and epitaph for many remedial students:

He did not use more sophisticated reading strategies--either he *could* not use them because he was unfamiliar with them, or he *would* not use them because they required more time--and, because he did not practice these strategies, he never learned to master them. (38)

More accomplished readers, on the other hand, do use more sophisticated reading strategies. More reflective about their behavior as readers, they preview a text, make predictions about its content, measure their predictions against the unfolding meaning of the text, entertain alternative interpretations, and review the text after their first reading. For these readers, reading is a metacognitive process, one made possible expressly because of their

knowledge of the reading process. Birnbaum confirms this theory when she writes that "studies of readers reveal that the more skilled are more aware of their cognitive strategies while comprehending texts" (30). And, in a statement that lends further support to teaching both reading and writing as processes, she adds,

The more proficient readers and writers have developed a stance toward written language that generalizes to most engagements with it. . . . They are simply better thinkers in relation to written language. They know how and what to think about while reading and writing. Moreover, these students' tendency to reflect over their experiences allows them to extract more information from those experiences and to further elaborate their schemata for forms and content of discourse. Finally, this same tendency probably accounts for crossovers between the two processes. As their experiences with written language deepen and broaden, young readers and writers gradually develop a positive view of themselves as in control of the processes involved and achieve an aesthetic distance that allows them to read with a "writer's eye" and to write with a "reader's eye." It seems likely that this sensitivity to the dual problems of the writer and the reader and their potential solutions leads them to transfer knowledge derived from one process to the other. (31-32)

This premise functions as the foundation for all instruction in English 07. From the beginning of the course, the syllabus invites students to see reading and writing as "processes that enable [them] to construct a personal understanding of a text." (See Appendix A, "English 07

Syllabus.") Even more specifically, the syllabus states that students will "examine the steps that make up the reading process, talking about what good readers do when they read a text," and discuss "the series of steps that make up the writing process, analyzing what effective writers do when they compose a text." Ultimately, the course endeavors to help each student discover the process that will enable her to read with more comprehension and to write with greater success. Toward that end, students in English 07 discuss and practice the following activities during the course of a semester:

The Reading Process

Previewing

- * how to use the title of a text to predict its content and organization
- * how to preview a text to find clues about its purpose and structure
- * how to exploit prior knowledge of a topic to improve comprehension

Reading

- * how to determine the writer's purpose
- * how to make predictions and form hypotheses about the content of a text
- * how to distinguish between main ideas and supporting ideas
- * how to mark a text
- * how to employ word-analysis skills

Reviewing

- * how to reconstruct a text
- * how to use writing and discussion to improve comprehension

The Writing Process

Prewriting

- * how to choose appropriate topics
- * how to develop ideas about the topic
- * how to create a central idea in the form of a thesis statement
- * how to plan a pattern of organization

Writing

- * how to develop a topic in paragraph or essay form
- * how to structure paragraphs and essays

Rewriting

- * how to approach writing objectively
- * how to revise writing to improve its effectiveness
- * how to edit writing to eliminate errors in spelling, usage, and mechanics

Of course, the activities that comprise the reading and writing processes are not discussed in isolation from one another. Whenever possible, students explore the similarities between the two processes--the "crossovers," according to Birnbaum (31)--so that their knowledge of reading educates them as writers and their understanding of writing strengthens them as readers. Hence, they see as readers how previewing an essay for its overall pattern of development can provide them with important insights about a writer's purpose, and they realize as writers why planning a logical pattern of organization is crucial if they are to help their readers discern their purposes. Nor are these various steps of the reading and writing processes examined as ends in themselves,

divorced from a meaningful context. Rather, students practice these processes as they read and write compositions that are thematically and rhetorically related to one another. As they are reading Alice Walker's "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self," they are writing their own essays about people or experiences that have shaped their images of themselves. And as they read Larry King's "The Old Man," they are working on papers in which they compare themselves with their mothers or fathers.

As we read individual selections in the class, we follow a similar format, too--one that emerges directly from the course's process orientation. Our fundamental purpose is to help each student compose her own understanding of a text, and we achieve that objective by consistently applying the process-oriented strategies we have discussed since the beginning of the semester. Whether we are reading "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self" or "Love Is Never Enough," for instance, we first preview the selection, speculating about the significance of the title, noting unusual text features which might yield clues about its content and structure, reading the introduction and conclusion, and then speculating further about the essay's meaning and organization. The very process of previewing thus models the cyclical process of reading as students ask questions, make predictions, and refine their hypotheses as they examine the

skeletal features of the text. During this stage of the reading process, we also explore how our own experiences might enrich our understanding of the essay--how we might be able to relate to the writer and how our prior knowledge of the subject might enlighten us about the essay's content.

Only after we have previewed an assignment, establishing both experiential and rhetorical schemata for the selection, do we begin to read it. Usually the only stage of the reading process with which students are familiar, reading for us becomes but the second phase of an incremental process of composition. During this phase, in particular, it is crucial that students interact with the text, a goal they can best accomplish if they annotate the text as they read. Many students initially resist this practice, sometimes howling in protest to any suggestion that they "mark up" the pages of their books. To these students, annotation is tantamount to defilement; writing in a book, synonymous with sacrilege. Yet especially for those students who view a text as sanctified and untouchable--the consequence, no doubt, of the oft-repeated threat, "do not make any marks in your textbooks"--annotation represents a potent antidote to the paralyzing effects of passive reading. As students are forced to respond physically to the text--to highlight striking ideas, to predict forthcoming development, to note important shifts in thought, and to identify points of agreement or disagreement--

they are likewise forced to interact with the text. Ann Moseley and Jeanette Harris outline this process in the preface to Interactions, the textbook in the course:

In [Interactions], you will find lots of white space and plenty of room to mark the text and write in the margins. . . . What you write is, of course, up to you. You may want to draw illustrations, to highlight with colored markers, to circle words you don't know, to number information, to underline or put asterisks beside ideas you consider important, or to write notes to yourself about what you are reading. . . . [If] you want to improve as a reader, it is essential that you communicate in writing with yourself as you read. (11)

Reading made manifest, annotation not only encourages students to read actively but also reinforces the fundamental motive of any reading-and-writing course: by joining reading with writing, it reminds students that the two activities are integrally related and mutually supportive. In the intersection of the two, students discover comprehension and understanding.

Our approach to the final stage of the reading process, reviewing, echoes that theme, again dramatizing the reflexive nature of reading. Sometimes we respond to essays in writing, exploring how our written reactions thrust certain ideas into prominence and relegate others to subservience. Sometimes we measure our earliest predictions about an essay against our consequent knowledge of the selection, examining how our predictions fostered comprehension. Sometimes we even analyze

how our knowledge of text structure enables us to reconstruct the content of the work. Whether we are responding to the readings in writing or through discussion, however, our ultimate goal remains always the same: we want to discover how the writer's purposes shape our personal reactions and how our individual responses reshape the writer's intentions.

Just as our approach to reading selections encourages students to practice the various elements of the reading process, our approach to writing assignments urges students to practice the recursive components of the writing process. Based upon theories that are by now well documented and widely practiced, each assignment requires that students plan, draft, revise, and edit their essays--a continuum that is facilitated by prewriting exercises, ongoing discussions, writing groups, and peer reviews. While these activities have become the staple of most writing courses, in a class like English 07 they assume added meaning and relevance, for they again reinforce the notion that reading and writing are related and coincident processes of composition. Prewriting mirrors previewing; drafting (usually the only stage of the writing process that students have practiced) mimics reading; and revising echoes reviewing. Moreover, students see that reading plays a vital role in the writing process just as they have seen that writing plays an important part in the reading process. The advantage of this bilateral vision is especially

acute during writing workshops, for it creates perspective and depth perception. Pointing to the unique benefit of using workshops when reading and writing are joined in a thematic context, as they are in English 07, Nicholas Coles notes:

an audience of peers who are working on the same sequence of assignments comes to a fellow writer's paper with a special kind of interest--a shared preoccupation with a common set of issues which keys and enriches their reading. They can offer not only "feedback" and judgment, but informed response and support, including other possible interpretations of what the writer has described, other possible conclusions to be drawn from the story he has told. The students are functioning, in fact, as a form of scholarly community, a community which is in part generated out of their discussion of one another's papers. (171)

Having consistently written and read throughout the semester, students therefore learn to approach their own writing and that of others with the sensitivity of a knowledgeable writer and the perspective of an informed reader.

In all cases, then, while students are practicing the strategies that will help them become more proficient readers, they are also practicing the techniques that will help them grow into more effective writers. This approach, which informs English 07 from beginning to end, helps students cultivate the kind of "how-to" knowledge I discussed in Chapter 3--a knowledge which transcends the individual essay or story. Ultimately, this methodology provides students with

the sort of knowledge that can recreate itself over and over again, for "when students are aware of what they are doing, they can more deliberately adopt effective methods of learning and gain a deeper sense of what the objectives and significance of inquiries are" (Katz et al. 37). Not a static body of facts--not the "bitting" that Richardson, Fisk, and Okun decry (65-71)--this is a process knowledge that leads to deeper knowledge.

The Thematic Structure of the Course

An emphasis upon reading and writing as complementary processes forms one of the pinions of English 07. Its thematic structure represents another, furnishing the course with unity and coherence. The structure of the class stems from the organization of the textbook, Interactions: A Thematic Reader, edited by Ann Moseley and Jeanette Harris. Reflecting Berthoff's contention that reading and writing are essentially processes of "making meaning," Moseley and Harris state in their preface that Interactions is "designed to help students discover meaning in what they read and to convey meaning in what they write. In this text, [students] progress from a consideration of self to an awareness of how the self interacts with other people and phenomena" (xxv). The rest of the book implements that plan by progressing through eight units entitled "The Self," "Self with Family," "Self with Friends," "Self with Mates," "Self with Environment," "Self

with Machines," and "Self with Heroes." The second edition of the text, just published, retains this essential organizational scheme, merely renaming the third unit "Self with Partners" and the seventh unit "Self with Technology."

Incorporating another of the fundamental motives of English 07, Interactions also "explains the interdependence of reading and writing" (xxv) and includes "Before You Read," "As You Read," and "After You Read" sections with each essay, story, or poem. According to the editors, "'Before You Read' activities involve students in important pre-reading and pre-writing techniques"; "'As You Read' activities help students interact with the selection and make it their own by determining the main idea, marking the text or evaluating the information it presents"; and "'After You Read' sections echo the format of 'Before You Read' sections, encouraging students to think about the ideas and opinions presented in the reading, examine the vocabulary or specific features of the text, or write a response to what they have read" (xxvi). While the units themselves provide a horizontal structure to the class, marking its progression from "The Self" to "Self with Mates" (the last unit I have taught), the apparatus of the text reinforces the vertical structure of the course, urging students to envision and to practice reading and writing as related processes of composition.

The Nature and Sequence of Reading and Writing Assignments

Reading and writing assignments in English 07 emerge directly from the thematic organization of the course. As I have indicated earlier, to help students develop a meaningful context for their work during the semester, the class begins with an exploration of the reading and writing processes. The class then continues with explorations of the self and the complex communities in which it is rooted. The motive for reading and writing assignments thus stems from the thematic approach on which Interactions is founded--a progressive approach that asks students systematically to examine themselves in relation to their worlds. In a statement that could likewise serve as a preface for all the assignments in the course, Moseley and Harris define this approach in the introduction of the text, directly addressing their student audience:

[Interactions] is about you--about the individual self that you are and how you interact with other people and the world. Each unit explores a different relationship. Beginning with the first unit, which focuses on your relationship with yourself, the book moves from close, intimate relationships with family and friends to more distant, abstract relationships with the society and environment in which you live. (1)

The sequence of assignments in English 07 follows this pattern, moving from the subjective to the objective, from autobiographical to analytical topics, from less demanding to

more complex forms of discourse. In general, then, the assignments trace the systematic progression that James Moffett advocates as they advance along the "I-it" and "I-you" continua. They begin with narration and progress to exposition; they proceed from reflection and conversation and graduate to correspondence and publication: "the movement is from self to world, from a point to an area, from a private world of egocentric chatter to a public universe of discourse" (246).

While English 07 affords students the opportunity to read and write about personally meaningful topics, it also facilitates their transition to the types of academic discourse they will encounter in college-level classes. In addition, the progression of assignments in the course demystifies the process of reading and writing, for students grow to understand how academic texts are composed and are able to relinquish their conception of them as "oracular authorit[ies]" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 38). As students become practicing readers and writers themselves, developing their abilities as they move from what Flower has termed "writer-based prose" to "reader-based prose" ("Writer-Based Prose" 36-37), they become participants "in the play of reading [and writing] that [go] on within the boundaries of the academic community" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 9). The sequence of assignments in English 07 therefore responds to

Rose's criticism that remedial programs tend to be "self-contained" because they fail to prepare students to write "academic prose" ("Remedial" 109-12).

In a further effort to help students make a fluid transition to academic reading and writing, the assignments in English 07 also acquaint students with various patterns of development, such as cause-effect analysis, comparison/contrast, process analysis, and classification. Although these patterns are sometimes viewed with suspicion and even hostility, D'Angelo and Meyer argue that a working knowledge of these rhetorical modes, or "discourse schemata" (Rose, "Remedial" 121), is especially useful to novice writers and readers. Lunsford underscores the importance of teaching these forms to writers when she notes that "the basic writing course that works exclusively on description and narration will probably fail to build the cognitive skills its students will need to perform well in other college classes" ("Cognitive" 43). And Dougherty stresses the importance of these forms for readers when she states that "readers who identify and use the plans provided by the writer more fully understand the writer's purposes and the material being presented" (95). Used effectively, not as ends in themselves but as means by which students can discover and organize information, traditional discourse schemata provide basic readers and writers with a powerful tool: frames within which

they can explore information and patterns by which they can structure it. So important is this knowledge that Rose asserts,

the lack of appropriate schemata . . . will have disastrous results as remedial writers are asked to produce structurally complex prose by readers who . . . evaluate student writing with a good deal of emphasis on organization, a product feature resulting from appropriate discourse schemata. We have little choice, then, but to teach these schemata. ("Remedial" 121)

"In short," concludes Dougherty, "there is ample evidence to suggest that we do our students a favor when we make explicit the structures and uses of writing plans" (95).

By situating a rhetorical approach in a thematic framework, English 07 provides students with a meaningful context that yields practical knowledge about reading and writing. The course's fundamental emphasis upon "the self" answers another of the essential needs of developmental students--needs that relate to the transitions they must accomplish not only as readers and writers but also as members of the academy. Steiner acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between language and self when he claims that "language . . . is focused inward to our private selves," that "through language, we construct . . . 'alternities of being'" (473). Likewise, Bartholomae and Petrosky assert that "the process [of literate development is] never . . . easy since . . . it calls into play 'needs of privacy and territoriality

vital to our identity.' And if this is generally true for all language users, it is dramatically and sometimes violently true for [basic readers and writers]" (7). As these statements suggest, change for remedial reading-and-writing students involves much more than an alteration of their reading and writing abilities; it embraces a host of issues which strike at their very identities--personal issues which are inseparable from their use of language.

Ultimately, then, students in a course such as English 07 are constructing much more than a new understanding of reading and writing: through reading and writing, they are composing a new understanding of themselves as well. An exploratory process like this necessarily involves a realignment of self--a revision, of sorts--as students are forced to redefine themselves in relation to the past and the future and others. In fact, among adult students the very decision to return to school has often prompted just such a revision of self, for it entails a break with the past and a conscious and sometimes very difficult decision to begin their lives anew. Especially for these students, the decision to further their education translates into a break with their former lives and an entrance into an academic environment they have not experienced since high school, usually years before. Adult students often view their enrollment in college as a new chance to realize ambitions that have been simmering amid

discontent, and younger students frequently view their enrollment as a last chance to escape the failure with which they have been branded and to prove themselves in an academic arena. The stakes are high: for students in both groups, college represents a crossroads that almost inevitably provokes them to a thoughtful reexamination of self--of whom they have been, who they are, and whom they want to become.

The reading and writing assignments in English 07 are intended to complement and to stimulate this natural process of reflection. Beginning with the first unit on "The Self" and extending through the last unit on "Self with Mate," the readings and writings in the course are designed to relate to students' real-world concerns. The assignments acknowledge the importance of personal experience, just as they herald the conventions of academic discourse. They ask students to reflect upon the significance of their experiences, just as they introduce them to the rhetorical plans that allow them to tailor structure to purpose. But they always provide students with a meaningful context in which to read and write. The reading and writing assignments in English 07 thus make the process of self-inquiry, so pervasive among these students, the very substance of academic study. Reading and writing become the media through which students can construct a new sense of self--an emphasis that answers Bartholomae and Petrosky's assertion that students perceive reading and

writing as relevant only when those activities are based on "subjects that . . . bring forward powerful and pressing themes from [their experiences]" (30). "Interpretive schemes [that emerge from students' own experiences]," the authors add, "have incredible heuristic power for a class fascinated with the slopes and valleys of their own lives and drawn to the power of the theory or generalization" (35).

Building upon this premise, reading and writing assignments in English 07 follow a similar pattern and unfold in a systematic sequence--one that allies reading with writing, theme with rhetorical mode, and formal with informal types of discourse. Each unit begins as students read and discuss thematically related essays, stories, or poems in Interactions. These readings not only provide students with the opportunity to practice various steps of the reading process; they also form a thematic context that enables students to respond thoughtfully to the formal essay assignments that comprise the other primary activity in the unit. Some of these early readings likewise serve as models for the rhetorical modes on which those essay assignments are based. Concurrently, students complete a series of informal journal entries which both reflect the salient theme of the unit and foreshadow the topics they might later develop more fully and more formally in their papers. The reading and writing assignments in each segment of the course--included in

Appendix B--are therefore continuous and interactive: the readings create the opportunity for writing, and the writings invigorate the occasion for reading. As students are discovering the transactional relationship between reading and writing, they are likewise learning to read and write more effectively.

During the first unit on "The Self," for example, students read a variety of essentially biographical and autobiographical works: "Buying Stock in Ourselves," by Ellen Goodman; "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self," by Alice Walker; "A Day with Mary Crane," by Janet M. Fitchen; "Barrio Boy," by Ernesto Galarza; "A Girlhood Among Ghosts," by Maxine Hong Kingston; and "Halfway to Dick and Jane: A Puerto Rican Pilgrimage," by Jack Agueros. Our primary aim in discussing these works is to explore the various influences--be they environmental, experiential, social, or cultural--that have shaped these writers' views of themselves. Students also complete four primary writing assignments during this phase of the course: two descriptive paragraphs, a narrative essay, and an autobiographical cause-effect essay. Consistent with the class's fundamental approach, all these assignments revolve around the theme of "self," for students are describing significant people, places, or things in their lives; narrating memorable personal experiences; and analyzing either

the effects of those people and experiences or some of the factors that underlie their attitudes and values.

The reading assignments during this segment of the semester support these endeavors, for while students are composing their descriptive paragraphs, they are also reading Galarza's vivid description of the barrio in which he grew up. As they are writing their personal narratives, they are likewise reading Walker's powerful account of her struggle to overcome the effects of an accident that left her partially blind. And as they are developing their cause-effect essays, they are simultaneously analyzing how Kingston's Chinese-American background affected her attitude toward school and her interaction with her classmates.

Nor are these themes and rhetorical modes discussed in isolation of one another; on the contrary, we look always for connections and intersections among ideas and techniques. When we construct understandings of "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self," we compare Walker's efforts to restore her self-image with Galarza's attempts to establish his identity as a Mexican-American. We also examine the description that Walker employs to make her experience real to the reader. Similarly, when we discuss "A Girlhood Among Ghosts," we compare Kingston's isolation from her classmates to Walker's estrangement from her family, and we analyze how Kingston uses description and narration to dramatize the

piercing loneliness she experienced as an outsider in American society. Throughout the unit, our goal is to connect reading with writing; to explore how the writers' experiences clarify the meaning of our own experiences, and vice versa; and to demonstrate that "the process [we] go through in reading these selections is much like the process that the writers went through in writing them" (Moseley and Harris 15-16).

The Role of Usage and Mechanics

Like the earliest version of English 01, many remedial writing classes either fail to incorporate the study of grammar into the process of writing, or they exalt the importance of correctness to the disadvantage of effectiveness. Nonetheless, because the writing of remedial students is distinguished by a proliferation of sentence-level errors, teachers turn almost instinctively to usage and mechanics in basic writing courses. In fact, in classes that rely upon programmed instruction, grammatical analysis flourishes because the study of usage and mechanics is the only enterprise that lends itself to the inherent limitations of the medium: because grammar is a closed capacity--unlike the open capacity of composition--skills exercises are the sole activity the technology can support.

In courses like these, and even in more orthodox courses, grammar assumes a prominent position rather than the secondary role it should occupy. These are the remedial English courses

that are developed in a deductive vacuum: those in which teachers decide upon the grammatical skills that students need and then set about teaching them whether they are necessary or not. Yet, as Lunsford has lately shown, neither knowledge gained from grammar drills nor memorization of grammatical principles results in improved writing, for students find it difficult to transfer an abstract understanding of grammar to their prose ("Cognitive" 41). "No wonder that students are often bored with such courses," laments Constance Gefvert, "resentful of the time they lose before getting into freshman English courses and disappointed that they really haven't learned much after all to help them gain the skills they lack" (121).

Instruction in usage and mechanics in English 07 is based upon a different premise: that "all grammatical study should be subordinated to the elimination of error, so that grammatical study will take away as little time as possible from the actual practice of writing" (D'Eloia 231). "Nothing is to be gained," D'Eloia states, "if the objective is error reduction, by covering the grammatical ground in order to round out the grammar" (232); instead, "instructors should teach only that grammar necessary for the student to address error" (238). Following this maxim, English 07 delays any instruction in grammar until the fifth week of the semester. My first priority is to help students learn to develop and

organize their ideas effectively, to grow comfortable with the process of writing, and to discover that writing can be more than a rote exercise--that it can be a purposeful means of expressing thought and feeling. Correct usage and mechanics are admittedly important, but from a student's point of view, they are significant only to the extent that they serve him in communicating what he finds meaningful. They possess no intrinsic value, a truth made apparent in Marilyn Demario's perceptive remark that "most students cannot learn to care about the correctness of the sentences they write until they care about what they say and how they say it" (97).

For that reason, English 07 teaches usage and mechanics in the context of writing, as an integral part of the writing process and only as the final stage of that process. Although some might contend that delaying instruction in grammar wastes precious time for basic writers--and wastes it where they can least afford to lose it--teaching grammar in a rhetorical vacuum is a far worse waste of time, and of opportunity, too. In that regard, pedagogy should accept its cue from writing itself, the teaching process mimicking the writing process. Grammar assumes a wholly supportive role in writing--like shape or form, it does not even exist beyond the context of composition. Similarly, instruction in grammar should always assume a strictly supportive role in the teaching of writing--anything else means that students' challenges and achievements

will stop with the next exercise or end with the last test.

To quote D'Eloia again,

An instructor should integrate the study of grammatical concept into the process of writing as thoroughly as he can contrive the mix, so that the student transfers an abstract grasp of grammatical principles to correct production, and so that he addresses matters of fluency, maturity, cogency, and correctness simultaneously. . . . For the chief limit of grammar is that grammatical analysis has no necessary connection to the synthetic process of writing. Perception is not production. Production is not proofreading. By whatever system the instruction is done, diagraming and parsing are about as similar to writing as admiring the dance and executing it, watching pro ball and playing it. We minimize our effectiveness anytime we lose sight of this first principle. (233, 243)

With this doctrine as its guiding principle, English 07 strives always to incorporate the study of grammar into the process of writing. As Barbara Walvoord recommends, we do discuss certain rudimentary elements of grammar: how to distinguish sentences from fragments and how to correct fused sentences with periods, semi-colons, transitional expressions, conjunctions, and subordination (189-90). Discussion of these topics, usually in the form of sentence-combining exercises, enables us to locate punctuation in the context of sentence structure and sentence variety. For the most part, however, English 07 concentrates on error analysis rather than on an encyclopedic survey of the grammatical canon. Based upon an

approach made popular by Shaughnessy and Bartholomae, the thrust of error analysis is to determine why students commit errors. Foster defines this concept when he writes,

New remedial strategies differ from the traditional attacks on writing problems by virtue of their attitude toward error. The traditional sentence-and-punctuation-drill strategy assumes that basic writers are those who make more errors than others, and that their improvement requires the correction of errors through repetitive drilling. In this view--behavioristic if you like--writing is a making of choices, some proper and some improper and remediation is the extinction of improper choices through conditioning for proper choices in each writing situation. The cause of errors is not as important as the fact of them, which is the point of attack. However, in recent remedial research, inspired by the ESL strategy of error-analysis . . . and best represented by Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, this proposition is reversed. The cause of errors is more important than the fact of each error, because when teachers discover why students make errors, they can help students eliminate habits that cause errors. (108)

With error analysis as the basis of grammatical study, then, and with a minimum of terminology, English 07 encourages each student to focus on the types of errors he is most inclined to make. Beyond that, the course challenges students to develop individualized rules that will help them avoid those errors in the future. Students are therefore able to realize mechanical correctness in their own words. They themselves gain naming power over the grammar as they practice

it in their writing--a crucial first step if they are to avoid submission to the complexity of grammatical jargon and to master the rules that dictate acceptable usage. When students see that grammar serves them, and not the other way around; when they realize that grammar does not have a life of its own, that it instead supports the vitality of their prose, then correct usage and mechanics assume a new purposefulness that they all too often lack in more traditional classrooms.

Evaluation

Donald Murray asserts that "the writing teacher must not be a judge, but a physician. His job is not to punish, but to heal" (qtd. in Lindemann 203). This statement characterizes my stance toward evaluation in English 07, for my purpose is not to sit in judgment--not to "guard the tower" or "protect the academy . . . from outsiders . . . who do not seem to belong to the community of learners" (Shaughnessy, "Diving In" 63). I do not even want to "convert the natives," stripping students of their language and replacing it with mine (64). Rather, through my voice I want to help students rediscover their own long-silent voices so they can grow as readers and writers.

With that as my overall goal, I attempt to make evaluation in English 07 descriptive instead of prescriptive, formative instead of conclusive. The non-punitive grading scheme of the course complements that approach, for students

are not classified with the traditional grades of A through F. They are awarded an S (Satisfactory) if they complete the objectives of the class or an R (Re-enroll) if they need additional time to master those objectives. (In some rare cases, students are assigned a grade of U (Unsatisfactory) if they fail to demonstrate any initiative to improve their reading and writing; however, no students have earned a U during the past two years.) Like the journal assignments, which are not graded at all, and the formal writing assignments, which receive no grade until students have met all the goals for the lesson, the course itself thus approximates the type of evaluation-free zone that Peter Elbow endorses in "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment":

. . . Evaluation harms the climate for learning and teaching--or rather too much evaluation has this effect. That is, if we evaluate everything students write, they tend to remain tangled up in the assumption that their whole job in school is to give teachers "what they want." Constant evaluation makes students worry more about psyching out the teacher than about what they are really learning. Students fall into a kind of defensive or on-guard stance toward the teacher: a desire to hide what they don't understand and to try to impress. This stance gets in the way of learning. (197)

When one remembers Murray's insistence that "the teacher of writing, first of all, must be a person for whom the student wants to write" (Writer 16), the need for such an "evaluation-

free" climate becomes all the more critical in a developmental course like English 07. It is only in an environment like this that students can concentrate on their writing, not on pleasing the teacher; only in a setting like this that they can take the risks and make the mistakes that both Lindemann and Elbow identify as crucial to their growth as writers (224; 197).

As I respond to students' essays, I therefore adopt the posture of a thoughtful, sympathetic advocate and try to embody Elbow's purest definition of an effective evaluator: by "do[ing] as little ranking and grading as [I] can" and by "us[ing] evaluation instead--a more careful, more discriminating, fairer mode of assessment" (205). I resist the temptation merely to label broad problems and to issue generic commandments, each of which heralds "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" and undermines the very reader-response approach we have cultivated throughout the course (Connors and Lunsford 214); I concentrate instead on the specific goals we have set for an assignment, responding rhetorically by praising the writer where she has succeeded and by identifying areas that need further attention. I dodge the expedient of appropriating the paper as if it were my own and rewriting what the student has written; I attempt instead to pose provocative questions that will help a student develop his ideas more effectively, "raising questions from a reader's

point of view that may not have occurred to [the writer]" (Sommers 148). Never do I identify all the grammatical errors in an essay; I mark instead only the mistakes we have earlier discussed, designating the errors with check marks in the margin so the student herself retains responsibility for identifying and correcting them. Indeed, since a paper is completed only when a student has achieved all the objectives of the assignment, I try always to effect the same response: to encourage the motive for revision and thus to create a "dialectic of composing and revising" (Wall 125). For when teachers "[help] students, in this way, to identify and interrogate the emerging meaning of their texts. . . , [they] in effect empower [students] to revise--and to use revision as [all writers] use it, to better understand the subject which engages them and which they thereby engage" (Coles 196).

Like the movement in a symphony of themes and variations, then, evaluation in English 07 is orchestrated to reinforce the essential motif of the course. It represents yet another of the agents that join the private with the public and product with process. Through evaluation--or, really, through their own responses to evaluation--students learn how to write for a reader and how to read as a writer. Evaluation thus emerges as a further mediator in the dialectic that links reading with writing. As Sommers suggests, once again acknowledging the inevitable interplay between reading and

writing, "we comment on student writing to dramatize the presence of a reader, to help our students become that questioning reader themselves, because, ultimately, we believe that becoming such a reader will help them to evaluate what they have written and develop control over their writing" (148).

The Primacy of Discussion

Donald Murray remarks that "in the usual classroom the teacher speaks and the students listen. In the writing class, the students speak and the teacher listens" (Writer 103). English 07 is just such a class, for discussion is of paramount importance: it is the mainspring that connects all the other elements of the course, the means by which reading and writing assignments are daily made manifest in the classroom. In fact, the tenor of the course is set during the first class meetings when students introduce themselves to one another and discuss their previous experiences with reading and writing. These initial discussions establish the informal atmosphere that characterizes English 07 while creating a common strand of shared experience. As each student volunteers his attitude toward English--usually it is negative--and shares his ambitions in the course--they are almost always hopeful--the class itself begins to form a collective identity. Students are released from the misconception that they alone have struggled to read and write

more effectively; they grow to see that they are not by themselves in their efforts to read and write well and not odd in their inability to master reading and writing before now. As Shor says, "their doubts are brought under control even as they are brought out into the open" (148).

Simultaneously, of course, students are beginning to develop a sense of audience through their classmates. As the semester progresses and the discussions continue, students grow to see their classmates as

members of a group of people with common life experiences and a shared project of exploring and researching them through writing. They constitute for one another not only an 'audience' to be 'considered,' but in a real sense a community of writers--a community based on commonality of experience and also on respect for one another's work with language. (Coles 168)

This double sense of audience and community is crucial for basic readers and writers, in particular, who often find themselves as much outsiders in academic institutions as they are strangers to academic practices. To be sure, if a student is to gain a voice--or, really, to find his voice--in the academy, he must learn how to read and write well and how to establish an identity for himself as a member of a discourse community. That is, he must learn to define his task and his purpose and himself in terms of the community for which he is writing: he must "invent the university" "every time he sits down to write" (Bartholomae, "Inventing" 134). An act of

invention that is difficult for many writers, it is a leap of identity that is deeply problematic for remedial writers, who are unfamiliar with the roles and regimens that define academic life. Discussion therefore provides students with the opportunity to invent themselves as members of a literate community, to develop the habits of reflective thought and critical inquiry that are necessary to upper-level coursework, and to participate in the play of language as it is spoken in the university. This participation is so fundamental that Rose says, "discussion . . . you could almost define a university education as an initiation into a variety of powerful ongoing discussions, an initiation that can occur only through the repeated use of a new language in the company of others" (Lives 192).

Discussion not only effects an alliance between the individual and the group, however; it also becomes the flux by which reading is soldered to writing and subject is welded to pedagogy. As texts become occasions for interpretation, discussion becomes reader-response theory made real, functioning as the antidote to "the rhetoric of the controlling idea." As readers or as writers, students can see that there are myriad ways to compose a text--never just one way and certainly not just the teacher's way. Like a text itself, "speech [is seen] as a challenge to be unveiled, and never as a channel of transference of knowledge" (Shor and

Friere 40). Discussion thus becomes a primary force in reasserting one of the founding tenets of the course: that reading and writing are not matters of rigid correctness; that whether they are reading or writing, students are always engaged in a process of negotiating individual meaning and significance. Discussion dramatizes this truth as no other classroom activity can, for the medium of instruction matches the goal of instruction. This convergence is particularly important in a class like English 07 since, as Shor notes, "politics reside not only in subject matter but in the discourse of the classroom" (14):

When education is a participatory sphere . . . , meaning and purpose are constructed mutually, not imposed from the top down as orthodoxies. The participatory classroom is a "free speech" classroom in the best sense, because it invites all expressions from all the students. An empowering class thrives on a lively exchange of thoughts and feelings. The way students speak, feel, and think about any subject is the starting point for a critical study of themselves, their society, and their academic subjects. (22)

Discussion in English 07 provides students with the capacity to construct "meaning and purpose" in their reading and writing just as it endows them with the freedom to construct "meaning and purpose" in their education. They no longer experience education as "something done to them" but rather as "something they do" (Shor 20). Furthermore, because their words are part of the substance of the course,

discussion dignifies their language, giving students the voice they must have if they are to be successful in college and career and life. Given that voice, they can then begin to teach themselves and, perhaps for the first time, to participate in their own education.

CHAPTER 5

"AWAKENINGS": VOICES OF REFLECTION AND REVISION

Shor notes that "students expect the teacher to speak first, most, loudest, last. . . . Students learn to speak least and lowest" (263). Yet it is not the teacher's voice which reveals most about what happens in a classroom. Students' voices reveal far more; students' voices, complete with their subtle intonations, their unique accents, and their individual inflections, betray the most important effects of a course. Indeed, as Clowes asserts, we need to know more about the "the effects of participating in remediation programs on student aspirations and attitudes" (484)--in our zeal to prove programs effective, he implies, we sometimes overlook what participation in these programs means to students themselves. And Mary Louise Buley-Meissner reminds us of another of the truths we too often forget: as educators, "we discover meaning in the reality of immediacy: the faces before us, the eyes alert with comprehension or shadowed with doubt, the hands reaching toward understanding, the silence that can signal the beginning or the end of a dialogue" (212). We learn much, Buley-Meissner concludes, "when we allow ourselves to learn from our students--when we try to interpret the intricate texts of their voices and histories (whether spoken or written). . . ." (211).

Chapter 5 is a record of some of those spoken and written voices--a chronicle of students' experiences in English 07 from their earliest reactions to being placed in developmental English to their retrospective assessments of the value of the course. Statistically, success rates for students in English 07 have been encouraging. As the analysis in Appendix C indicates, students enrolled in English 07 have consistently fared better than their cohorts in other developmental English classes at Virginia Western, and their rate of success in subsequent first-year English courses compares favorably with that of students in the general population of the college. More telling than those statistics, however, and more revealing about the true content of English 07 are students' comments about the class. Theirs are the voices that ultimately define the essence of the course; theirs, the voices that locate its heart.

* * *

Students' Attitudes Toward Reading and Writing

Most students who are forced to enroll in developmental reading and writing approach English 07 with fear and reservation: for these students, remedial English is not just another course. For some--those who were already aware of their shortcomings as readers and writers--English 07 is the course they have been dreading since they decided to pursue a higher education. They already know the results of their

placement test before they commit the first words to paper, and they have already imagined the terror of those first agonizing days in class. For others--those who are uncertain of their ability to succeed in college--the class represents an immediate setback and a decisive test: they believe that this is the course that will prove their failure or herald their success. For almost all students, however, the decision to come to Virginia Western has not been a casual choice, for they begin their college careers with firm purpose and resolute determination.

Many developmental students come to Virginia Western out of economic necessity. Enrollment in college is a true dividing line for them because a college education represents the opportunity either to escape or to avoid poverty and, ultimately, to better their standard of living. To these students, in particular, education is not merely an intellectual adventure, not just personal improvement; rather, its significance is heightened because a college degree promises social and economic improvement. As Carla, an above-average student in English 07, said, "I want to be able to make more money than minimum wage. If I ever got married and something happened, I would want to make sure I could support my family. I want to be independent and not have to rely on someone else to support myself." No doubt speaking for many of her classmates, another student, Dana, expressed a similar

motive in one of her first journal entries:

The reason that led me to pursue a college career was I wanted to make a better life for myself, and working a penny job wasn't going to do that for me. I wanted to pursue college to see if it was for me and if I could do it. Even if I graduate from college and I don't get a good job like the one I trained for, at least I have that piece of paper that will say that I am qualified for something besides flipping hamburgers or watching somebody else's kids.

Her statement reflects the mixture of tenacious desire and tenuous idealism that distinguishes many of the students who sit in developmental reading and writing classes.

Donald is an adult student who had already "struggled with four-and-a-half dollars an hour" and who had earlier discovered "it's not going to go far . . . not going to go far at all." He had decided to return to college not just for economic reasons but also for another motive that many students share: to improve his life, to gain self-respect, and to realize a future unlike his past. Discussing his desire for a higher education, he said,

I feel like I've got a lot of things to make up for. I don't know if it was something that built up in me over the years, but when I would throw one of my fits, I guess underneath I was really saying to myself, 'well, this ain't the way I want things to be.' That's when I decided to come on in here and try to get through Virginia Western. . . . The main reason I'm back here is for me now.

Admitting that he had "done so much before to destroy all of

my character," Donald viewed college as an opportunity to "do something that you're really proud of, really assert myself as to what I really am and what I really care about." At the same time that Donald professed to have returned to school for "number one, for [him]self," though, he also hoped that his decision might prompt his son, who had dropped out of school and "was following right along in [his father's] footsteps," to consider going to college as well. Donald's admission that he had enrolled in college with his children in mind reveals another of the fundamental motives that many students share:

I try to talk to him; I try to tell him, "while you're still young, do something with yourself. Don't wait till you get to be the age where I'm at. Do something now." I hope that maybe later on he can say, "well, heck, Daddy went back to school at his age. Maybe I should think about it while I'm still young." I've been hoping above all that if it would influence anybody at all, it would influence my son. I haven't wanted to be the boasting type towards my kids--like "look what I'm doing"--but at the same time I want them to try to see what I am doing, that I am really sincere about this.

Donald thus viewed his own matriculation in college at least partly as a means of emphasizing to his children the importance of education. As still another student remarked, "I was motivated years ago to come back to school, but the situation didn't make it good for me to do that. . . . But my son--don't we have this thing that we want our children to fulfill a dream that we couldn't?"

What is generally true among many of these students, then, is that education is an endeavor weighted with especial significance, its importance elevated by the extraordinary reasons that underlie their decisions to return to school. Also true is the fact that many of these same students recognize reading and writing as the chief components of a college education. Indeed, to them, poor literate skills are the immediate indicators of educational and social failure; superior skills, on the other hand, become the hallmark of success, poising them for membership in the society of the educationally advantaged. To these students, improved reading and writing become the cornerstone that joins a college education with economic success and social acceptance.

Dana, for example, discussed the importance of education and correct English in the same breath, her very remarks reflecting the equation she had subconsciously made between them: "Education is important, I see. I didn't at first, but nobody wants to talk to someone who does not know correct English or speaks in such a way that it is not understandable." Janie, another student in English 07, made a comparable connection between her ability to communicate effectively and her chances to excel in the workplace:

I use language everyday on my job. I work with children so I have to be sure I make my words very clear. I also have to communicate with the parents of these children, so I have to make sure I use

the proper words and use them in the right way.

For these and for like students, the development of reading and writing skills thus represents the threshold for success in college and the benchmark for advancement in society.

Tempering the motivation that often defines these students, however, are legion problems that limit their abilities as readers and writers, many of which stem from their lack of experience with the dialect of academia, standard written English. Not surprisingly, few English 07 students are avid readers, nor have they written extensively in high school. In that regard, Larry's background is indicative of what many remedial English students have experienced prior to coming to Virginia Western. "In all my English classes in high school," he said, "we never wrote papers. We wrote one paper, and that was a research paper, and that was it." Another student, William, elaborated upon a similar paucity of constructive experiences with reading and writing:

[My teachers] in high school wouldn't teach. They would go over it, and if you asked for help, they would go over the same thing again. They didn't clarify nothing for you. They didn't really care about whether the students learned or nothing--just pass 'em and get 'em out of here.

What writing we did, [the teachers] wouldn't come back and tell you, "hey, you, this sentence isn't punctuated right." So finally I just got to where I didn't punctuate at all. I didn't try to

punctuate. I just went ahead and did it, and they accepted it and went on. Basically, they just graded it and went on. They never did write comments on it or nothing; they just put a letter grade on it. Never had to rewrite them. If you could write your name, basically, man, you passed.

Of course, not all students have experienced the startling indifference that William alleges against his teachers. By the time they reach college, most English 07 students have nonetheless learned a lasting lesson from high school English classes: that reading and writing are fraught with danger and charged with the possibility of failure. Because these students also recognize the importance of reading and writing--and because a college education is so valuable to them--English becomes a source of deep-seated conflict. At once threatening but attractive, reading and writing develop into an unstable mixture of ambivalence and desire, resulting finally in profound fear. Indeed, McGrath and Spear contend that community college students "are caught in a double bind [because they] suspect their own ability to do intellectual work, to handle ideas and language, yet still hold them to be important, as indicators of personal worth" (25); and if this is true for community college students in general, it is profoundly true for developmental reading and writing students.

This conflict, which casts reading and writing as "simultaneously alluring, but emotionally charged, and deeply

problematic" (McGrath and Spear 25), is reflected not only in students' classroom conduct but also in their very words. William, who wanted desperately to be the first person in his family to graduate from college, was quick to admit that he almost did not even apply for admission: "When I first came in, I was scared. I've been out of school for four years, and I've always been scared of coming back to school because I didn't know whether I'd flunk out." English, he said, was the primary reason he delayed his education for so long. Hopeful that he could write a "perfect paper," he could also identify writing as the immediate source of his fear: "Writing--I was scared of it. That's one thing that kept me out of college for awhile. If I could have punctuated my sentences, I'd have come to school." Carla expressed her attitude more succinctly but no less forcefully. Defining the uneasy ambivalence that haunts many remedial English students, she wrote in one of her first journal entries:

My general attitude toward reading and writing is not very good. I know reading and writing are important, but that does not mean I have to like it. . . . Someday I will get through all this school shit and do what I want to. I know I'm not dumb or anything and I don't feel sorry for myself. Well, that's not all true. I do get very frustrated and upset. I've always struggled, and I still haven't caught up. I never will.

Teachers are sometimes tempted to hear in comments like these only resentment or despair; they treat such words as a

letter of resignation, one which they promptly accept. If one listens to Carla's statement more closely, however, he can discern in the very progression of her discourse the conflict that pervades the consciousness of many remedial English students: a conflict that manifests itself in her acknowledgment of the importance of literate skills and her admission of her own apparent inability to master them.

At first, Carla admits that her "attitude toward reading and writing are not very good," but immediately afterward, in a moment of reflective honesty, she acknowledges that they "are important." Not content to leave her thoughts at that point, she again asserts that their importance "does not mean that [she] has to like them"--an addendum that effectively neutralizes her earlier statement about their significance. She then scans into the future when she will be through with "all this school shit"--a rhetorical leap that, at once, degrades the importance of school (accented by the word "shit") while allowing her imaginatively to escape the conflict which it represents. Next, she affirms, almost rebelliously, that she is "not dumb" and does not "feel sorry for [her]self"; however, in another moment of honesty, she admits, "that's not all true," that she does "get very frustrated and upset." Finally, in a statement that suggests resignation and closure but which actually signals insecurity

and unresolved conflict, Carla laments, "I've always struggled and I still haven't caught up. I never will."

The progression of Carla's comments therefore reflects the aversion and attraction provoked by reading and writing. I don't like reading and writing, she states; reading and writing are important, she admits. I don't feel sorry for myself, she claims; I do get frustrated and upset, she confides. And when she says that she will never succeed, what she really means is that she wants to desperately. Conflict thus masquerades as resolution, and fear is disguised as carelessness--a carelessness, however, that even Carla herself cannot quite accept. Moreover, in another of the equations that characterize developmental English students, Carla has moved within a matter of sentences from an assessment about the relative importance of reading and writing to an evaluation of herself: she cannot think about the one without speculating about the other, so closely is her use of language connected with her self-esteem.

To Shor, the complex battery of attitudes that Carla embodies "speak[s] to the disabling consciousness that [developmental] students bring to class, the interferences to learning" (147). In fact, Carla's very words echo Shor's contention that "a passive curriculum arouses in many students a variety of negative emotions: self-doubt, hostility, resentment, boredom, indignation, cynicism, disrespect,

frustration, the desire to escape" (23). Countering this passive curriculum and its peripheral effects is what Shor refers to as "empowering education"--education that, in its content and approach, strives to dissolve students' "disabling consciousness" by arming them with a consciousness of their own abilities. Instead of concentrating on what students are not, this brand of education finds its substance in what students are; instead of denying what students might speak, it "move[s] students away from passivity and cynicism" by acknowledging that "students are people whose voices are worth listening to, whose minds can carry the weight of serious intellectual work, and whose thought and feeling can entertain transforming self and society" (26). Ultimately, according to Shor, "the goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change" (15).

The Importance of Teaching Reading and Writing as Complementary Processes

By their own testimonials, many students in English 07 believe that the class provided them with just this type of empowering education. About the course's approach to reading and writing, students were generally enthusiastic. Adopting as their own the founding premise of English 07, they had grown to see reading and writing as inseparable companions.

One student noted, "reading and writing are really the same thing--to me, they are. You can't do reading without writing." Another student, almost incredulous, stated, "I can't imagine that it's taken this long to get [a reading and writing course] into gear; I can't imagine it ever not being done like this." And yet another student, Debbie, contrasted her participation in English 07 to her sister's experience in separate reading and writing classes:

I like the way [the course] put reading and writing together. I loved that because. . . I look at my sister now. She has reading in one class and writing in another class, and she's got homework in both--homework that doesn't really match. I think it was better to have [reading and writing] together because they do go together. I liked having it that way.

Even more important than students' philosophical perspectives on teaching reading with writing, however, was the understanding they gained about the reading and writing processes. From that standpoint, the course apparently achieved its goal of helping students develop personal strategies for approaching reading and writing assignments. Writing about her reading, Dana declared, "as a reader I can understand boring as well as interesting passages because I make outside notes on my paper. As I read, I can put down on paper what I'm thinking, and then I can put them all together." A second student named Terry described in even more detail how the process of reading had changed for her:

I now approach reading quite differently than I ever have before. Before English 07, I would pick up a book and just start reading. Now, I preview the text by looking at the title, the introduction, and the conclusion. By doing this I have a better understanding of what the writer will be discussing. I also mark up the text with underlining, highlighting, and making notes. I underline specific examples and detail, and I highlight the thesis and topic sentences. I also make notes about interesting and directly related parts. After completing the paragraphs, I will usually scan through them a second time. This is quite effective for me in remembering what I have read. Discussing what we have read in class is another good method of recollection for me.

Strategies like these seem to have worked, improving students' comprehension and altering their very attitudes toward texts. Larry's initial "hatred" of reading had moderated only slightly, to "not really lik[ing] it that much"; but he did admit that the strategies we had discussed in class had proved valuable:

Just the way [the course] taught us how to read--it makes it so much easier. If you actually do it, then the majority of the time you're going to do well. If you just do it one time, you can tell the difference by just how much you can remember. If someone asks you a question that might be totally off the wall, you can actually remember [the information]--things you wouldn't think you could remember.

Finally, many students emerged from the course more comfortable with their roles as readers; for them, reading had been transformed from a matter of passive comprehension into

an opportunity for active interpretation. "Before I'd always read passively," said Amy. "I'd skim everything and only focus in on what would catch my eye or what I was interested in." She then continued:

Now I'm wanting to know everything that I read. If I'm going to read it, I want to understand everything that I'm reading about it. I don't want to pass one word that I don't understand. I think that's one of the negative things I've done all along and didn't realize it. Now I can understand how the context and the text feed off of each other, and I can not be intimidated by a passage that would have intimidated me. English 07 has gotten me out of being intimidated by reading.

Just as English 07 helped students make sense of the reading process, easing them beyond the fear of the unknown, it also helped them develop more systematic approaches to the process of writing. In this case, too, the course seems to have provoked many students to cultivate from disorder and randomness an individual process that enabled them to complete assignments successfully. William described in detail the process he had developed--a process that assumes even more meaning when it is gauged against his earlier haphazard approach to writing:

I think my writing's changed. When I first came here and went over and took my placement test, I didn't know what a thesis statement was. I didn't know what a topic sentence was. Basically, it's like, [they said] write a thesis statement, and I just wrote down what I thought it was. Now I understand how to write a paper.

[In high school] I'd just put a bunch of words on a piece of paper and hand it in. I never did bother about making paragraphs; I just made it one long paper. A new paragraph--never at all. . . . It's like, "hey, get a new piece of notebook paper. Here's this paragraph, and I guess I'll start another one here."

Now, the first thing I do is sit down and contemplate a little bit, scratch my head, walk around a little bit. Then I sit down and write my thesis statement. Afterwards, I build my body around my thesis so everything pertains to the thesis. Then my topic sentences--they come out relatively the same--but it's easier for me to get a thesis statement first. Then I can work on it from there. After I do that, I always write my conclusion--before I write my introduction. That way, I can know what my introduction will be. It's just the way I write.

From a random activity typified by his "put[ting] a bunch of words on a piece of paper" and beginning a new paragraph with each new sheet of notebook paper, William had developed a series of steps that allowed him to approach a writing assignment deliberately and thoughtfully. In some ways very orthodox, in other ways unorthodox, William's heuristic was one that allowed him to make sense of the complex and daunting task of beginning an essay. His very ability to define this process--and to define it so articulately--no doubt provided William with some assurance that his future attempts to write effectively would transcend pointless and fruitless stabs in the dark. He was not alone. Donald had learned to rewrite his essays instead of "throwing up [his] hands and saying

'hell with it'"; Sherry had grown to see revision as opportunity instead of punishment, as "a chance to see if you improved"; and Larry now understood the power of multiple drafts, for "in rough drafts you can write whatever you want and then go back and fix it." As Carla wrote in a later journal entry, "all through my high school and junior high school years, I have wanted someone to teach me how to write a paper. This year is the first year I have been able to catch on and make it work. I really feel a lot better and more confident about my writing."

The Value of Reading and Writing Assignments

Underlying students' new understandings of the reading and writing processes were the reading and writing assignments they completed in the class. Most students agreed that the assignments had been helpful and their sequence purposeful. Donald stated that the assignments had been for him "like walking up a flight of stairs," not just because of their thematic progression but also because of their advancement through various rhetorical modes. Students appreciated the journal, too: one student wrote, wryly but seriously, that she had "really not hated writing the journal assignments because it is nice writing about experiences and then going back and reading them later on"; another, that "the journals helped prepare us for writing our papers"; and yet another, that "the journal [was] the only thing [she'd] ever written and really

felt good about" because she had been able to "write things that [were] totally [her]."

The most telling testimonials, however, came from students who had already completed English 111; they were the ones in the best position to judge whether the assignments in English 07 had truly prepared them for college composition. When questioned about his preparedness for English 111, Larry spoke of the advantage his familiarity with rhetorical patterns had provided him:

Everything I learned in English 07 I use in English 111. . . . For instance, we had to write another cause-effect essay in English 111, so I already knew what to do, and I already had ideas of how to do it. Now, I mean, it wasn't easy, but it was a lot easier going through English 07 than if I would have gone straight into English 111. I wouldn't have done nearly as well.

Debbie's experience was similar to Larry's. Recalling her first reaction to being placed in English 07, she later talked about how the course had helped her in her first-year English class:

I realized right away that I needed to be in [English 07] because I had been out of classes [for so long]. I didn't even know how to write an essay; I had forgotten how to write one, so I needed to know the form of it, what it contained, the different types of writing--cause-effect, exemplification, and all that. So I needed to practice on it, because if my teacher had said, "I need you to write this," I wouldn't have known what to write, and I wouldn't have known how to put it in a form. . . . In

fact, that's the only way I made it through English 111, really, because I could read the writing assignments we had [in 07], and once I read them, then I could use that to help me with my paper and give me some type of idea. You don't get any ideas there [in English 111]; it's, "OK, you've got to do this," and "this is what I want," so if I hadn't had 07, I would have been really, really lost.

It is surely possible to interpret Debbie's remarks more as a comment on the ineffectiveness of her English 111 class than as a testimonial to the effectiveness of English 07; however, one cannot dispute the essential truth that, at least in her mind, what she had learned in English 07 contributed to her success in college-level English. Nor can one deny the unfortunate truth that college English courses like Debbie's certainly exist and that it is probably in classes like these that developmental students have the least chance for success--all the more reason to help these students develop effective approaches to writing before they attempt college-level work.

Success for some English 07 students stretched even beyond English 111, and these students again credited the assignments they completed in developmental English as being instrumental to their achievement. Debbie said, "I have learned to enjoy reading again, and I have used my reading skills to benefit me in my health class"; William found satisfaction in his ability to decipher "the instructions and

wording in math problems"; and Katie, who will be the first English 07 student to graduate from Virginia Western, insisted that what she had learned had "definitely" helped her: "I'm on my second paper in biology now, and I got a 100 on my first paper." Katie also remembered the first formal writing assignment she had completed in English 07, an assignment that, interestingly, would find a later counterpart in a report for her biology class:

I remember the very first [paper]. That's because you had us put as many descriptive terms in there as possible, and it was about the lake I live on--Ascot Lake--and about walking down to it. When I wrote it, you had us go down to that place beforehand and think about all our thoughts and feelings and write down details and then translate them into a real descriptive paragraph. Mine was chocked full. I remember going to the thesaurus and trying to find even better words that would fit it.

Three years after she wrote that paragraph, Katie was working on another paper--an admittedly different paper--once more at the lake:

Right now I'm writing about duck populations. I'm counting the duck populations at the neighborhood lake. I go into more detail about the scientific names, how many different species there are, more number crunching. For example, I had to learn how to do a table and a graph. In that respect, [scientific] writing is different. Writing for English is more creative. Writing for science is kind of blah; it's kind of straightforward, from the horse's mouth. Really, there's a certain amount of talent involved on the part of the writer

because you want to be able to organize it all, but it's not like writing for English. I prefer the latter.

Katie's ability to define the differences between "writing for English" and "writing for science" demonstrate her growth as a reader and writer. By the time she was compiling her biology report, Katie had moved beyond the descriptive paragraph she had composed for English 07, yet it was that paragraph--and her other assignments in the course--which had functioned as the basis for a literacy repertoire she had since expanded in other classes. With the lake serving as a symbolic setting, Katie had demonstrated how her knowledge of reading and writing had been transformed by later literate experiences: as a reader and a writer she had travelled far, but she was still very conscious of where she had begun. She was still surrounded by the knowledge she had gained in English 07.

The assignments in English 07 thus appear to have provided many students with a practical foundation for later college coursework. With their thematic emphasis upon "The Self," "Self with Family," "Self with Friends," and "Self with Mate," the assignments in the class seem also to have stirred students to a process of self-examination, making the reading and writing in which they engaged more meaningful. Barry Kroll believes that these "personal, emotional, and experiential bridges" (21) are critical for any reader or

writer, for they enable a reader to participate in the life of a text and empower a writer to breathe life into his own text. Certainly, the "bridges" that English 07 students were able to construct between their personal experiences and the texts they composed, whether through reading or writing, enlivened the process of communication for them. Carla suggested this when she observed that it is "much easier writing about important experiences," and Amy confirmed it when she said that the assignments in the class had prompted many students "to look into themselves and ask 'who am I?'" "I can see people [in the class]," she went on, "and they're learning things about themselves they never even bothered to look into. I think that if you can open up those doors, you can open up their desire to read and write." Her comments echo those of Buley-Meissner, who states that "'self' understanding is essential to students' development as writers [and] thinkers" (212).

For students like Carla and Amy, reading and writing had become the grist for personal exploration, creating an open vista into their lives. A vital part of their attempt to know themselves and form themselves--"you can't be who you want to be until you learn who you are," confided Amy--reading and writing had grown inseparable from the process of constructing identity. Katie described what that process had meant to her, both as a reader and a writer:

To me, reading and writing [in English 07] were a release. I had all these pent-up thoughts and stuff. The four years I was out of high school I didn't do anything but vegetate. Maybe for that reason, the course was a real workshop in discovery. Just discovery--discovery about myself and how I treat others and how others treat me. Discovery about the different people I meet. You know, when you read, you look in there and you think, "wow, that's happened to me before." So you realize we're all sort of a mirror image. And when you write, you form an opinion, because you've got a bunch of thoughts running around up here, but that doesn't mean they're coherent. And when you see them on paper, it's like, "yeah, I never thought of that before. I didn't think I was capable of doing that."

"An open door," "a release," "discovery": for Katie, reading and writing had become an ongoing process of continual discovery. Just as Friere advocates, her encounters with language had "diminish[ed] the distance . . . between reading words and reading the world" (Shor and Friere 183). Because of her ability to identify with the assignments in the class, she saw herself in what she read, and she saw herself again in what she wrote. In each case, she saw a self she had not recognized before, one made manifest precisely because of her capacity to create a "personal, emotional, or experiential bridge" (Kroll 21). A specific advantage of the type of "generative theme" that Shor advocates (46-48), relevant reading and writing became the means by which Katie was

accomplishing a revision of self, endowing language with a value that extended far beyond the confines of the classroom.

Later assignments--those that focused on "Self with Family," "Self with Friends," and "Self with Mate"--seem to have prompted students to a revision of their relationships with others as well. Bartholomae and Petrosky note that "it is not just the 'subject' that is changed when one turns it into an artifact, but a writer's relationship to those around him that is changed as well" (7). For many students, the literate development that resulted from the readings and writings in English 07 apparently did change their relationships with their families and friends. Sometimes the changes were difficult to negotiate, as William suggested when he recalled how his interaction with his father had been altered:

My dad's only got a sixth grade education. When I come in using the grammar I've learned in class, he gives me a funny look like, "Speak English, boy, so I can understand what you're saying." Like yesterday I learned [the meaning of the word] "diligent." I went home, I said, "Dad, you're real diligent," and he goes, "What?" He goes, "What's this stuff you're talking about me?" Like, "No, Dad, it means you're a hard worker." And he says, "Oh, OK."

More often, however, these changes assumed the form of students' deepened appreciation of the people around them, the reading and writing assignments themselves sensitizing students to the significance of their relationships with loved

ones. One student wrote in her journal about the effect of her essay "Like Mother, Like Daughter," which "reminded me how much my mother and I are alike." "It also made me appreciate her even more," she added, "because I realized how much she has done for me and how much I love her." Another student recalled a paper she had written about "[her] German heritage, and a little bit about [her] mother." "I'd never really bothered to ask my mother these personal questions," she said. "If it hadn't been for the paper forcing me to find out these things and put them down on paper, then I would have never discovered these things about my mother's heritage." And yet another student, who had originally planned to write a contrast paper about her late father and her stepfather, eventually adopted a different perspective toward the man who had, in her mind, usurped her father's position. In the process of composing the assignment, she said, she had learned to see her stepfather differently, so she had turned the essay into a comparison. "Since I wrote that paper," she shared, "I feel closer to my stepfather than I ever have before."

Whether they were reading or writing, then, students in English 07 professed that the assignments they completed helped them redefine their view of their relationships, in some cases even prompting them to new insights. Their significance not limited to relationships in the present, the assignments seem also to have served for several students as

a meeting point between the past and the present or the present and the future. As students reexamined their relationships with the people who were important to them, reading and writing became a bridge that enabled them to make the past alive and the future possible. One student, Dorothy, relived through both reading and writing the death of her mother:

On January 5, 1991, at 2:00 in the morning she died. This was the most tragic and devastating moment of my life. The thoughts about not talking to her, not seeing her, not kissing or hugging her again were a weight crushing me. At this moment I felt half my life was gone with her. My childhood and all the years I had spent with her were gone, and I was left alone. I felt like somebody had put iron curtains around my heart. To say goodbye to my mother was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. For a long period afterwards, I felt like a zombie. I will always feel her loss. I loved her very much.

And Donald declared that what he had read and what he had written had altered his view of family. His participation in the course had given him new hope that he could reclaim the past and realize his future by establishing a new relationship with his family:

Before I started in this course, I didn't really . . . you know, as far as my children were concerned, I really wanted to try to be something to show them that I could be a caring, sincere, and loving father. I guess what I'm trying to say is that this has really been . . . I can't really say this was using the school or the class or anything like

that, but the class has really helped me see more of relationships, you know, what they are. You know, you just don't go on and forget them and everything like that. It's really been eye-opening. . . . It's really bringing out some things that I thought five years ago would never be brought out. . . . Am I getting this down?

In words like these, one can glimpse the power of reading and writing to alter perspective and value. Though still not quite sure himself, Donald had indeed "gotten it down." The reading and writing assignments in the class had merged with Donald's life and prompted a process of reflection that had begun to change--or perhaps merely to magnify--his attitude toward his family. In either case, Donald had emerged from the course a changed person, one with a different outlook on himself and on the importance of relationships. Revision had become the stimulus for invention, or as Donald himself later said, implying how the work he had completed in English 07 might affect the life-long labor he had begun, "I guess I've still got a long ways to go, but I'm finding out a little bit more about myself with each assignment."

The Significance of Social Relations in the Classroom

While the assignments in English 07 may have been the immediate stimulus for self-discovery in the class, the social relations of the classroom exerted a profound effect upon student learning as well. To be sure, the assignments themselves may have created the potential for personal

exploration, provoking students to thoughtful self-examination, but students' relationships with the teacher and their classmates provided the daily vitality that enabled them to realize that potential. Students' attitudes toward the teacher (which are, in reality, a reflection of the teacher's attitude toward them) and the collegiality they felt with other members of the class thus served as the catalysts that precipitated acceptance, involvement, discussion, and individual growth.

Corroborating this contention is Shor's belief that a student-centered classroom "approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other" (15); this dynamic "society" is best fostered, he adds, when "teachers and students . . . desocialize from the dominant influences on their development" (203). Although these two statements at first appear almost paradoxical, the contradiction seemingly announced in Shor's alternate use of the words "social" and "desocialize," they actually complement one another. For it is not until "the walls between students and teachers . . . become lower" (29), not until students and teachers abandon the familiar roles by which they define themselves and one another that they can create a "border culture [or] learning area between students' speech and understandings and those of the teacher" (203).

The creation of this "border culture" seems to have been central in the minds of many English 07 students. Like William, who had grown to regard teachers--especially English teachers--as remote and uncaring, many of the students in the course had apparently come to judge their instructors with suspicion and even hostility. Donald's experiences in a GED class had shaped his attitude toward teachers, his comments about them echoing William's earlier recollections of his high school English teachers:

When I was studying for my GED, the teachers just ran us through. If you wanted to do anything on your own, you had to stay after your regular class, and the teachers acted like they were reluctant to help you--like they had plans that they had to do. They had to get home and take care of their personal lives and everything like that. I'm surprised as many of us got through that as we did.

Donald's statement reflects an attitude that was pervasive among English 07 students. Indeed, Donald had learned a lesson that many of his classmates knew but could not quite articulate: that indifference is the privilege of authority. Whether their power was manifested in their unwillingness to help after class or in their prerogative to proclaim grades without justification, teachers had become the symbolic representations of authority to these students, gatekeepers who guarded a privileged body of knowledge and who were fully capable of repulsing an onslaught of the "unworthy" and

"unlearned"--all of those, in other words, who were intruders in the academy.

Such an attitude runs directly counter to the qualities that Shor attributes to the empowering educator, who refuses to "[define] students as deficits to be filled with skills, words, and facts. . ." (200). When students in English 07 discovered that they were accepted for who they were, as they were, many were able to disencumber themselves of their negative attitudes and the passive role they had assumed in previous English classes. Finally freed from the confining view that teachers had earlier imposed upon them--as individuals who were limited in ability and who brought nothing of value to the classroom--students were able to recast themselves as capable and active learners.

This transformation was spurred by subtle features of the class, my stance toward evaluation, for instance. Probably the source of greatest anxiety to students--and also the most prominent way in which teachers exercise their authority--evaluation eventually became a non-threatening enterprise for most English 07 students. As Larry suggested, they viewed evaluation as a cooperative, constructive process of growth, not as a unilateral, degrading mechanism of reduction--and certainly not as another reminder of the inequality between teachers and students:

When we turned in our papers, you didn't
tear up the whole essay and then throw it

out like they did in high school. You told us how we could make corrections and what we needed to change if we wanted to. You gave us more ideas instead of telling us it was all wrong. When I turned something in and I found out it wasn't right, I didn't freak out or feel real bad about it. I didn't get all tensed up. I didn't feel bad about letting somebody else read my work.

Debbie shared a similar perspective, her comments serving as a further testimonial to the importance of the partnership she perceived with her teacher:

I liked the way you told me if my papers were good reading. I liked the positive things you would write instead of all the negative things. I liked the positive comments like "this was a good story" or "I enjoyed reading it," because I'll be looking for that now [in my college composition class], and it's like, no comment. It's like "you left out this." Since you encouraged me, I felt like I had to write my best; otherwise, you would have been disappointed. It made me work a lot harder and put a lot more effort into it.

Finally, Amy recalled the encouragement she had received in English 07. At first timid about returning to school, her initial self-doubt later blossomed into self-confidence and self-respect--a change that had been nurtured, she said, by the acceptance she sensed in the classroom. Two years after her enrollment in English 07, Amy remembered that as one of the most powerful outcomes of the course for her:

I think the reason most people won't go on [to college] is because they're too ashamed or embarrassed. No one should have done that to them in the first

place. But they're too ashamed to let anybody know where they've come from or what they don't know, and so they won't start over. There are a lot of teachers--the more they know about you, the more they degrade you. But in English 07, I always felt like the more you knew about me, the more you accepted me for who I was, even with all my problems and idiosyncrasies. The most important lesson you taught me was that I could learn. You just can't imagine what a world of difference that made to me; that was the key that opened up everything else. . . . When education is an important thing to you when you're young, and when you don't do well at it when you're older, anything that changes that is important. That's why English 07 was so important to me. . . . It was a late bloomer's dream.

All of these students, according to Friere's interpretation, "were suffering self-restraint because of an external restriction coming from other teachers, who had told them they were not capable of learning" (Shor and Friere 27). However, all of them had learned to abandon their conception of teachers as judges and taskmasters; they had learned to embrace instead a vision of teachers as partners and themselves as capable learners. To use Shor's terminology, they had succeeded at desocializing themselves from the traditional influences that usually divide teacher from student. For these students, the destructive inequities that had haunted earlier classrooms had been at least temporarily dispelled: in their place had materialized a "symbolic frontier, a developmental borderland," " a zone of

transformation where the culture of teachers and students [met]" (Shor 204, 203).

Even more important than student-teacher relationships in fostering learning in English 07, however, were student-student relationships. Again and again, students testified to the significance of class discussion and their relations with their classmates. To Larry, "the discussions were very important--the best thing about the whole class," and to Donald, they were the means by which "[his] other classmates" became "[his] other friends." An extension of the "developmental borderland" created by students' perception of the teacher, discussion became more than a forum for understanding the reading and writing assignments in the class. Though that function was certainly primary, class discussion also became the medium through which students established connections with subject matter and with one another. In a cycle of continuous generation, discussion prompted personal involvement, and personal involvement yielded further discussion as students melded into a community of readers and writers. Ted's acknowledgement that his father abandoned his family when he was two, Diedre's revelation that she had her first child when she was fifteen, Leslie's stories about her parents' volatile marriage and violent divorce, Henry's admission that he was a recovering addict--all represented unsolicited personal disclosures that both

invigorated the classroom and expanded the possibility for further openness as students lived through the themes and readings that comprised the course. As Debbie said,

When you get to put yourself into the class, you learn a lot more, and you feel a lot better. . . . In a way, it helped everybody get to know each other, and we talked a lot more. Really, that was one of the closest classes I've ever had, because in most of my classes now, we're not real friends.

The open discussions that students enjoyed thus proved crucial to creating a sense of community in the classroom. Because students realized they could learn from one another, the discussions also both bolstered their self-esteem while positioning them as equals among their colleagues. This equality seemed especially important to some students, perhaps because, at least in English, they had always perceived themselves as academically inferior. From that standpoint, the camaraderie students experienced as members of an academic community--and the purposeful resolve it engendered--emerged as contrasts to the relationships they had experienced in high school. Speaking about this difference, Larry noted, "in high school, most people would make fun of anything you wrote, just because you were in high school." But in English 07, he continued, "everybody feels the same way because we've all been put in the same position." Donald echoed that sentiment:

It seems like since I started [this class]--I don't know if it's just me or my imagination. I don't think it's my

imagination--some of the friendships and relationships I've made seem different. They're different friendships than what I've been accustomed to. All of us that are here in this classroom, we all look at each other on the same level. . . . Sitting in here and having the open discussions like we're seeing, I say to myself, "well, in the long run, I've really thought in terms of what everybody else does." That's made me feel like I'm really on just about the same level and standing where everybody else is."

Released from a defensive posture in the classroom, the result of his realizing that he was "standing where everybody else [was]," Donald was also freed to concentrate on improving his reading and writing. Because he did not have to defend himself against charges of ignorance, to either his teacher or his classmates, he could admit what he did not know and strive to learn what he needed to know:

Everybody I've ever asked for advice or everybody who's ever said something to me or asked me for advice, we've always been open for suggestions, even open for a little bit of criticism. Even when we evaluate each other's papers--it's criticism sometimes, but it's a different type of criticism. It's a criticism to help somebody. It's not just "you're a dumb, dumb" or "you idiot"--it's different. . . . It's a different kind of relationship. It's an accepting kind of criticism or kind of praise.

The theme of acceptance thus arises again. In a statement that reflected, at once, his new-found feelings of competence and confidence, Donald had captured the essence of an "empowering education" (Shor): students helping one

another, listening to one another, learning from one another. A common ground of experience and language--a frontier they could never have discovered in a teacher-centered classroom--had convinced them that they were capable individuals who could assume responsibility for their own learning. They had renegotiated the social relations of the course "from a focus on [the teacher's] authority in the classroom to a focus on [students'] authority in their worlds" (Brooke 1). In the process, they had discovered the deeper significance of what Amy meant when she said, "I had it in me all along."

* * *

Conclusions

Steiner contends that "through language, so much of which is focused inward to our private selves, we reject the empirical inevitability of the world. Through language, we construct . . . 'alternities of being'" (473). The truth of Steiner's assertion is borne out in what students have said and written about English 07, for the course does indeed seem to have changed many students' abilities to read and write just as it has altered their attitudes toward themselves and learning. In both interviews and written commentaries, students consistently suggested that the class guided them to a greater enthusiasm for English and fostered among them a deeper appreciation of reading and writing. Amy, for example, said that she now had a "greater love" for reading and

writing, which she had come to regard as "a lot more fun than probably a lot of people realize." Freed from "the rhetoric of the controlling idea," she had found that she "didn't have to have a good education to write what [she] felt and what [she] thought." If given the opportunity," she added, "all I would do is just sit back and write, read and write."

Although Amy's exuberance may be unusual, her response is indicative of the attitude shared by other students in the course. Betsy, who expected the class "to be a real struggle for [her] because English was one of [her] worst subjects," discovered to her amazement that English was her "favorite" subject. Like other students who had been unable to master "all the stuff that English teachers in the past made seem so important," she had realized, "I might not know what you call this and what you call that, but I could still construct it." Larry's initial embarrassment at being placed in English 07--of feeling "dumb or stupid or something"--had been replaced by a desire to write: "I like to write papers now; I'd rather write papers now than anything." And Donald, who remembered his first thoughts in the class--"I ain't ever going to be able to do this"--later said, somewhat sheepishly, "It might sound strange to you, but most of the time in the mornings I can't wait to hardly get here. I'm serious! I'm really serious about it! I really am!"

Just as English 07 seems to have changed students' attitudes toward reading and writing, it also affected the way in which they use language--an alteration that had been noticed by them and by those they know. A student named Tracy revealed how written language had assumed new communicative potential: "I recently dropped my best friend a few lines after receiving a phone call from her. Writing her with the motivation of my classroom experience gave me the chance to say a lot more than I could on the phone." And Donald stood almost amazed at the way in which his awareness of language--and his world--had been heightened. A refined sense of language had given him a finer perspective so he could see more in the world around him:

When I read, "the weather was cold," I can now see snow up to your ankles. I can really more or less visualize it. I can picture a scene in my head; I can see somebody standing there with snow up to their ankles and shivering; I can see the cold breath leaving their mouth. Now I get a whole different picture of it in my mind.

As Donald's grasp of reading and writing had tightened, his view of the world had expanded, his sensitivity to language enabling him to perceive fine distinctions in a landscape that would earlier have been blank. Finally, Donald pointed with pride to a letter he had recently received from a friend with whom he had corresponded for years. In it his friend said, "I'm really amazed how your letters have changed; something's

different about your writing." It was a difference that Donald attributed to his "just applying some of the things [he'd] learned in English 07."

Other students discovered improvement and pride in their new-found abilities to help friends and family with English assignments. Sherry related one such experience in a writing sample she completed at the beginning of English 111:

I am still a little afraid to write, but my whole attitude has changed. The reason why I say it has changed is because I helped one of my cousins with his report and he got an "A" on it. He said "thanks" to me, but I told him "I owe it all to my college English [course]."

Still other students uncovered their growth as readers and writers as they compared the past with the present. Writing in a final journal entry, one such student stated,

Before coming into this class my attitude was so negative, and I couldn't see how this class was going to help me. Now it's hard to think of all the elements that I've learned because there are so many. . . . When I look back at how I used to write my papers and how I used to read, there's a great deal of difference I [recently] read one of my research papers from last year and compared it to one of the simplest papers of this semester. I found out that if I had used some of the techniques that I've learned, I could have had A papers instead of C papers. As far as reading goes, I'm glad that I have the mind to read now. At first I wouldn't read whether I was tested on it or not. Now when I read I try to mark up the text, looking for the thesis statement and major ideas. I believe that is the most

important tool of reading--marking it up. Now that you've told us to make educated guesses about the text, that helps also because it makes me want to know if I'm right or not.

What had once been reticence and resistance had therefore been transfigured for many students into pride, accomplishment, and, ironically, even gratitude. For as students' attitudes toward reading and writing changed, so did their attitudes toward being in a developmental English course. All the more meaningful because they had successfully completed English 111, both Debbie's and Larry's testimonials demonstrate the dramatic shift in their perspectives toward English 07. According to Debbie,

I felt so angry [when I was placed in English 07] because I thought, "I'm already behind in going to college. And now I have to wait a whole semester." I said, "I don't need this class," and I was angry, and I wanted to just rewrite the placement essay. But I'm glad I took it now, because it was good for me, and I made good grades. English 07 made me feel more comfortable with going into English 111. If I had gone straight into 111, I probably would have had a lot of problems and made bad grades.

Larry's comments again emerge as representative, too:

When I got put in [English 07], I felt bad because I felt like I was different. You don't ever want to get put down to a lower level, but it's not really getting put down--it's just helping you catch up to where you're supposed to be. English 111 would have killed me. I probably would have ended up dropping out. I'm glad they've got English 07, because a

lot of us would probably never make it.
I would have tried, but it would have
been just too hard.

It thus seems apparent that, at least for some students, enrollment in English 07 made a critical difference at a crucial time. For those students, the course seems to have served as a catalyst for a revision of self, awakening them to their capacity for learning. Shor defines this type of revision as "change-agency," "[as] action [that occurs] at the classroom level so that students rethink disabling ideologies and behaviors" (190); in this kind of classroom, he suggests, "students become members of a learning community where problems are social and soluble, not mysterious or permanent personal failures" (148). For some English 07 students, this membership in a learning community did translate itself into a new sense of identity as they redefined themselves as capable learners. In rejecting "the rhetoric of the controlling idea," they discovered that correctness is no more the goal of reading and writing than it is the object of education. As a consequence, they realized that they could take risks, that they could experiment, that they could learn even amid error and indecision. As Wanda said, identifying how her approach to learning had changed,

I know now that whatever I'm feeling or
whatever I'm thinking I'm just going to
come out and say it. Before I was
holding myself back, but now I just
volunteer an answer, even if it might be
wrong. Just like, I'll raise my hand

even if I'm not sure of the answer; I'll answer anyway. Before, I was afraid to raise my hand, thinking it might be a stupid answer or the wrong answer.

Silent before, Wanda had released herself from the misconception that she could participate in meaningful dialogues only if she was already armed with correct answers. Like Donald and Amy, who had learned that "it's all right to not know," Wanda had discovered that uncertainty necessarily precedes knowledge and that participation itself is the only true prerequisite to a higher education.

Wanda's realization about the importance of active involvement was reflected in other students' comments as well. Students who had passed earlier English classes by taking tests instead of by writing, students who had "always waited for the teacher to go over the reading or [had seen] the movie," students for whom "reading didn't really matter because [they] could still go to class and get by": all these students realized that they were themselves responsible for what they learned or did not learn. As Larry said, drawing a perceptive distinction between merely "keeping up" and genuine learning,

Keeping up is just . . . you're not even teaching yourself; you're not even trying. I mean, you actually have to work; it doesn't just come to you. In high school it's easy to let everything just sink in because all the teachers talk to you, and whether you want them to or not, everybody's told you everything. In college, you have to learn it

yourself--you have to be willing to learn, which is good. Now, I know I can improve myself, so actually it makes me want to learn more, a lot more.

If one adopts Dewey's notion that "education succeed[s] when it increase[s] the students' ability to learn, to act on learning, and to want more learning" (Shor 137), then Larry's education had certainly been successful for him. For students like Larry, learning had been changed from passive detachment to active involvement through their discovery that students are their own best teachers.

The confidence that students expressed about their improved abilities as readers, writers, and learners manifested itself in other ways, too: primarily in a more optimistic outlook toward the future. Reassured that they had the opportunity to succeed in college, many students were able to convert a past of impotent potential into a future of promising hope. William has already begun to calculate the length of time it will take him to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology--seven years. Betsy, who insists she was voted "most unlikely to succeed in school," now looks upon her success in English 07 as "a big accomplishment." Donald proclaims that "the course is the best thing that's ever happened to me" because "it's been so long since I've thought positive about almost anything." Perhaps for that reason, he says, "I feel like the sun shines a little bit brighter now; I feel like the air I breathe is a little bit cleaner now."

Finally, Amy likens the course to a "master key" because it "enabled [her] to open many doors." "Without reading and writing," she adds, "you're caged; you're in a locked room." And then, with simple eloquence, she concludes, "I feel like the sky's the limit. Before, the sky was limited."

It thus seems true that English 07 altered these students' views of reading and writing, themselves and their worlds. Indeed, the intricate relationships among these various factors--reading, writing, self, and world--suggest a far more complicated view of developmental English courses than that which is traditionally highlighted in the literature. English 07's emphasis upon reading and writing as complementary processes, the thematic focus upon the self, the rhetorical bent of the assignments, and the social relations in the classroom--all of these ingredients proved to be significant influences in students' attempts to transform themselves into literate members of the academy. In the process, and with the influence of family and friends, some students were able to transform their very attitudes toward learning as well. Part of a complex matrix of forces--some of them visible, some unseen--English 07 had become a woven strand in the rich brocade of students' lives. For these students, personal experience and intellectual inquiry had melted together, their boundaries disappearing, until life had been brought to learning and learning had been brought to

life. Perhaps it is little wonder, then, that a course which aspires to construct an understanding of reading and writing--such vital forms of communication--should likewise have stirred students to an awakening of sorts: an awakening made manifest in their vision of themselves as competent readers, capable writers, and liberated individuals whose sky is no longer limited.

CHAPTER 6

ENGLISH 07 AFTERWORDS: REFLECTIONS ON READING AND WRITING, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Amy has remarried. With the responsibilities of a family--a son by her previous marriage--a new husband, and a new home, she did not return to school. Now working as a haircutter, she plans to begin a correspondence course in English in the fall.

Donald has returned to college after a one-year absence. Soon after he completed English 07 in the spring of 1992, he discovered that the woman he had always known as his mother was not his natural mother, that he had been adopted at birth. He spent the next year trying to locate his mother, only to find out, too late, that she had died in 1990.

Carla, who could not wait to "get through all this school shit," has transferred to a four-year liberal arts college in North Carolina. Although she has found the program of study to be challenging, she has succeeded at maintaining a 4.00 grade-point average.

Larry has now completed English 111, the first semester of freshman composition. He still has problems with usage and mechanics--"the weakest part of my grasp on English," he says--but he is determined to do even better in his next college-level course. Everything he has learned in English 07

has "given [him] the confidence [he] need[s] to tackle English."

I have just completed my third year of teaching English 07. No year has been like the others; none of the classes, quite the same. As I have tried to help my students learn to read and write more effectively, I have also struggled to define my own conception of literacy. I am not the same teacher I was three years ago.

* * *

At the end of Black American Street Life, Dan Rose invokes the poet Robert Hayden to communicate the frustration he experienced in trying to chronicle life on a block in South Philadelphia from 1969 to 1971:

america as much a problem in
metaphysics as it is a nation earthly
entity an iota in our galaxy an
organism that changes even as i examine
it fact and fantasy never twice the
same so many variables (qtd. in Rose
269)

I share a similar frustration, for my attempts to capture English 07 in this dissertation represent at best only a sketch of the course itself--a sketch drawn in crude and clumsy strokes. In truth, the course does not correspond to the discrete chapters outlined so crisply in the table of contents. Those chapters merely reflect my attempt to organize clearly an analysis of complex processes that are both continuous and interactive, just like the lively

dialectic that connects reading and writing themselves. The course is not the neatly tapered product I have described in those chapters either--not a being born full grown and then, like a fossil, frozen and fixed in time. In reality, English 07 is not an "entity" at all. Rather, it is "an organism that changes even as [I examine] it," its "fact and fantasy never twice the same" (qtd. in Rose 269).

The essays that compose this chapter of my dissertation reflect some of the latent philosophical and pedagogical influences that informed the development of English 07: some of the conclusions I have reached and some of the insights I have gained as a result of my three-year involvement with the course. Together, they create a chronology of some of the principles that shaped both the course and me. Variations on a theme, they are significant because they reflect a few of the undercurrents, invisible in earlier chapters, that guided English 07 in the direction it ultimately took. Just as important, they betray a few of the many ways in which my attitudes toward teaching and learning were themselves transformed as I was forming the course.

Sarah Sherman asserts that "we cannot examine the evidence without being changed by it [and that] the evidence cannot be examined without being shaped by our perceptions of it" (212). So it is with reading and writing, and so it has been with the development of English 07. My convictions have

helped sculpt the course, but the course has sculpted me as well. Like an ethnographer, I have been "on the inside and on the outside, . . . in the field and in the study" (Tinberg 41); for I have been both actor and spectator, expert and novice, conductor and performer. Indeed, although I have been a teacher of composition and literature for almost twenty years, I did not learn how to write and read--did not learn how to teach--until I taught Writing and Reading Improvement. Perhaps because I have been simultaneously engaged in doctoral studies, the effect of English 07 on my teaching has been magnified, its significance amplified under the scrutiny of reflection and introspection. Perhaps because I knew from the beginning that my dissertation would be based on this course, I have been able to gain a different perspective on my role as a teacher, one created by the coincidence of my being a participant and an observer at the same time. Perhaps I have merely approached this class more seriously and more systematically. What is certain, however, is that my ideas about reading and writing, teaching and learning have changed dramatically, all of them, like memory, reshaped through analysis and examination. It was not I who created English 07; English 07 created me as well.

One of the most important ways in which I have changed as a teacher involves my personal resolution of a question that has plagued me since I began teaching as a graduate assistant:

should one teach reading and writing in a thematic context or via rhetorical modes? This question assumed crucial significance during the planning phases of English 07, for there were few textbooks that combined reading with writing, fewer still that attempted to acquaint students with various forms of reading and writing. In fact, as my colleagues and I tried to match what we knew about literacy with a textbook and a comprehensive plan for the class, we began to understand why so many colleges--and so many authors--prefer to treat reading and writing as separate skills. It is much simpler. Yet since the organization of the course depended upon its fundamental approach, the determination of a rhetorical or a more *laissez-faire*, thematic bias soon became an issue of great moment.

Prior to my participation in English 07, I had always relied exclusively upon the rhetorical method--primarily because the first textbook I employed as a graduate assistant was organized rhetorically. The use of rhetorical modes--what Burton Hatlen calls the Old Rhetoric--was attractive to me also because of its logical, straightforward appeal: it "invited the student to read certain texts as models of 'correct' compositional structure, and then to write texts in imitation of these models" (60). An approach perpetuated by Decker's Patterns of Exposition (now in its twelfth edition) and Trimmer and Hairston's The Riverside Reader, the imitative

tradition remains popular even today. In spite of Hatlen's proclamation that the rhetorical approach "has apparently, over the last two decades, quietly expired" (65), it remains especially prevalent, even dominant, in community colleges.

In its strictest form, however--and this is perhaps the form to which Hatlen refers and which has helped banish rhetorical modes to disgrace--the imitative approach is based upon beliefs that are clearly destructive to students. These are the essentialist beliefs that students need external control and direction; that reality is absolute (so that writing becomes an occasion for rigid imitation and correctness, and reading, an issue of remembering everything in the text); and that teachers and writers, as "authorities," possess a superior knowledge to which students can only aspire. At the heart of this philosophy, of course, is a rather disturbing vision of human beings who must be manipulated by someone who knows, far better than they do themselves, what they really need.

If the Old Rhetoric seems to deny students the freedom to learn, turning them into mere automatons, the New Rhetoric--the basis of a thematic approach--celebrates the inherent virtue of the individual, a bias that marks its existentialist heritage. Hatlen sees the New Rhetoric as a rebellion against the "empty, thoughtless writing which [imitation] seemed not merely to permit but to encourage" (68). He likewise

attributes the beliefs of the New Rhetoricians to a series of shared assumptions about the nature of the writing process, most of which reflect their disillusionment with the traditions of the Old Rhetoric. Product versus process, finality versus change, imitation versus discovery: all betray the basic philosophical hostility between adherents of the Old Rhetoric and proponents of the New Rhetoric, who have become the eager pallbearers of the earlier generation.

At a deeper level, however, the conflicts between the Old Rhetoric and the New Rhetoric are rooted in fundamentally different conceptions of human nature--dramatically different conceptions that reflect their allegiance to essentialist and existentialist philosophies. For while the Old Rhetoric tends to view man as a creature who needs structure and direction, the New Rhetoric proclaims man to be "an essentially autonomous self" (Hatlen 70)--a being who is self-directing, who is capable of facilitating his own personal growth, and who possesses an inherent "pattern-forming propensity" (73) that is most "authentic" (72) when it is most spontaneous. To existentialists who adhere to these beliefs, "the self constitutes the ultimate ground of being, the only certainty in a treacherous world, and the continuing growth of that self is the only absolute imperative" (70). Ultimately, these beliefs provoke a vision of a student writer who "already has within her everything she needs in order to write powerfully:

[whose] intuitive powers will enable her to make connections among disjunct parts of her experience necessary to give her 'something to say,' and [whose] inherent impulse toward form will guide her to create a structure adequate to the meaning she is trying to create" (69).

There is much to admire in a perspective like this, and much of what I have tried to accomplish in English 07, with its thematic emphasis upon "the self," brands me as a disciple of this very approach to teaching reading and writing. But as Hatlen notes, there are also theoretical gaps in such a pedagogy, perhaps especially as it applies to connections between reading, whose influence upon the self is at least partly external, and writing, which, according to the New Rhetoricians, stems wholly from within the self ("issues 'from' a self" (70), to use Hatlen's words). There are also, I believe, severe limitations to such a perspective as it applies to developmental readers and writers, who typically need more structure than their mainstream colleagues. Ironically, in this regard the New Rhetoricians, who conceive of reality as relative to the individual, fail to recognize that all readers and writers are not alike and that these differences may mandate different teaching methods. Existentialists who condemn in toto the use of rhetorical modes also fail to understand that a teacher's immediate action is not synonymous with his ultimate intent. Basic

writers, in particular, require more guidance and structure, so a teacher may need to provide them with rudimentary prose models. But he does this with the hope that students' mastery of various forms will eventually enable them to become more independent writers who can create their own forms of discourse.

For all of these reasons, Hatlen urges an alternative to the New Rhetoric. Because he, too, admires many of the convictions of the New Rhetoricians, Hatlen's proposal is not a rejection but a revision of earlier theories, one that acknowledges the importance of models in improving student writing. Distinctly experimentalist in his orientation since he believes that people are motivated by both internal and external forces, Hatlen calls his revision a Dialectical Rhetoric; for it "allows [him] to see the forms in terms of which [his] students 'make meaning' as issuing, not out of some 'shaping' power presumed inherent in the human mind, but rather out of the give and take of social interaction" (78). A perspective that allies him with Sternglass, Hatlen's Dialectical Rhetoric is also remarkably like Bartholomae and Petrosky's fundamental conception of reading--as an intersection of meaning created by the reader's prior knowledge and the information embodied in a text. Hatlen thus proposes a Dialectical Rhetoric that affords a prominent position to both reading and the use of models. Reading

emerges as a meaningful process of discovery, and writing becomes a process of expanding possibilities. In this way, "imitation [is] not simply . . . a mechanical reproduction of certain external patterns of organization but . . . a dynamic process in which the writer introjects and remakes formal structures" (79).

It was this combination of the Old Rhetoric and the New Rhetoric--of a rhetorical approach framed in a thematic context--that I eventually adopted as the foundation for English 07. Like Hatlen, I am not aching to return to the essentialist doctrine of the Old Rhetoric because of some minor dissatisfaction with the New Rhetoric, but I believe that it needs some revision. For while I applaud the ultimate objective of the existentialists--"personal growth"--I also think that a more realistic conceptualization of reading and writing pedagogy, especially for developmental students, lies somewhere between the two extremes, in the experimentalist realm of the Dialectical Rhetoric. Neither purely process nor strictly product, reading and writing exist simultaneously in the tension between the two: in the composing that leads to composition and in the composition that motivates composing. Just as certainly, reading and writing are born in the convergence between prior knowledge and knowledge not yet realized, between restraint and freedom, between the public and the private worlds. Through reading and writing, the

private world shapes the public world, and the public world revises the inexorable self--a self, then, which both creates and is created, which is, at once, both process and product.

* * *

My adoption of Hatlen's Dialectical Rhetoric in English 07 helped me resolve an apparent contradiction and a felt shortcoming in my approach to teaching reading and writing. My participation in English 07 also dramatized to me my own limitations as a teacher and the limitless potential of my students when they were reading and writing about subjects that mattered to them. Although I am reluctant to admit such a truth so late in my career, it made me aware that literacy is indeed a social construction which a teacher can affect only peripherally.

In her introduction to "Writing and Reading in the Community," Guadalupe Valdes states that "we are just beginning to discover that much knowledge about literacy is acquired outside the formal school context, whether at home, in the community, or in the workplace" (89). A statement that seems apparent, even mundane, Valdes's insight nonetheless escaped me for years. Indeed, her perception seems so obvious that I find it incredible I was never able to articulate it to myself before now. A truth that looms so large must have been difficult to miss. Or as Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson says

about the discovery of America, "it was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it!"

Yet miss it I did. As a teacher I had somehow always assumed that my classroom represented the primary arena in which students attempted to master literate forms. I had never considered very seriously what students read and wrote outside my class, nor had I considered very thoughtfully how the reading and writing I assigned in my courses related to students' literate practices in the much larger arena of their everyday lives. Put simply, I failed to realize that students' academic lives--and, in particular, their experiences with reading and writing--stretch beyond the classroom to their families and their friends, to their jobs and their interests. Like many members of the academy, I had thus become the unwitting proponent of an ethnocentric view that exalts the importance of the classroom while denying the significance of these more pervasive influences. At the same time, I had allowed myself to succumb to the essentialist belief that language development is "universal, innate, nonhistorical, acultural, and socially aspecific. . ." (Valdes 98).

One strand of my investigation of English 07--a strand that I eventually abandoned in favor of this curriculum study--yielded an opposite conclusion: that literacy is "historically invented and diverse in its cultural forms and

social functions" (Valdes 98) and that "writing and reading activities are embedded in the larger flow of activity in people's lives" (100). The original purpose of that investigation was to create "literacy profiles" for selected students in English 07; however, my research also suggested that students' previous and ongoing experiences with language, though usually invisible in the classroom, do indeed exert a profound effect upon their conceptions of themselves as readers and writers--an effect that cannot be divorced from their performance in the course. To view a student as if he were a member of an academic community alone is thus to simplify the reading-and-writing situation, for a student is, in reality, a participant in several different communities, all of which are continuously and simultaneously affecting his use of language.

For this reason--and this is a truth to which I still cling--I concluded that the best developmental English class is one that builds upon the most important ways in which students already use reading and writing. In other words, it is one which acknowledges how students use language in the real world, which builds upon this usage instead of denying it, and which facilitates the development of new literate practices that enable students to be successful in college and career. Adopting a broader point of view, I grew to see English 07 not as the exclusive agent of students'

literate growth but as only one of many factors that fostered their development as readers and writers. Relying upon an analogy, I came to view the course as a prism through which "multiple literacies," like waves of light, were being reflected. I hypothesized (and at once hoped) that some of my students' ideas about reading and writing--and some of the literate practices they had learned over time--were being reshaped and redefined, just as light is refracted through a prism.

If this conception were accurate, then students' "new" literate practices were not solely the product of what they had learned in my class at all. Instead, they were the reflection, or revision, of a "literacy repertoire" that embraced both formal and informal learning in both the present and the past. Students' new-found abilities were thus not the result of a process that negated their earlier skills and experiences (Shaughnessy notes that some teachers believe they must "cure" their students) but the sum of an equation that joined their existing literate practices with those they had learned in the course. This equation is similar to that which describes the reading process: prior knowledge + meaning in text = construction of new or related meaning. To ignore the influence of students' previous experiences with language is the theoretical equivalent of denying the importance of prior knowledge in reading comprehension, insisting instead that

meaning resides in the text alone. I therefore concluded that the most effective reading-and-writing course would be one that allied students' real-world language use and real-life concerns with the forms of discourse required in an academic community. Such a class would function like a powerful prism, capturing the broadest band of light and transforming it into the richest array of colors.

In an effort to establish students' real-world literate practices during their enrollment in English 07, I asked several students to keep a comprehensive list of everything they wrote and read for a two-week span. The results of this activity were fairly predictable. Students read more often than they wrote, with much of their reading the direct result of assignments in their classes, especially English 07. Most students read for pleasure and information, too, their texts as diverse as the newspaper, Nature's Outlet Nutrition News, and the Bible. Other reading activities served ordinary, utilitarian functions: reading traffic and street signs, menus, letters, labels and advertisements.

Not surprisingly, most of the writing that students completed revolved around school work also. Although there were several exceptions, most in the form of letters to friends, students wrote only when a specific written response was required of them. Too, in most instances their writing was more akin to answering study questions, copying an

existing text, or performing numerical calculations. Beyond these school-related functions, writing among these students was limited primarily to common activities such as writing checks or completing forms. Only one student, Rebecca, used writing as an extension of her personal interests: she wrote answers to Bible study questions.

The compilation of these reading and writing lists, though admittedly limited in scope and time, demonstrated that students use reading and writing in purposeful ways outside the classroom. Extended over time and applied to a larger sample, such lists would no doubt illustrate what Valdes and others have termed the "social construction of literacy" (101). Neither bound by the classroom nor isolated to school, language development--even the development of more sophisticated college-level skills--does indeed embrace the everyday realities in which students live and work.

My students' reading and writing lists also revealed a complex network of social relations, implying that our classroom--or any classroom, for that matter--was not a self-contained entity at all. Rather, it was only the immediate representation of relationships and experiences that stretched far beyond its walls, into an invisible past that had likewise dissolved into other places and other times and other people. Both a classroom and a student's mastery of reading and writing, then, are merely the present manifestation of social

relations like those that Dorothy Smith describes in The Everyday World As Problematic: "concerted sequences or courses of social action implicating more than one individual whose participants are not necessarily present or known to one another" (155).

Although they were very sketchy and far from exhaustive, my students' reading and writing lists had documented their literate practices, suggesting a much more complicated view of reading and writing development than that which is usually reflected in the literature. These lists led to another strand of the study as well. For in the process of completing my own list, I realized that my reading and writing were really apparent representations of my essential self: they were not just what I do but who I am. More than a mere summary of literate activities, my reading and writing list betrayed the very structure of my life, for it reflected the ways that I define myself and the roles that I embody as a teacher and an administrator, a husband and a father. When I later ranked my reading and writing activities in order of importance, I found that the activities that define my professional life, those most pervasive and most necessary in my daily routine, were, strangely, the least important. Those that were far more significant were the ones that defined my personal life and formed the heart of my self-concept, my reading to my son and daughter, embracing my role as a father,

being the most important of all. Judging from my own experiences--and I realize that such extensions possess inherent limitations and dangers--I began to suspect that the extent to which a student sees reading and writing as meaningful communication skills, or as skills worth working at, is a reflection of the extent to which reading and writing have become woven into the fabric of what he or she most values.

Although I could not have articulated that insight then, I understand now that my experiences, like the threads of an intricate tapestry, had been weaving that truth for a long, long time. I remember the old man I met in Wytheville who told me he wanted to learn to write--he couldn't write at all--because he had forgotten too many of the things he had wanted always to remember. "You just can't remember everything," he said. "If I'd 'a knowed how to write, I could've kept those things with me." Learning to write would have served a significant purpose in his life. And I remember Doris, a student in 07 in the spring, who told me she had been required in an earlier English class to write a process paper on how to tie a shoe. A single mother who had been deserted by her husband, whose son had recently had open-heart surgery, she had balked. "What's the point? Why?" she had asked me, her voice thick with exasperation. She had not completed the

assignment--or the course--because she could see no purpose in either one.

The sheer ability to commit words to paper was vital to the old man: it would have enabled him to "save" his life. The opportunity to write about something relevant was crucial to Doris: anything less was a waste of her time. And my reading Goodnight, Moon to my son and The Little Engine That Could to my daughter (though perhaps heretical for a college English teacher) remains the most meaningful way in which I use language. The reading is important because it is tied to my love for them.

Language is born with reason; it becomes through purpose. And developmental English students in particular need a reason for learning how to read and write more effectively. Students outside the mainstream, some have become developmental learners precisely because they have been unable to find that reason in a traditional classroom, or because it has been wrested from them during the course of their education. Rosebery et al. remind us that learning to read and write is "engaging" for "very young children [because they] expect writing and reading to be purposeful, communicative experiences" (150). Developmental students need to regain that sense of purpose, the very sense of purpose that was probably stripped from them years ago in classes where they were asked to identify parts of speech or to explain how to

tie a shoe. They need to see how the skills they learn in college relate to the reading and writing they do in their everyday lives and lead to the reading and writing they will do for the rest of their lives. Finally, they need to see that reading and writing are purposeful, not peripheral--that the reading and writing which characterize an English class extend beyond the walls of the classroom and embrace the deepest levels of being. Anything less means that they will fail to see how reading and writing connect with the real-world concerns that define who they are.

The reading and writing lists that my students and I completed thus emerge as tangible representations of the social construction of literacy, reminders that language develops in social contexts which are not synonymous with the classroom alone. They also serve as a mandate for creating developmental English courses that are immediate and relevant--courses that teach reading and writing in the way that students learn how to read and write in the world at large: as members of a literate community. Perhaps most important, my earlier study of English 07 corroborated the suggestion that the development of reading and writing ability is intertwined with the construction of identity. One can no more separate the use of language from personal and social growth than he can isolate reading from writing or listening from speaking. Or as Murray says, all writing and all reading

are essentially autobiographical, sometimes explicitly but always implicitly ("All Writing" 66, 74).

If this is true, then relevant assignments that promote personal growth represent a potent catalyst for making the use of language meaningful, especially when those assignments are written and read among a community of readers and writers. Explorations of the self and the complex communities in which it is rooted, these are the assignments that rescue writing from the purposeless exercise it all too often becomes and that lead both the writer and the reader to genuine discovery.

"We become what we write," states Donald Murray ("All Writing" 71). "Good writing begins with you," insists Erika Lindemann. It "results from watching yourself grow up, from listening to yourself debate subjects that matter" (qtd. in Faigley 89). Marie, a student in my 07 class this fall, put it another way. Reaffirming the vital relationship between personal involvement and personally meaningful writing, she wrote in her journal about a poem she had composed for her son--a poem she was "really proud of":

The one thing that distinguishes this certain poem from some other poems I have written is that my son is involved. It is the only poem I have written that made me feel good about myself in terms of writing and expressing myself on paper. It is the only poem I felt so strongly about I entered it in a contest. I did not win, but the feeling it brought me was truly enough.

I enjoyed writing this certain piece, because it is a piece of my life,

a piece of my life which I love dearly,
my son.

The poem itself just seem to have a
little more of me in it, a little more
heart, a little more light.

"We become what we write," says Murray. When the topics
matter, we become in the process of reading and writing as
well.

* * *

"Life is not a having and a getting,
But a being and a becoming."

--Matthew Arnold

"Reality is a becoming, not a standing still."

--Paulo Friere

While my involvement in English 07 renewed my commitment
to try to make curriculum and instruction relevant and
immediate, its ultimate effect is perhaps more personal. I
say "personal," yet I have in mind something expansive and
far-reaching as well, for English 07 taught me how to read and
write.

Prior to my experience in English 07, reading had always
been a meaningless routine to me. I had never learned to
preview a text, never learned to use word-attack skills, never
taken the time to review very thoughtfully what I had read.
I had never assumed or even imagined that an expository text
could mean anything but what the author originally intended.
In much the same way, writing had always been an agonizing
activity to me. Although I diligently taught my students

about the writing process--in those days I was certain it was a "linear" process--I betrayed every maxim I intoned. I always began at the beginning, always edited as I wrote, was always reluctant to change anything I had committed to paper. As a result, I found myself always paralyzed by the same anxiety I tried to exorcise in my students. Only by becoming a student again--this time in the role of a teacher--was I able to overcome these impediments. By deserting the sanctuary of my expertise, I was able to grow as a reader and writer.

Thoreau notes that even "in our most trivial walks, we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands. . . . Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes. . . . Not till we are lost . . . do we begin to find ourselves" (783). Thoreau's words capture the essence of my experience in English 07, for not until my own assumptions about reading and writing were challenged was I able to free myself from the rote knowledge that had become the anchor of my teaching--only then that I was able "to learn the points of compass again" (783). As a writing teacher teaching reading, I found myself suddenly lost, unable to locate the familiar guideposts that had always directed my lesson plans. I possessed a textbook knowledge of reading, to be sure--one that matched my textbook knowledge of writing. But that

knowledge meant very little when I tried to translate it into meaningful activities in the classroom. Should I stress the organizational pattern of Walker's "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self"--what I would have done had I been teaching the essay in a writing class--or should I concentrate on students' personal reactions to the piece? Should I emphasize an "efferent" reading of the essay, or should I help students "live through" the experience of the text (Kelly 90)? As I agonized over questions like these, I found myself paralyzed again, plagued by the same insecurities I had always felt when writing, now uncertain of my abilities as a teacher and a reader and a writer.

I found myself ultimately--as a teacher and a reader and a writer--by deserting the "well-known beacons and headlands" (Thoreau 783) and by growing to appreciate the bewildering array of uncertainty that basic readers and writers must contend with every day of their academic lives. Like my students, I had to grow to see uncertainty as possibility, and possibility as opportunity, not as threat. Sarah Sherman likens this type of promising uncertainty, familiar to most readers and writers, to the infinite range of possibilities that confront a sculptor at the beginning of a project. A sculptor, Sherman says, must "carve away chips of anonymous rock" to create her figure; she must pore over "disconnected facts" and "disparate images," but she must ultimately "seek

her own figure." "If that figure is to come into focus, she must then resolutely discard, carve away, all irrelevant figures, however valid" (212). Similarly, to create her own composition, a writer must make deliberate decisions about the shape of her developing text. In selecting a plan or a word, she must choose from among myriad possibilities, making judgments that necessarily preclude other alternatives. Whether she is working in stone or on paper, then, the dilemma for the creator is always the same: "to tell her truth she must suppress other truths" (212).

Of course, this dilemma is problematic not just to sculptors and writers: it applies also to readers, particularly developmental readers, who must construct meaning from a text that offers an inexhaustible potential for interpretation. Faced with the difficulty of this situation--and to avoid the slippery surface of subjectivity, from which "reality" seems forever to be receding--many students, nudged along by their teachers, retreat to the apparently stable terrain of objectivity: they seek a sanctuary in the objective, the factual, the verifiable, the superficial, and the meaningless. They believe they should remember everything in a text or, at the very least, its "major ideas." But as Sherman and Bartholomae remind us, to try to remember everything is to flirt with insanity, for "the reader who would literally recall a text would never be able to misread

and would therefore be able to speak only the same text back to itself" (Bartholomae, "Reading" 96). And since "meaning . . . is not essential, intrinsic to the individual element itself, but 'arbitrary' in the sense of 'arbitrated' or mediated" (Sherman 215), the sculptor, the historian, the writer, and the reader--all must establish a perspective which shuts out other points of view. "Telling a truth," states Sherman, "demands we forego the truth" (221).

Then what "truth" is one to tell? How can one find a perspective to adopt as his own? How can one find order in this seemingly endless maze of chaos? Questions like these must plague developmental reading and writing students as they struggle to "fill the silence" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 7) with which every class, every reading, or every writing assignment begins. And the problem runs deeper than that. For students must not only discover a perspective that enables them to fill that menacing silence; they must also establish a right--or an "authority," to use Bartholomae and Petrosky's term (6)--to speak from that perspective. And when students know that the teacher already knows what they would speak--when they must somehow find a perspective, speak with a voice of authority, and make their ideas sound original to someone well versed in the subject--the silence becomes more threatening and even more foreboding.

This is precisely the position in which I have always found myself as a reader and a writer and, most recently, as a teacher in English 07 and the author of this dissertation. A novice at teaching reading and unfamiliar with reading research, I have been overwhelmed by all that I have read and sometimes helpless to determine a direction for myself. In spite of knowing better, I have been frustrated as well: frustrated that I could not remember all I wanted to remember and wishing I could remember more than I did. Too, I have found myself bothered by my inability to speak with that proverbial "voice of authority," the very voice with which I often speak in my other classes. Tracing the path that my students have no doubt travelled countless times before, I have felt a keen need to demonstrate that I "know" the material, not only as a teacher to my students but also as a student to my professors. Yet lurking in the back of my mind is the knowledge that I have no legitimate right to speak so boldly, no real right to speak at all. In the shadow of those whose knowledge overwhelms my own, I have sometimes been tempted to remain silent.

I have learned to avoid that silence by seeing myself in my students and my students in me: by beginning where my students begin and, like Tinberg, by "often times simply not knowing" (40). With a few notable exceptions--Mike Rose and John Langan, for example--most teachers of developmental

English probably share a background similar to mine. They have always been relatively proficient readers and writers, members of the academy whose literate experiences are thus alien to those of their students. Because reading and writing have always been easy for them, they have never really had to struggle. And because language is the source of their expertise--something they take for granted because they "mastered" it in college--they have "lived their professional lives within easy and familiar categories and structures" (McGrath and Spear 12). As a result, they have forgotten that real discovery begins with the unknown, that better teaching and true learning inevitably evolve from doubt and uncertainty. These teachers must learn the "lesson that is never finally learned," the lesson that I have only recently rediscovered: that they should "come to class, not thinking of a territory to be covered, but with a compass. . ." (Berthoff 35). "Liberatory education," Friere states simply, "is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students both have to be learners" (Shor and Friere 33).

Perhaps especially for this reason, it behooves teachers to repudiate "the rhetoric of the controlling idea" and to employ the type of student-centered pedagogy endorsed by Bartholomae and Petrosky, Berthoff and Hatlen--the sort of approach to reading and writing instruction that affords students the freedom to learn by allowing them to explore and

to experiment amid uncertainty and in spite of insecurity. To employ any other approach is to create a classroom that reinforces students' deepest fears about reading and writing-- a classroom in which correctness is substituted for expression, in which individuality is denied for the sake of generic truths that apply to no one, and in which students are systematically silenced because they remain unheard. Just as important, reading and writing instructors must learn to abandon the comfortable role of "teacher" and to become students themselves, individuals like Emerson's American scholar, who "now thinks, now acts, . . . each reproduc[ing] the other" (965). That is the type of teacher I am trying to become: a student-scholar who endeavors to help his students realize their capacity to read and write well so that they are no longer relegated to the shadows, never again condemned to silence.

WORKS CITED

- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." When A Writer Can't Write. Ed. Mike Rose. New York: Guilford, 1985.
- . "Reading, Writing, Interpreting." Newkirk 89-118.
- . "The Study of Error." College Composition and Communication 31 (1980): 253-69.
- Bartholomae, David, and Anthony R. Petrosky. Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1986.
- Beach, Richard, and JoAnne Liebman-Kleine. "The Writing/Reading Relationship." Peterson 64-81.
- Berthoff, Ann E. The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models and Maxims for Writing Teachers. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.
- Birnbaum, June Cannell. "Reflective Thought: The Connection Between Reading and Writing." Peterson 30-45.
- Bizzaro, Patrick. "Intertwine and Developmental Writing." Faculty-Counselor Collaboration in the Developmental Classroom: A How-To Manual. Ed. Mary Anne Reynolds. Manassas, VA: Northern Virginia Community College, 1981.
- Blumenthal, Joseph C. Tests for English 3200: A Programmed Course in Grammar and Usage. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt, 1972.
- Brandt, Deborah. "Social Foundations of Reading and Writing." Peterson 115-26.
- Brooke, Robert E. Writing and Sense of Self: Identity Negotiation in Writing Workshops. Urbana: NCTE, 1991.
- Buley-Meissner, Mary Louise. "Reclaiming Personal Knowledge: Investigations of Identity, Difference, and Community in College Education." College English 55 (1993): 211-21.
- Clowes, Darrel. "Remediation in American Higher Education." Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research. Vol. 8. Bronx, NY: Agathon, 1992. 460-93.

- Coles, Nicholas. "Empowering Revision." Bartholomae and Petrosky 167-98.
- Comley, Nancy. "Composing, Uniting, Transacting: Whys and Ways of Connecting Reading and Writing." College English 51 (1989): 192-200.
- Connors, Robert J., and Andrea A. Lunsford. "Teachers' Rhetorical Comments on Student papers." College Composition and Communication 44 (1993):200-23.
- Cross, K. Patricia. Accent on Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976.
- D'Angelo, Frank. Process and Thought in Composition. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: 1980.
- D'Eloia, Sarah. "The Uses--and Limits--of Grammar." Journal of Basic Writing. 1 (1977): 1-20. Rpt. in The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. Rpt. in Tate and Corbett 225-43.
- Demario, Marilyn. "Teaching the Course." Bartholomae and Petrosky 87-102.
- Dougherty, Barbey. "Writing Plans as Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Revising." Peterson 82-98.
- Dyson, Anne Haas, ed. Collaboration Through Reading and Writing: Exploring Possibilities. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989.
- Elbow, Peter. "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment." College English 55 (1993): 187-206.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." Anthology of American Literature. Ed. George McMichael. Vol. 1. New York: Macmillan, 1993. 958-71.
- Faigley, Lester. "Counterstatement." College Composition and Communication 42 (1991): 89-90.
- Flower, Linda. "The Construction of Purpose in Writing and Reading." College English 50 (1988): 528-49.
- . "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing." College English 41 (1979): 19-37.
- Foster, David. A Primer for Writing Teachers: Theories, Theorists, Issues, Problems. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1983.

- Gefvert, Constance. "Training Teachers of Basic Writing." Kaden and Hoerber 119-40.
- Graves, Donald. Writing: Teachers and Children at Work. Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1983.
- Gundlach, Robert, Marcia Farr, and Jenny Cook-Gumperz. "Writing and Reading in the Community." Dyson 91-130.
- Hatlen, Burton. "Old Wine and New Bottles: A Dialectical Encounter Between the Old Rhetoric and the New." Newkirk 59-86.
- Kaden, Lawrence N. "An Introduction to Basic Writing." Kaden and Hoerber 1-9.
- Kaden, Lawrence N., and Daniel R. Hoerber. Basic Writing: Essays for Teachers, Researchers, Administrators. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1980.
- Katz, Joseph, et al. A New Vitality in General Education: Planning, Teaching, and Supporting Effective Liberal Learning by the Task Group on General Education. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1987.
- Kelly, Patricia P. "After Words: Reader-Response Theory and Practice." Virginia English Bulletin 41 (1991):89-93.
- Kroll, Barry M. Teaching Hearts and Minds: College Students Reflect on the Vietnam War in Literature. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992.
- Lederman, Marie Jean. "A Comparison of Student Projections: Magic and the Teaching of Writing." College English 34 (1973): 674-89.
- Lees, Elaine O. "Building Thought on Paper with Adult Basic Writers." The Writer's Mind: Writing as a Mode of Thinking. Ed. Janet N. Hays, et al. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1983. 145-51.
- Lindemann, Ericka. A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.
- Lunsford, Andrea. "Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer." College English 41 (1979): 28-46.
- . "The Content of Basic Writers' Essays." College Composition and Communication 31 (1980): 278-90.

- . "What We Know--and Don't Know--About Remedial Writing." College Composition and Communication 29 (1978): 47-52.
- McGrath, Dennis, and Martin B. Spear. The Academic Crisis of the Community College. Albany: State U of New York P, 1991.
- Meyer, Bonnie J. F. "Reading Research and the Composition Teacher: The Importance of Plans." College Composition and Communication 37 (1982): 37-49.
- Moffett, James. "I, You, and It." College Composition and Communication 16 (1965): 243-56.
- Moore, William, Jr. Against the Odds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970.
- . Community College Response to the High-Risk Student: A Critical Reappraisal. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1976.
- Moseley, Ann, and Jeanette Harris, eds. Interactions: A Thematic Reader. Boston: Houghton, 1991.
- Murray, Donald M. "All Writing Is Autobiography." College Composition and Communication 42 (1991): 66-74.
- . "Reading While Writing." Newkirk 241-54.
- . A Writer Teaches Writing. Boston: Houghton, 1968.
- Newkirk, Thomas, ed. Only Connect: Uniting Reading and Writing. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1986.
- Perl, Sondra. "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing." Kasden and Hoerber 13-32.
- Peterson, Bruce T., ed. Convergences: Transactions in Reading and Writing. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1986.
- Petrosky, Anthony R. "From Story to Essay: Reading and Writing." College Composition and Communication 33 (1982): 19-36.
- Richardson, Richard C., Elizabeth C. Fisk, and Morris A. Okun. Literacy in the Open-Access College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983.
- Rogers, Carl. Freedom to Learn. Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1969.

- Rose, Dan. Black American Street Life: South Philadelphia, 1969-1971. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1987.
- Rose, Mike. Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educational Underclass. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- . "Remedial Writing Courses: A Critique and a Proposal." College English 45 (1983): 109-28.
- Rosebery, Ann S., et al. "The Problem-Solving Processes of Writers and Readers." Dyson 136-64.
- Roueche, John E. Salvage, Redirection, or Custody?: Remedial Education in the Community Junior College. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1968.
- Roueche, John E., and R. Wade Kirk. Catching Up: Remedial Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973.
- Rouse, John. "The Politics of Composition." College English 41 (1979): 1-12.
- Salvatori, Mariolina. "Reading and Writing a Text: Correlations Between Reading and Writing Patterns." College English 45 (1983): 657-666.
- Selfe, Cynthia L. "Reading as a Writing Strategy: Two Case Studies." Peterson 46-63.
- Shaughnessy, Mina. "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." College Composition and Communication 27 (1976): 234-39. Rpt. in Tate and Corbett 62-68.
- . Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Sherman, Sarah. "Inventing an Elephant: History as Composition." Newkirk 211-26.
- Shor, Ira. Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Shor, Ira, and Paulo Friere. A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education. New York: Bergin, 1987.
- Small, Robert C. "Literature and Imagination." Virginia English Bulletin 41 (1991): 3-10.

- Smith, Dorothy. The Everyday World As Problematic: A Feminist Sociology. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1987.
- Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." College Composition and Communication 33 (1982):148-56.
- Stafford, William. "Writing." The Riverside Reader. Ed. Joseph F. Trimmer and Maxine Hairston. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton, 1993. 128-31.
- Steiner, George. After Babel. New York: Oxford UP, 1975.
- Sternglass, Marilyn. "Writing Based on Reading." Peterson 151-62.
- Tate, Gary, and Edward P. J. Corbett, eds. The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. New York: Oxford UP, 1981.
- Thoreau, Henry David. Walden. American Literature: The Makers and the Making. Ed. Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren. Vol. 1. New York: St. Martin's, 1973. 774-92.
- Tinberg, Howard B. "'An Enlargement of Observation': More on Theory Building in the Composition Classroom." College Composition and Communication 42 (1991): 36-44.
- Vacca, Jo Anne, Richard T. Vacca and Mary K. Gove. Reading and Learning to Read. Glenview, IL: Scott, 1987.
- Valdes, Guadalupe. "Introduction to 'Writing and Reading in the Community.'" Dyson 87-90.
- Wall, Susan V. "Writing, Reading, and Authority." Bartholomae and Petrosky 105-36.
- Walvoord, Barbara E. Fassler. Helping Students Write Well: A Guide for Teachers in All Disciplines. New York: MLA, 1982.
- Wiener, Harvey S. "Basic Writing: First Days' Thoughts on Process and Detail." Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition. Ed. Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1981, 87-100.

APPENDIX A

ENGLISH 07 SYLLABUS

English 07 Writing and Reading Improvement

General Description

English 07 is a comprehensive course in language arts. It is designed to help you develop the skills you will need to read more effectively and to write more clearly. Because reading and writing are complementary activities, we will also explore the ways in which these communication skills relate to one another, trying always to connect what you read and what you write to relevant issues in your lives.

Course Content and Goals

This course is founded upon the belief that all language skills--speaking, listening, reading, and writing--bear an integral relationship to one another. Whether you are reading or writing, for example, you are engaged in the task of "making meaning." As you read a text, you make meaning as you relate what you read to what you already know. And as you write, you create meaning as you discover what you want to say about a particular topic. Both reading and writing, then, are processes that enable you to construct a personal understanding of a text; neither can be divorced from the other.

On the one hand, then, we will be practicing specific strategies that will help you read with greater confidence and comprehension. Toward that end we will examine the steps that make up the reading process, talking about what good readers do when they read a text. On the other hand, we will be discussing the series of steps that make up the writing process, analyzing what effective writers do when they compose a text. In that context we will discuss planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Our most important task, of course, will be to help you find the approach that works best for you.

Think about reading and writing, then, as inseparable companions, as different halves of the same whole, as two sides of the same coin. For, as the editors of Interactions, our textbook, state, "a writer produces a text for a reader, and a reader reads a text produced by a writer."

Specifically, we will explore the following topics throughout the semester:

The Reading Process

Previewing (what you do before you read)

- how to use the title of a text to predict its content and organization
- how to preview a text to find clues about its purpose and structure
- how to recall what you know about a topic to improve your comprehension

Reading (what you do as you read)

- how to determine the writer's purpose
- how to make predictions and form hypotheses about the content of a text
- how to distinguish between main ideas and supporting ideas
- how to mark a text
- how to employ word-analysis skills to draw meaning from a text

Reviewing (what you do after you read)

- how to reconstruct and add to the meaning you created as you read a text
- how to use writing and discussion to improve your comprehension and to make the text your own

The Writing Process

Prewriting (what you do before you begin writing)

- how to choose an appropriate topic
- how to develop ideas about the topic
- how to create a central idea in the form of a thesis statement
- how to plan a pattern of organization

Writing (what you do when you compose the first draft)

- how to develop a topic in paragraph or essay form
- how to structure paragraphs and essays

Rewriting (what you do when you revise and edit your writing)

- how to approach your own writing as an objective reader
- how to revise your writing to improve its effectiveness
- how to edit your writing to eliminate errors in spelling, usage, and mechanics

As we explore these various skills, I will ask you to read different types of texts--paragraphs, essays, stories, and even some poetry. I will also ask you to complete writing assignments that stem from our weekly readings.

I would also like for you to complete, each week and at home, at least three ten-minute writings that will form a personal journal. These journal entries are an important part of the course and, in some cases, may serve as the basis for your other major writing assignments. Since the purpose of a journal is to explore your thoughts for a private audience, I will not consider grammar, spelling, or punctuation as I read your journal. I am interested only in content--only in your developing your ideas as fully as you possibly can and in what you have to say. I will collect your journals every other week.

Course Requirements

To complete the course successfully, you must fulfill the following requirements:

1. in-class and out-of-class reading and writing assignments
2. the journal
3. regular attendance
4. a final examination and conference

Please save all of your writing assignments, for you must return them to me at the end of the semester.

Attendance

Regular attendance is critical to your success in English 07, and I hope you will be able to attend all of our class meetings. However, please do not miss more than six classes. If you miss more than six classes, you may be withdrawn from the course during the first nine weeks of the semester or, after that, assigned a final grade of U. Please contact me if you need to miss class--I want to do whatever I can to help you succeed in the course.

Evaluation Policy

Although I will comment on all your writing assignments, I will not evaluate them with traditional grades of A - F. Instead, I will use only the grade of S. If you earn an S on a paper, then you have successfully completed the assignment. If you do not receive an S, you must rewrite it, incorporating into your revision changes or corrections that will make it

more effective. You may then return the assignment to me and I will re-evaluate it. A paper is completed only when you have achieved all the goals we set for the assignment, or only when it earns an S.

At the end of the semester, you will receive one of three possible grades:

S You have completed all the course requirements and may register for English 101 or English 111.

R You have made good progress toward achieving the goals of the course but still need more time and practice to improve your reading and writing. You must re-enroll in either English 07 or in English 01 and 04 for another semester.

U You either failed to attend class regularly or to complete all the class assignments.

Required Texts

Moseley, Ann, and Jeanette Harris, eds. Interactions: A Thematic Reader. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990.

A college-level dictionary

When you get Interactions, you will see that it is divided into various sections that correspond to various themes. The first section, for instance, is entitled "The Self." Later units are entitled "Self with Family," "Self with Friends," "Self with Mate," and "Self with Society." These units form the basic structure of the course, for we will be reading the essays within each section and then discussing them in class. These readings will also serve as the basis for your writing assignments.

* * *

A final note: reading and writing, which are the heart of this course, stand at the very center of thought and feeling. They are not only means of communicating ideas to other people but also ways of exploring our attitudes and beliefs and emotions. I hope that during the semester we will be able to realize these inherent opportunities in reading and writing: opportunities for sharing and personal growth which represent, at once, both the challenge and the reward of these vital communication skills.

APPENDIX B
READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
IN ENGLISH 07

Unit One: The Self

Journal Assignments

Journal Assignment #1
Assessing Your Reading and Writing

1. Describe your general attitude toward reading and writing. Do you see reading and writing as important, unimportant? Why? Can you trace your attitude to any particular experiences or situations?
2. List the ways in which you use language over the course of a week. Which uses seem most significant to you? Why?
3. Reflect back upon a time when you wrote something you were really proud of. What distinguished that piece of writing from other assignments you've completed?
4. What do you like to read? Why? When was the last time you read something that really made a difference to you?
5. What goals have you set for yourself in English 07? What would you most like to improve about your reading and writing?

* * *

Journal Assignment #2
The Self

1. Choose an adjective that your best friend would use to describe you. Then relate an experience that demonstrates the presence of that quality in your character.
2. Write about the most embarrassing moment you have ever experienced.

3. Recount what happened at your high school graduation.
4. Write about the day in your life you would most like to forget--or the day you most treasure.
5. Recount the most mischievous thing you ever did as a child, or write about the best thing that ever happened to you as a child.

* * *

Journal Assignment #3 The Self

1. Create a list of the people who have had the most important influence in your life. Then choose one person from your list and write about his or her effect on you.
2. Discuss how the experience you wrote about in your narrative paper helped shape your personality. How did it change you? What did you learn from it?
3. Write about the reasons that led you to pursue a college education.
4. Discuss why you have chosen a particular career for yourself.
5. Analyze the ways in which our course has affected your attitude toward reading and writing. In other words, what have you learned about reading and writing? How has your understanding of these processes changed?

* * *

Reading Assignments

Sandra Cisneros, "My Name"
 Ellen Goodman, "Buying Stock in Ourselves"
 Maxine Hong Kingston, "A Girlhood Among Ghosts"
 Maxine Hong Kingston, "The Misery of Silence"
 Mike Rose, Excerpt from Lives on the Boundary
 David Raymond, "On Being 17, Bright, and Unable to Read"
 Alice Walker, "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self"
 Gail Sheehy, "Adult Crises"
 Janet M. Fitchen, "A Day in the Life of Mary Crane"
 Jack Agueros, "Halfway to Dick and Jane: A Puerto Rican Pilgrimage"

Ernesto Galarza, "Barrio Boy"
Katherine Mansfield, "Miss Brill"
William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"

* * *

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment #1 The Self Letter of Introduction*

Your first writing assignment in English 07 is a letter of introduction--a follow-up to our verbal introductions on Monday. You may follow whatever form you wish in your letter, including whatever information you would like for us to know about you. If you find yourself at a loss for words, however, the following questions may provide you with some helpful guidelines, or at least a place to begin.

The Past

When and where did you last attend school (or work)?

How would you characterize your earlier experiences as a student (or employee)?

The Present

Why have you decided to attend Virginia Western?

Are you pleased with your decision? Why?

The Future

What career do you plan to pursue?

Why did you choose this career?

Conclusion

What else would you like your classmates to remember about you?

After we have all completed our letters, we will publish them and distribute them to everyone in the class.

*Adapted from an assignment in Barnwell, William H. The Resourceful Writer: A Basic Writing Course. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1987.

Writing Assignment #2
The Self
Description

We have seen that description provides us with vivid images of people, places, and things. Your goal in this assignment will be to describe a person as vividly as you can. The person you will be describing is yourself--yourself as you were when you were a child. The assignment thus begins with a childhood photograph, for I would like for each of you to locate a picture of yourself to use as the basis for your paragraph. After selecting a picture, examine it for as many details as you can find: details that describe what you were doing, what you were wearing, the expression you had on your face, the way you combed your hair, anything that helps portray who you were in that photograph. Then organize your details according to one of the patterns of organization we have discussed in class.

After you have written your paragraph, you will need to bring it and the photograph to class with you. We will then shuffle the paragraphs and the photos and read our papers aloud to see if we can match the descriptions with the pictures on which they are based. If our descriptions are vivid and concrete, we should be able to identify the child that each description portrays. Or, to put it another way, we should be able to match the pictures we create with our words with the images we find in the photos.

* * *

Writing Assignment #3
The Self
Description

For this assignment, you should describe a place as vividly as you possibly can. Choose a special place that is either vivid in your memory or one that you can experience firsthand--that's important if you are to be able to describe the scene in detail. In fact, your objective is to describe--or recreate--the scene in such detail that it seems to us as if we are there. To accomplish that goal, you should try to use concrete details that appeal to various senses. You should also try to create a strong dominant impression through your selection of detail, your choice of words, and your use of figurative language.

Because the best writing evolves over a period of time and through a series of steps, you will want to begin the

assignment by brainstorming about possible details you might include in your paragraph. List as many details as you can, trying to appeal to all five of the senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and, if relevant, taste. Then select the details that will communicate the strongest dominant impression about your place.

After you have decided upon the details that will best describe your place, you will need to create a topic sentence that introduces the scene to the reader. You will then need to decide upon an effective way to organize all of your information. Use one of the organizational strategies we have discussed in class: tell your reader about the scene as you look from side to side, front to back, top to bottom, or bottom to top.

Throughout this process, make sure that you are being specific and concrete--not general and abstract. Look for ways to be even more specific about the images you've included in your description. Remember that concrete details, carefully chosen words, and vivid metaphors and similes are the tools you can use to make a strong impression on your reader.

* * *

Writing Assignment #4
The Self
Narration

*"I am, he thought, a part of all that
I have touched and that has touched me."*

--Thomas Wolfe
Look Homeward, Angel

According to Donald Murray, a teacher of writing, all reading and all writing are essentially autobiographical. "Writing autobiography," he states, "is my way of making meaning out of the life I have led and am leading and may lead. . . . We make up our own history, our own legends, our own knowledge by writing our autobiograph[ies]." Murray's words serve as the foundation for this next assignment, for I want you to write a portion of your autobiography--a narrative essay in which you recount a significant personal experience.

Imagine that the paper you are about to begin will form a short chapter in a story about your life. While your overall purpose in this hypothetical autobiography is to portray your life from its beginning, your specific goal in this chapter is to recount an experience that had a significant influence in shaping your character. This experience should be one in which you were directly involved-- in other words, one in which you were an active participant.

Some possible topics for this chapter might be (1) a time when you learned the real meaning of some emotion or state of being, such as exhilaration, humiliation, fear, or pride; (2) an experience that taught you a lesson about yourself, such as what you must do to keep your self-respect or perhaps to earn the respect of others; or (3) an experience that taught you the difference between right and wrong. You may also choose to write about any experience that is personally meaningful to you. The experience should be of limited duration, however, so you can employ a wealth of detail to dramatize what happened to you; and it should involve action, so you can use all the elements of effective narration. Remember, too, that your primary goal in this assignment is simply to describe, as vividly as possible, what happened to you during this experience. At least in the body of your essay, you should not analyze how the experience affected you.

Whatever topic you finally decide on, try to incorporate the following elements into your narrative:

- carefully chosen words, especially nouns and verbs
- figurative language, especially metaphors and similes
- dialogue and direct quotations
- concrete details (that create a strong dominant impression)
- appeals to various senses

If you can skillfully incorporate all of these ingredients into your paper, your narrative should be vivid and interesting. Ideally, it should enable us to recreate your experience in our imaginations, making what was meaningful to you real to us.

* * *

Writing Assignment #5
The Self
Cause-Effect Analysis

*"Life is not a having and a getting,
But a being and becoming."*

--Matthew Arnold

In the first chapter of The Heath Introduction to Literature, Alice Landy states that "we are always curious about each other, and usually curious about ourselves as well. Why do we behave as we do? What are the causes of our actions?" Questions like these are the beginning of this next assignment. Indeed, the curiosity about oneself which Landy speaks of and the insight which that curiosity yields are the basis of the assignment, for in this paper I want you to write about some aspect of your life which has been significant in shaping your character. It might be an experience (the birth of a child or the loss of a loved one), a person (a friend or a role model), a place (your hometown or a personal sanctuary), or even a thing (an animal or a machine). Whatever it is, it should be something that has had an impact on the person you are or on the values you possess.

While the overall purpose of the paper is to explore an important dimension of your personality, you may approach the assignment in one of two ways: either by emphasizing causes or by focusing upon effects. You might, for example, choose to analyze the causes that have led you to embody a particular character trait--say, jealousy or shyness--or you might analyze the effects of your jealousy or shyness on yourself and others. Likewise, you might write about the factors that led you to a significant decision in your life, or you might explore the effects of that decision. You might simply choose to discuss how a parent, teacher, friend, brother, sister, job, or experience (maybe the one you described in the narrative assignment) has affected you, making you into a different person. Because this assignment centers on how you have come to be who you are, examining the pivotal events or turning points you identified in your lifeline may also help you decide on an appropriate topic.

As you can see, this paper will probably be a bit more challenging than the previous one. That assignment was based on narration--your goal was to recount an experience as vividly as you possibly could. This one is based on analysis--you will need to examine your life carefully, attempting to identify some of the influences that have helped shape your

personality. This essay will also be structured differently than the previous assignment. Your narrative was organized chronologically, but this paper will be composed of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction will include a thesis statement--a sentence that announces the purpose of your paper. The body, reflecting your approach and your subject, will discuss a series of causes or effects. And your conclusion will tie your discussion together, ideally making a strong final impression upon the reader.

Depending upon your topic, the working outline of your essay will therefore look like this:

P1	Introduction of Effect	OR	Introduction of Cause
P2	Cause 1		Effect 1
P3	Cause 2		Effect 2
P4	Cause 3		Effect 3
P5	Conclusion		Conclusion

Remember that the difference in approach is really just a difference in emphasis: whether you concentrate on causes or effects in the body of your paper, you will still be analyzing a cause-effect relationship.

In trying to decide on a topic, keep in mind that what may seem insignificant about your life to you will likely not seem so to us. We learn from others, and whatever you have learned about yourself can probably help us in understanding ourselves as well. The aspect of yourself you choose to write about need not be a positive one, need not be something you are proud of; in fact, exploring a negative dimension of your character may be more helpful to you. At the same time, however, don't feel compelled to write about something too dramatic or traumatic. Avoid a topic so intensely private that you would not want to share it with someone else in the class (since you will once again be evaluating one another's rough drafts).

Most important of all, write about someone or something you know about and care about. To quote Landy again, "writers have many standards for judging writing. But an enduring standard is the writer's power to interpret us, as humans, to ourselves. The greater the writer's knowledge of people and himself seems to be, the more openly he shares his knowledge, the higher we rate him." The more clearly you can analyze the elements you choose to explore in your own life, the more effective your essay will be.

Unit Two: Self with Family

Journal Assignment

Journal Assignment #4 Self with Family

1. How would you characterize the family in which you grew up? Was it traditional or nontraditional, small or large, happy or unhappy?
2. Select one motto that your family tried to instill in you as you were growing up. Then write about how they tried to communicate that message to you by their example.
3. What member of your family are you most like? In what ways?
4. Write about an experience you shared with your family (or with a member of your family) that you want always to remember.
5. To what member of your family are you closest? Why?

* * *

Reading Assignments

Ian Robertson, "The Family"
Joyce Maynard, "Generations"
Janice Mirikitani, "Breaking Traditions: For My Daughter"
Larry King, "The Old Man"
Walter Macdonald, "Never in My Life"
Ellen Goodman, "The Family That Stretches (Together)"
Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"
Nancy Friday, "Competition"

* * *

Writing Assignment

Writing Assignment #6 Self with Family Comparison/Contrast

According to Ann Moseley and Jeannette Harris, the editors of our text, "to a great extent you define yourself in terms of your family." Moseley and Harris go on to say that the reading selections in Unit 2 of Interactions "will encourage you to explore the relationships within your family and to define yourself more clearly in terms of these relationships." That's exactly what we want you to do in this fifth writing assignment: to compare or to contrast yourself with another member of your family. You might also choose to compare or contrast other members of your family--perhaps your mother with your father or a brother with a sister.

Let's assume that you plan to contrast yourself with your mother. How are you going to start? Probably the best way to begin is by brainstorming or freewriting about the differences between the two of you. Usually, the most meaningful differences are those that revolve around personality characteristics or values--they'll give you more to write about than mere contrasts in appearance, and they lend themselves well to illustrations and examples. (Even at this early stage, you might want to identify the examples you could use to demonstrate your contrasts; for those examples may influence which ideas you ultimately decide to discuss in your paper.) In this case, then, you might determine that you and your mother differ in your attitudes toward money, responsibility, and child-rearing. You might also conclude that you embody competing sets of values. Perhaps ambition is more important to your mother than it is to you, or maybe you value freedom more than your mother does. Perhaps you have opposite ideas about the meaning of "success." There are many, many ways in which the two of you might differ.

After you've expanded your list of possible differences, you'll want to narrow it down to a manageable number--probably three or four. Now you're in a position to order the differences from least important to most important. Of course, if you've considered your topic carefully, all the differences you write about should be significant ones; you're ranking your ideas only in terms of their relative importance.

Once you've done that, you can determine which of two basic organizational patterns will be more effective in your essay. One pattern is known as the block-by-block pattern of organization; the other, as the point-by-point pattern. Both

patterns of development include an introduction; a thesis statement; several paragraphs in body, each with a topic sentence; and a conclusion. The primary difference between the two lies in the way you organize the information in the body. The possible working outlines for this paper would look like this:

	<u>Block by Block</u>		<u>Point by Point</u>
P1	Introduction	P1	Introduction
P2	Mother Characteristic 1 Characteristic 2 Characteristic 3	P2	Characteristic 1 Mother Yourself
P3	Yourself Characteristic 1 Characteristic 2 Characteristic 3	P3	Characteristic 2 Mother Yourself
P4	Conclusion	P4	Characteristic 3 Mother Yourself
		P5	Conclusion

Each organizational pattern has its advantages and disadvantages, depending upon how many points of comparison you're discussing, how much information you have, and what you want to stress in your comparison or contrast. After you've decided on the approach that better suits your purposes, you'll need to devise a thesis, compose your topic sentences, develop and order your examples (if you haven't already completed this step), and decide on a strategy to employ in your introduction and conclusion. Only after you've engaged in these prewriting activities should you begin to write the first draft.

* * *

Unit Three: Self with Friends

Journal Assignments

Journal Assignment #5 Self With Friends

1. Describe the qualities you value in a friend.
2. Write about a friendship you have had with a much older person. Describe your friend and at least one memorable experience you shared with him or her.
3. How did you meet your best friend? What personal qualities attracted you to this friend, and what experiences contributed to your friendship?
4. Write a narrative about a time when you and one of your friends had a serious argument or disagreement. How did you resolve your differences?
5. Write a journal entry about a friendship that helped you through a difficult time, such as an illness or the death of a loved one. Or write about how you supported a friend during such a time.

* * *

Journal Assignment #6 Self With Friends

1. Think about the friends you have had during different stages of your life--maybe during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Then describe the characteristics that distinguished each type of friendship.
2. Are friendships between males different from friendships between females? If you think they are, write about some of the qualities that distinguish these two types of friendship. You might even speculate about the factors responsible for these differences.

3. Think about your friendships with members of the opposite sex. What is the basis of the friendship? How are friendships between men and women different from friendships between members of the same sex?
4. Write about the various roles you play with different types of friends. Are you one person with some of your friends and a different person with others? What accounts for these differences?
5. One of the essays we will read during this segment of the course is entitled "Friends, Good Friends, and Such Good Friends," by Judith Viorst. The title implies that we classify our friends on the basis of closeness, from mere acquaintances to best friends. With that classification in mind, write about three people who would fit into the categories described in Viorst's title.

* * *

Reading Assignments

Maya Angelou, "Liked for Myself"

Jennifer Crichton, "College Friends"

Larry McMurtry, Excerpt from The Last Picture Show

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "Can Women and Women Be Friends?"

Judith Viorst, "Friends, Good Friends--and Such Good Friends"

Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright, "Death of a Friend: The Delicacy and Strength of Lace"

Stephanie Mansfield, "Death of a Friendship"

* * *

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment #7

Self with Friends

Analysis

In this paper you will be analyzing your best friend's personality. In other words, you will be writing about the specific qualities that make your best friend so special to you--the qualities that help define your best friend as your best friend. As we saw on Thursday, those qualities might be honesty or loyalty, patience or independence, respect or unconditional love. No doubt your best friend embodies these and other distinctive characteristics that cause you to care about him or her so deeply.

Because you want to provide your reader with an accurate and realistic portrait of your friend, you might begin the assignment by listing as many adjectives as you can think of to describe your best friend's personality. (This process is very similar to the freewriting in which you wrote about the characteristics of a "perfect friend.") Think about the elements that first drew the two of you together as friends, the characteristics that have enabled you to remain friends, the qualities that have allowed you to overcome disagreements, the traits that distinguish your best friend from your other friends and acquaintances. All of the adjectives you can think of will be personality traits; together, they will create a complete profile of your best friend.

Since you cannot possibly write about all of those characteristics, you will need to decide upon the three or four qualities that are most significant in determining your best friend's personality. Those qualities will become the heart of your essay, each one serving as the basis for a paragraph in the body. To determine the order in which to discuss those traits, you will naturally want to rank them. Then you will likely write about them in their order of importance, from the least important to the most important. Because this is another formal essay, the working outline for your paper will thus look like this:

- P1 Introduction
- P2 Personality Trait 1
- P3 Personality Trait 2
- P4 Personality Trait 3
- P5 Personality Trait 4
- P6 Conclusion

To develop each paragraph in the body, you will need to cite specific examples that illustrate the character trait you are discussing. In this case, too, you should try to think of as many examples as you possibly can. Then choose one or two of the best examples that demonstrate the presence of that quality in your best friend's personality. If your best friend is selfless, think of examples that illustrate his selflessness; if your friend is faithful, think of experiences that dramatize her faithfulness. Of course, when you recount these examples in the paper itself, you will want to develop them in detail, using the descriptive techniques we have discussed in class. Only by employing those strategies will you be able to bring your friend to life for the reader--only then that you can represent your friend in such a way that the reader understands why he or she is so special to you.

* * *

Writing Assignment #8
Self with Friends
Classification

In this essay, you will be classifying your friends into several different categories, just as Viorst has done in "Friends, Good Friends--and Such Good Friends." As we have seen in class, any group can be classified in any number of ways; thus there is no one way to categorize your friends. You might, for instance, classify your friends in terms of closeness--a classification that might yield categories such as acquaintances, casual friends, and intimate friends. (Even the labels you employ to identify these types of friends can vary, of course.) Or you might classify according to different stages in your life--an approach that might result in categories of childhood friends, high school friends, and college friends. (Here, too, the categories you decide on might vary.) You might also categorize your friends according to age or the length of time you have known them. Your classification need not be limited to three categories either; you can have as many categories as you have different types of friends.

Once you have decided on a classification scheme, you have also determined the overall pattern of organization for your paper. In fact, the paragraphs in the body of your essay will be built around the different types of friends you have chosen to analyze. The working outline of your paper will therefore probably look like this:

- P1 Introduction
- P2 Type 1
- P3 Type 2
- P4 Type 3
- P5 Conclusion

Of course, the plan for your paper may differ, depending upon the number of categories that result from your classification.

After you have completed this step of the writing process, you will need to decide on the various qualities that distinguish one type of friend from another. (You may have already done this, perhaps without knowing it, when you decided on the categories themselves.) In other words, you will need to decide on specific points of comparison that differentiate one type of friendship from another. You might consider the way in which you met each type of friend, the kinds of things you talk about, the sorts of things you do together, the types of interests or values you share--anything

that helps clarify how each kind of friend differs from the others you are discussing.

After you have determined these points of comparison--or qualities that distinguish your various types of friends--you will need to organize them, probably moving from the least important to the most important. This order will determine the pattern of development you will follow in each paragraph in the body. Each paragraph will thus probably be structured like this:

Topic sentence
Quality 1
Quality 2
Quality 3

As you can see, organizing this essay is a bit more challenging than structuring the assignments you have written in the past. However, you can also see that this paper is structured much like the analysis essay you just completed. If you approach the assignment systematically, following a step-by-step progression, you should once again be able to organize your essay clearly and complete the assignment successfully.

* * *

Unit Four: Self with Mate

Journal Assignments

Journal Assignment #7 Self with Mate

1. Choose one of your favorite quotations or poems about love and then discuss why that quote or poem means so much to you.
2. Samuel Butler writes, "The course of true love never does run smooth." Discuss the extent to which this quotation has proven true in your life.
3. What are some of the ingredients that are necessary to maintain a loving relationship? In other words, what must two people do to keep a relationship healthy and alive?
4. Discuss whether or not you believe men and women approach romantic relationships differently. Be sure to illustrate your discussion with specific examples, either from your own experiences or from the experiences of those you know.
5. Your child has just asked you, "What is love?" How would you respond to this question?

* * *

Journal Assignment #8 Self with Mate

1. Write about the qualities you desire in an ideal mate.
2. How would you define the differences between love and infatuation?
3. Using vivid narration, write about either the best date you ever had or the worst date you ever endured.
4. Speaking from your own experiences, discuss some of the factors or problems that make relationships difficult to maintain.

5. Your best friend has just broken up with her lover. Imagine that you are writing a letter to her to try to comfort her. What advice would you offer to her? What would you say to help her overcome her sense of loss?

* * *

Reading Assignments

Ian Robertson, "Romantic Love, Courtship and Marriage"
Gary Soto, "Finding a Wife"
Karen Heller, "Is He Husband Material or a Boyfriend Kind of Guy?"
Bel Kaufman, "Sunday in the Park"
Aaron T. Peck, "Love Is Never Enough"
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "How Do I Love Thee?"
Janet Campbell Hale, "On Death and Love"
Elsie Bliss, "'Why Isn't a Nice Person Like You Married?'"
Bobbie Ann Mason, "Shiloh"
Carol Oberhaus, "For Ladies Only"
Thu Hong Nguyen, "A Good Woman"

* * *

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment #9 Self with Mate Process Analysis

In "Love Is Never Enough," Aaron T. Beck identifies five rules or steps that one should follow to improve communication with his or her partner: (1) "tune in to your partner's channel," (2) "give listening signals," (3) "don't interrupt," (4) "ask questions skillfully," and (5) "use diplomacy." His advice functions as a type of guide that enables an individual to achieve a specific goal--in this case, better communication. For this next assignment, you will develop a similar guide, one that provides your reader with information that enables him or her to complete a task or to accomplish an objective. Although you may approach the assignment in a number of different ways (all of which relate to this thematic unit, "Self with Mate") your ultimate goal will be to acquaint your reader with whatever knowledge he or she needs to be successful at the process you have chosen to analyze.

Because process analysis revolves around "how-to" topics, your essay will, in essence, be a kind of manual that provides the reader with directions, helpful hints, and bits of advice.

Listed below are some suggested subjects:

Explain how to communicate effectively with members of the opposite sex.

- how to argue constructively, or how to win arguments
- how to kiss memorably
- how to attract members of the opposite sex
- how to impress someone on a first date
- how to find or select a husband or wife
- how to foster closeness in a relationship
- how to keep "life" in a relationship
- how to destroy a relationship
- how to tell when love is "true" or "real"
- how to tell if you are a victim of infatuation
- how to distinguish love from infatuation
- how to tell if someone is "boyfriend kind of guy"
or a "girlfriend kind of gal"
- how to propose
- how to cope when you are away from the person you love
- how to survive the break-up of a relationship

Of course, there are other topics you might discuss, depending on your interests, knowledge, and experiences. All that is really important is that you choose a subject which interests you and which enables you to explain in detail how to do something.

* * *

Writing Assignment #10
Self with Mate
Definition

Remember the classified ad you wrote, trying to find that "special someone"? Well, it didn't work. Although you received 137 responses, none of them quite measured up to your expectations. Discouraged but still hopeful, you've decided to enlist the services of a dating agency for some professional assistance in finding a companion. Included in the questionnaire you are given to complete is the following statement:

If we are to locate your ideal mate, we must know the specific qualities that he or she should embody. Perhaps appearance is important to you, or perhaps you are more interested in your partner's personality. Maybe you value integrity more than anything else, or maybe you cherish commitment. Whatever your specifications, try to let us know as clearly as possible what you desire in your

companion so we will be able to find someone who will answer your most important needs. A multi-paragraph essay would serve as the perfect vehicle for communicating your requirements to us.

That's just what I want you to do in this next assignment: write a paper in which you define your conception of the ideal mate. To accomplish that goal, you can employ any (or several) of the patterns of development we have discussed during the semester. Description, narration, exemplification, causal analysis, comparison/contrast, analysis, classification, process analysis--all can be effectively used to develop a clear definition. Unlike the papers you have written in the past, a definition essay possesses no set pattern; you must create your own. Although that makes this assignment more challenging, it also gives you more freedom than you have had in any previous assignment. Now you can choose the organizational pattern and the types of development that will best suit your purposes. As you can see, then, your definition will be a unique and individual statement, one determined by your beliefs and values.

Whatever approach or, more likely, combination of approaches you decide to use, try to organize your definition into a coherent whole. Although your definition will reflect your own values, remember that anyone else should be able to identify clearly what you conceive to be an ideal mate. Even if your reader does not agree with your definition, he or she should at least be able to understand your conception of an ideal companion; for in the end, acceptance or rejection should rest on informed understanding.

* * *

Final Evaluation

Journal Assignment

Journal Assignment #9 Evaluating Your Reading and Writing

1. Discuss the ways in which you have improved as both a reader and a writer.
2. Of all the essays we have read this semester, which one(s) did you find most interesting or stimulating? Why?

3. Of all the essays you have written this semester, which one(s) did you find most challenging? Which one(s) do you feel best about? Why?
4. Now that you have successfully completed English 07, you are in a position to offer advice to others who are just beginning their education at Virginia Western. Imagine that you are writing for someone who is new to the college, someone who will be entering English 07 next fall. What advice would you offer to him? What will he need to do to be successful? What have you learned about reading and writing that a new student should keep in mind?

* * *

Writing Assignment

Writing Assignment #11 Evaluating Your Reading and Writing Abilities

The final assignment for English 07 will be an essay in which you evaluate what you have learned about reading and writing. The assignment begins with a careful review of everything you have learned during the semester and close analysis of the previous essays you have written. In fact, before you can really begin writing the final paper, you need to consider what you have learned as a reader and how you have improved as a writer. To accomplish the former goal, you need to examine your behaviors as a reader: what you do before you read, as you read, and after you read. To accomplish the latter goal, you need to review the record of your writing in the course: all the essays you have thus far completed. Using that information, you will then be able to generalize about the areas of reading and writing you have already mastered and those you still need to improve upon.

Since this final writing assignment will be another formal essay, your paper will once again be composed of an introduction, several paragraphs in the body, and a conclusion. The introduction should arouse the reader's interest, create a context for your discussion, and state your thesis--no different from the papers you've written in the past. The conclusion of your essay will resemble those you've written earlier, too; for you will restate your thesis and try to make a strong final impression on the reader. The paragraphs in the body, however, will discuss your current evaluation of your reading and writing skills. You will probably assess your reading skills in the first section of the body and analyze your writing skills--including your

mastery of grammar--in subsequent paragraphs. The working outline of your essay will thus probably look like this:

Introduction
Reading Skills
 Weaknesses
 Strengths
Writing Skills
 Weaknesses
 Strengths
Conclusion

As you can see, your final essay will be structured much like your previous papers. The only significant difference is that you are now writing about your reading and writing. Because the general format of the essay is the same, you should try to incorporate into your paper all the elements of an effective expository essay: a clear thesis; good topic sentences and transitions; and, most important of all, specific examples that illustrate your points to your reader. In this case, of course, the examples--whether they reflect upon your reading or your writing--will come from the selections you have read or the papers you have written throughout the semester.

Because you are evaluating what you have learned about reading and writing throughout the course, you will not be able to discuss all of your strengths and weaknesses. To be sure, you cannot discuss every grammatical error you have made any more than you can write about every strength you have developed. That means you will have to generalize about patterns and trends in your reading and writing. Examine the strategies you now use when you read a text; look for the types of grammatical errors you tend to make most often; emphasize the strengths that occur again and again in your papers. Ultimately, think about the ways in which your knowledge of the reading and writing processes has changed, and don't overlook the ways in which your attitude and feelings about reading and writing may have changed, too.

In the end, then, think of this paper as a persuasive essay; for your ultimate goal is to demonstrate to your reader that your reading and writing have improved and that you now know more about effective reading and writing than you did at the beginning of the semester. In the process of doing that, you will also be demonstrating how you have changed as a result of your enrollment in English 07.

APPENDIX C

SUCCESS RATES IN ENGLISH 07 AND ENGLISH 01 AND 04

As Bartholomae and Petrosky lament in Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts, "our experience with basic readers and writers has taught us that the change that takes place [in their literate abilities] can never be . . . complete or total, and the process can never be . . . easy" (7). Success rates in English 07 corroborate this truth. Students enrolled in English 07 have consistently fared better than their colleagues in other developmental reading and writing courses, and their success in subsequent college-level English classes has likewise eclipsed that of other developmental English students. As the statistics in the following tables indicate, however, levels of achievement among remedial students at Virginia Western betray the deeply problematic nature of developmental education, for they disclose the unhappy reality that sometimes "the odds against the [remedial student's] success are overwhelming" (Moore, Against 3).

The tables that comprise Appendix C compare success rates among students enrolled in English 07 with those enrolled in English 01, Preparing for College Writing, and English 04, Reading Improvement--the remedial writing and reading classes that, together, correspond to English 07. Students in English 07 and students in English 01 and 04 are drawn from the same

population and share similar characteristics: individuals in both groups have written an unsatisfactory placement essay and, according to the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, are reading below the tenth-grade level. Thus, although these two groups do not represent matched samples, in general, students who enroll in English 07 are the cohorts of those who enroll in English 01 and 04.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 compare the success rates of students in English 01 and 04 with students in English 07 during the four semesters in which English 07 was taught. In each of those semesters, the college offered multiple sections of English 01 and English 04 and one section of English 07, with no significant variations in class size. Measures of success are reflected in the four possible grades a student may receive in a remedial course: S (Satisfactory), R (Re-enroll), U (Unsatisfactory), and W (Withdrawal). According to Virginia Western's General Catalog, an S is awarded "for satisfactory completion of a developmental studies course"; an R, when "the student is making progress but the course objectives have not been completed"; a U, when "the student has not made satisfactory progress"; and a W, when a student "withdraw[s] or [is] withdrawn from a course after the add/drop period but prior to the completion of 60% percent of the session" (27). In practice, an R is given to students who show promise and who have made some progress in improving their reading and

Table 1.1

Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students

	S		R		U		W	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	26	48.1	16	29.6	1	1.9	11	20.4
Spring 92	7	30.4	12	52.1	2	8.7	2	8.7
Fall 92	9	32.1	15	53.6	0	0	4	14.3
Fall 93	31	57.4	13	24.1	2	3.7	8	14.8
Total	73	45.9	56	35.2	5	3.1	25	15.7

Table 1.2

Success Rate of English 07 Students

	S		R		U		W	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	13	65.0	0	0	2	10.0	5	25.0
Spring 92	17	70.8	2	8.3	2	8.3	3	12.5
Fall 92	10	66.7	2	13.3	0	0	3	20.0
Fall 93	13	59.1	3	13.6	0	0	6	27.3
Total	53	65.4	7	8.6	4	4.9	17	21.0

writing skills; a U is given to students who have failed to complete a significant number of assignments or who have missed an excessive number of class meetings.

As the data in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate, the success rate for English 07 students was almost 20% higher than that for English 01 and 04 students: 65.4% versus 45.9%. If one disregards students who received a W, considering only those students who completed these courses and actually earned a grade, the difference in success rates becomes even more dramatic: 82.8% versus 54.5%. Data for completers only are illustrated in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Of course, success rates in developmental classes prove meaningful only when they are viewed in the context of students' success in later college-level classes. Indeed, a high success rate in a remedial course means little if students are unprepared for college-level work. Students' achievement in first-year courses thus becomes the index that corroborates the true effectiveness of a developmental studies program. At Virginia Western, students who complete English 01 and 04 or English 07 may enroll in one of two freshman writing courses: English 101, Practical Writing I, or English 111, College Composition I. English 101 is intended primarily for students in occupational-technical curricula; consequently, the dominant forms of discourse in this class tend to be reports, abstracts, and business correspondence.

Table 2.1

Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students
(Completers Only)

	S		R		U	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	26	60.5	16	37.2	1	2.3
Spring 92	7	33.3	12	57.2	2	9.5
Fall 92	9	37.5	15	62.5	0	0
Fall 93	31	67.4	13	28.3	2	4.3
Total	73	54.5	56	41.8	5	3.7

Table 2.2

Success Rate of English 07 Students
(Completers Only)

	S		R		U	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	13	86.7	0	0	2	13.3
Spring 92	17	81.0	2	9.5	2	9.5
Fall 92	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	0
Fall 93	13	81.3	3	18.7	0	0
Total	53	82.8	7	10.9	4	6.3

English 111, on the other hand, is a generic introduction to critical reading and writing; as in most college composition courses, the staple assignment is the formal essay. At Virginia Western, only about 5% of the student body elects to enroll in English 101, making English 111 the course of choice for the vast majority of students.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 summarize the success rates in English 101 and English 111 for students who satisfactorily completed English 01 and 04 and English 07. In an attempt to lessen the effects of extraneous variables, I have considered only those students who registered for English 101 and English 111 in a semester immediately following their enrollment in developmental studies classes. These data indicate that success rates in first-year English courses among English 01 and 04 and English 07 students were virtually the same, as one would anticipate given similar exit criteria for the two sets of courses. If Preparing for College Writing, Reading Improvement, and Writing and Reading Improvement are designed to prepare students for Practical Writing I and College Composition I, then one can presume that, with similar standards and criteria for evaluation, students who complete these remedial courses should be well prepared for college-level English, so comparable rates of success would be an expected rather than an unusual outcome. If one compares success rates among only those students who completed English

Table 3.1

Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students
in English 101 or English 111

	A,B,C		D,F		W	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	14	66.7	5	23.8	2	9.5
Spring 92	3	60.0	2	40.0	0	0
Fall 92	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3
Fall 93	15	51.7	8	27.6	6	20.7
Total	35	57.4	16	26.2	10	16.4

Table 3.2

Success Rate of English 07 Students
in English 101 or English 111

	A,B,C		D,F		W	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	7	58.3	3	25.0	2	16.7
Spring 92	5	62.5	1	12.5	2	25.0
Fall 92	6	66.7	1	11.1	2	22.2
Fall 93	7	58.3	4	33.3	1	8.3
Total	25	61.0	9	22.0	7	17.0

101 and English 111, however, considering only those students whose work resulted in an earned grade, the rate for English 07 students was once again slightly higher. (Students who do not complete a college-level course receive either a W or an F, depending upon the date of their last day of attendance.) Data for completers only in English 101 and English 111 are included in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

As these statistics demonstrate, English 07 students who completed English 101 or English 111 enjoyed a higher rate of success than English 01 and 04 students. Perhaps even more important, the percentage of English 07 students who passed English 101 and English 111 compares well with the overall pass rates for these two courses among all students at the college. Including completers and non-completers, approximately 67% of the students who annually enroll in English 101 and English 111 earn an A, B, or C; counting completers only, approximately 80% are successful with an A, B, or C. The success rate among English 07 completers and non-completers (64%) is thus almost the same as that for students in the general population, and the success rate for completers only (86%) actually exceeds that for the general population.

Although none of these statistics can be conclusive, they are encouraging. The small size of the samples, teachers' differing styles and personalities, even differences in class

Table 4.1

Success Rate of English 01 and 04 Students
in English 101 or English 111
(Completers Only)

	A, B, C		D, F	
	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	14	77.8	4	22.2
Spring 92	3	60.0	2	40.0
Fall 92	3	75.0	1	25.0
Fall 93	15	83.3	3	16.7
Total	35	77.7	10	22.2

Table 4.2

Success Rate of English 07 Students
in English 101 or English 111
(Completers Only)

	A, B, C		D, F	
	N	%	N	%
Fall 91	7	77.8	2	22.2
Spring 92	5	100.0	0	0
Fall 92	6	100.0	0	0
Fall 93	7	77.8	2	22.2
Total	25	86.2	4	13.8

scheduling--all represent factors that conceivably influenced success rates among these students. But there is a relatively high rate of success among English 07 students, one which surpasses the rate for other developmental English students and which compares favorably with the rate for students in the general population at the college. In only one semester, many English 07 students apparently improved their reading and writing to the extent that they were competitive with more proficient students who entered the institution already prepared for college English.

Moreover, the sizable discrepancy in the percentage of students who pass English 07 as opposed to English 01 and 04 translates into a correspondingly high difference in the overall percentage of students who are eventually successful in college-level classes. Perhaps the ultimate quantitative measure of English 07's relative effectiveness, this difference also represents the most unsettling statistic in the study: of the 159 students who began English 01 and English 04, only 35, or 22%, completed a first-year English course successfully; of the 81 students who began English 07, 25, or 31%, completed such a course successfully. While the statistics thus cast English 07 as a viable alternative to teaching reading and writing separately, they also echo Moore's ominous prophecy that "the odds are that the remedial student will not be any better off academically after his

college experience than he was before he had the experience unless educators change the existing rules of the game" (Against 3). At the same time, they confirm the unfortunate but inevitable truth that community colleges function as a gateway only to some, never to all.

VITA

John Spencer Capps
4386 Summerset Drive
Roanoke, Virginia 24014

EDUCATION

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Doctor of Education, Curriculum and Instruction, 1994

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Master of Arts, English, 1977

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, English, 1974

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke, Virginia.
Associate Professor and Program Head of English, 1978-
present.

Center for Instructionally Talented Youth, Roanoke, Virginia.
Visiting Scholar, 1985-90.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, Virginia. Instructor of English, 1977-78.

Wytheville Community College, Wytheville, Virginia. Lecturer
in English, 1977.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, Virginia. Graduate Teaching Assistant,
Department of English, 1974-77.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Fellowship, Southwest Virginia Writing Project, 1985
Graduate Tuition Scholarship, awarded by Virginia Tech for
academic achievement, 1976

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Tech, 1974-77

Phi Kappa Phi, 1973

Phi Eta Sigma, 1971

Dean's List, Virginia Tech, 1970-74

Valedictorian, Upper St. Clair High School, Upper St. Clair,
Pennsylvania, 1970

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Chair, Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, Virginia Western Community College Self-Study, 1991-93
Participant, VCCS Instructional Leadership Conference, Richmond, Virginia, 1987
Chair, College Council, Virginia Western Community College, 1985-87
Vice-President, Faculty Forum, Virginia Western Community College, 1985-86
Member of the Executive Committee, Faculty Forum, Virginia Western Community College, 1984-85
Chair, "Implications From Three Theorists for Teaching Composition," Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977
Chair, "They Write Where They Are," Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977
Presenter, "Audio Tape Critiques of Freshman English Themes," Community College Association for Instructional Technology, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1976

GRANTS

"A Retention Model for Developmental Reading and Writing Students," (with Bill Salyers and Patsy Starnes), Funds for Excellence Program, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 1991-92
"Innovations in the Teaching of Freshman English," (with Michael Squires and Susanne Gruenhagen), Teaching-Learning Grant, Virginia Tech, 1976

PUBLICATION

"'Other Ways of Seeing': A Rousseauian Education of Henry Fleming." Virginia English Bulletin 41 (1991): 11-28.

AWARDS

Certificates of Teaching Excellence, Virginia Tech, 1977-78, 1976-77, 1975-76, 1974-75


John Spencer Capps