RECONCEPTUALIZING THE ROLE OF READING IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

by

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To all my former students: collectively you have taught me that teaching is far more about listening than it is about talking

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation identifies several reasons that the field of composition studies has largely neglected the issue of reading, and builds upon conceptions of reading and writing as connected activities to argue that it is insufficient to teach writing without also attending to reading. The dissertation presents the first-available topography of reading approaches—systematic ways of engaging with a text that encourage readers to attend to certain textual features while reading with very particular goals in mind—that instructors might teach students to adopt as they read assigned texts.

Drawing on surveys and interviews of writing instructors at the University of Michigan, this project compares how these instructors define and describe various reading approaches with the definitions and descriptions found in scholarship, thus offering a more complete picture of how reading is theorized and taught in first-year writing courses. Instructor data reinforces how inexact the definitions for these reading approaches are and how this imprecision can make it difficult to teach reading effectively in first-year writing.

Instructor and student data suggests that being explicit with students about how course reading assignments connect to course writing assignments can increase student motivation to complete assigned course reading, and this dissertation highlights two distinct strategies that can be used to connect reading and writing: teaching students to "steal" or imitate writing strategies, and assigning model texts to serve as exemplars. The dissertation outlines several additional benefits of teaching reading and writing as connected activities.

This dissertation also recasts writing workshop as a pedagogical strategy for teaching reading-writing connections. By asking students to read with an eye toward improving their own writing, workshop integrates reading and writing in ways that can help students to recognize important connections between the two meaning-making processes. The dissertation proposes a new, fuller conception of workshop in which students analyze both published texts and student-produced texts to identify what could be improved upon and what is already working well. Students return to their own writing better prepared to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to implement specific new writing strategies and techniques.

Introduction

A Great Day for a Hike

Mt. Defiance is 4,960 feet at its summit. The trail to the top begins gently, then transforms into a series of steep switchbacks. Once you reach the 4100ft. mark, you get a gorgeous view to the north of the Cascade Range, Columbia River Gorge, and parts of southern Washington. Once on top, you get a clear view of Mt Hood to the South and into eastern Oregon.

I know these details because the summer after my sophomore year in college two of my best friends and I hiked to the top. We didn't bring enough water with us, and about two hours into the five-hour hike I felt my mouth drying up, my throat constricting. By the time we reached the top we had little energy left to talk and we sat silently eating the sandwiches we'd carted up and taking in the panoramic view. This was our first hike together—my first hike of any kind—and we'd conquered the toughest climb in the Columbia River Gorge.

But it was the afternoon *before* our hike that stands out most in my memory.

We arrived at the campground Friday afternoon with the idea of getting to sleep early then setting off at first light to get in a few hours of hiking before the midday heat. Temperatures in the Gorge that week were spiking into the high eighties. I think each of us was a little nervous, and after setting up the tent and unpacking the coolers we had little left to do but sit around and imagine what the morning would bring. I brought along a novel—Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*—which I had put off finishing because several early scenes involved hiking, and I wanted to finish reading the book out in the woods right before our big adventure. I followed a stream up an embankment about fifty yards away from the campsite, and on a flat boulder right next to the water I sat down and finished the novel.

I don't know exactly what it was about the ending that unsettled me. As the narrator of the novel descends from a mountain on the novel's final pages after several weeks alone as a fire lookout, readers are invited to consider what it means to live in a world with people, and what it means to live alone. The narrator is optimistic after these weeks alone in nature, but as readers we suspect that he will resume his destructive behaviors as soon as he returns to the city. It got me thinking about what it would take for me to live such an isolated existence, and how I might respond to a similar transition back to social life. A stock phrase is that the novel "set my mind racing," but it felt more like my mind was quite literally *opened*—newly receptive to whatever thoughts came my way.

I curled up on the boulder and watched the stream flow by. The water poured itself into three distinct levels, with waterfalls about a foot high dropping into pools about three feet long, then dropping again, much like a staircase. I flicked a rock into the water and it hardly made a splash.

Then I got an idea.

I looked at the stream and thought about human history. The top-most level of the stream represented the present moment—my lifetime. The one just below that, the middle level, was the future—the two hundred years or so after I was dead. The third step down was the distant future, a time when only the most important ideas and figures from today would still be relevant.

I picked up a stone the size of an acorn and dropped it into the upper pool of water. It made a wave, and a small ripple of water careened over the drop into the middle level. This rock was Jack Kerouac. Kerouac was influential in his time and had a slight impact on the near future. I picked up a much heavier rock and dubbed it William Shakespeare. The splash where the rock disappeared into the upper pool sent waves down into the middle pool that traveled with lessening energy into the lowest, "distant-future" level of the stream. Shakespeare's impact was greater than Kerouac's and extended further into the future. Jesus Christ was a rock the size of my head.

Then I knelt beside the stream and collected a tiny pebble on my fingertip. I named it Michael Bunn. I dropped the pebble into the water hoping to see a splash that I

knew wasn't coming. I looked around my feet and saw dozens of similar sized pebbles. Pebbles lined the shore and there were hundreds of them coating the streambed.

*

I describe this sunny afternoon in the Pacific Northwest because it was the moment when first I understood—truly understood— that writers had the potential to change the way that readers view the world.[1] *The Dharma Bums* did more than entertain me. Reading that novel altered my thinking, placed me in a mindset in which I was able to speculate about history and my personal role within history. If I hadn't finished *The Dharma Bums* that afternoon I wouldn't have had the series of thoughts about history—or the subsequent thoughts on the power of authorship—that have proven so influential to me. As Karen Armstrong writes in her book *A Short History of Myth*, "[T]he experience of reading a novel has certain qualities that remind us of the traditional apprehension of mythology. It can be seen as a form of meditation . . . It projects them into another world, parallel to but apart from their ordinary lives" (147).

That was the day I decided to become a writer.

When I think back to that summer afternoon, and especially the weeks that followed, I understand that another important consideration emerged: the connection between reading and learning to write. While *The Dharma Bums* was the catalyst for my desire to become a writer, it was also a specific text that I studied to better understand the craft of writing. Within a week of our hike up Mt. Defiance I read another Kerouac novel, *On the Road,* and compared it to *The Dharma Bums.* I tried to determine how the narrators in each novel (who act as both participants and non-judgmental observers of the stories' events) affected my perception of the stories. I tried to understand what, specifically, I liked about this kind of narration and what that might mean for my own efforts to write. I had no theories at this point—no familiarity with Reader-Response Criticism or with Barthes' "The Death of the Author." I could have purchased a writing handbook if I had thought to do so, but I doubt that this would have seemed as exciting as reading another novel or short story and trying to learn from it. I loved to study writing

[1] Jesus Christ might not be recognized as a writer along the lines of Shakespeare or Kerouac, but the written account of his teachings and life constitute a highly influential book.

by reading the work of authors I admired. I still do. As Francine Prose explains in *Reading Like a Writer:*

> Long before the idea of a writer's conference was a glimmer in anyone's eye, writers learned by reading the work of their predecessors. They studied meter with Ovid, plot construction with Homer, comedy with Aristophanes; they honed their prose style by absorbing the lucid sentences of Montaigne and Samuel Johnson. And who could have asked for better teachers: generous, uncritical, blessed with wisdom and genius, and endlessly forgiving as only the dead can be? (3).

To her list I could add learning narrative from Kerouac, setting from Flannery O'Connor, point of view from Hemingway, and conflict from William Golding—just four of the authors I read that influential summer.

Prose speaks of the value of reading for would-be writers, but her quote is also a comment on the *teaching* of writing. She describes these canonical authors as teachers who were "generous, uncritical and blessed with wisdom." Trying to understand the connections between reading and writing has taken on even greater importance for me over the past ten years as I've dedicated myself to teaching collegiate writing courses.

My initial opportunity to teach collegiate writing came the semester I enrolled as an MFA student at the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). As a new teaching assistant, I took a one-semester pedagogy course that advocated assigning published texts and was given a staff syllabus reliant on the discussion of published texts to prompt student writing. Heavily influenced by departmental faculty such as David Bartholomae and Mariolina Salvatori—each of whom has published scholarship arguing the benefits of assigning difficult, published texts in the writing classroom—the staff syllabus created each year for new teaching assistants was packed with such reading assignments. It is normal for first-year students at Pitt to be reading the work of John Berger, Adrienne Rich, and Michel Foucault, among others. In the introduction to the sixth edition of their influential textbook, *Ways of Reading*, Batholomae and his co-author Anthony Petrosky provide the description of an approach to reading that new instructors at Pitt are encouraged to use with their students. The authors write:

> Reading involves a fair measure of push and shove. You make your mark on a book and it makes its mark on you. Reading is not simply hanging back and waiting for a piece, or its author, to tell you what the writing has to say. In fact,

> one of the difficult things about reading is that the pages before you will begin to speak only when the authors are silent and you begin to speak in their place, sometimes for them—doing their work, continuing their projects—and sometimes for yourself, following your own agenda (1).

Bartholomae and Petrosky go on to describe the typical reading tasks that are called for in classrooms—summary, locating main ideas, locating information—then put forth an alternative conception of course reading:

> A danger arises in assuming that reading is only a search for information or main ideas. There are ways of thinking through problems and working with written texts which are essential to academic life, but which are not represented by summary and paraphrase or by note-taking and essay exams.
>
> Student readers, for example, can take responsibility for determining the meaning of the text. They can work as though they were doing something other than finding ideas already there on the page and they can be guided by their own impressions or questions as they read (6).

A major tenant of the *Ways of Reading* approach is that the writing process (at least as it is taught and practiced in the composition classroom) begins with the reading and study of published texts. Reading these texts is what prompts writing, and writing provides an opportunity to reflect upon that earlier reading.

The Writing Program at the University of Michigan, in contrast, places much more of an emphasis on working with student-produced texts.[2] After completing my MFA at Pitt and teaching there for one year as an adjunct instructor, I moved to Ann Arbor and accepted a position to teach writing classes as a lecturer.[3] In the August composition workshop required for new instructors, Anne Curzan—the director of the Writing Program—announced that each instructor should spend half our class time working with student writing. Her expectations for first-year writing instructors were unambiguous: "That means if you're teaching twice a week, one of those classes should be a workshop or working directly with student writing," she said.

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[2] I don't mean to imply that instructors at Pitt didn't use workshops; they did. During our initial three-day training as new teaching assistants, we participated in a practice session on conducting workshops in our classes and we were encouraged to implement workshops in our first-year writing courses. Nor do I mean to imply that instructors at Michigan never use published texts; indeed they do. What is different at Michigan is the level of emphasis on both workshopping and using student writing.

[3] I have since enrolled in the Joint PhD Program in English and Education and continue to teach in the English Department Writing Program.

We were only a few hours into the two-day workshop and I was already confronted with a policy that went against the way I had been trained and had been teaching for four years. Despite this directive, I continued to assign published texts almost exclusively and only rarely scheduled class time for peer review or class-wide workshops that dealt with students' own writing. If anyone had asked why I continued to emphasize the reading of published texts (nobody ever did), my excuses would have been that it was the way I knew how to teach and that the classes I'd taught so far had gone pretty well. I had received favorable evaluations and positive feedback from students. Their writing routinely demonstrated intellectual engagement with the published texts we read. Occasionally students would even emulate aspects of something we read in their own writing.

As I continued teaching at Michigan, I learned more about the success my colleagues were having by using student-produced texts in the classroom. Doubts about my own reading assignments began to surface. I wondered if my resistance to incorporating more student writing into the classroom was less about the benefits of using published texts and more about my conception of students and their work. Wendy Bishop provides a useful warning when she writes:

> We should remember, also, that when conducting a writing class, we are convening a discussion among writers who happen to be students . . . When we see the individuals on our rosters as writers-more-than students, we distance ourselves from the demeaning, disempowering concept of "student writer" with its inevitable implications of eternal deficiency ("Crossing" 193).

I have always viewed the individuals registered for the courses I teach as writers, but until recently I didn't think of them as writers in the same way that I thought of published authors as writers. They were *student* writers and—as Bishop warns—in my mind the student label always trumped the writer designation.

Heading into the winter semester at Michigan, a slew of questions surrounded my course planning: Did I continue to teach published texts because I undervalued my students and their writing? Would my classroom reading approach be more effective if I encouraged students to share their writing and read more of their peers' work? What would it even mean to have an effective classroom reading approach? Would an

effective approach be one that helps students to better interpret texts? To develop critical thinking skills? To improve their own writing?

The role that reading should play in the writing classroom remains ambiguous for many instructors and scholars—a conclusion verified by my research on instructors at the University of Michigan and by my survey of composition scholarship. In her book *Situating Composition*, Lisa Ede discusses her own changing perspective on reading in the writing classroom while reviewing her past course syllabi. Ede explains that after several years of working almost exclusively with student texts, she began to include more published works. She writes that "[t]he decision to include published readings in my composition courses reflects my questioning of at least one of the features of much process-based teaching: a focus on student writing rather than on professional writing" (91-92). Yet, a few pages later Ede writes that "[i]n spite of my literary training, as a writing teacher I have—despite my admiration of such curricular projects as Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Ways of Reading*—tended to deemphasize reading in comparison to writing and to prefer working with student rather than with professional literary texts" (100). Ede doesn't offer an explanation for this apparent contradiction, and her example shows how uncertainty about reading in the writing classroom may trouble even the most experienced instructors and scholars.

Although there are only a handful of scholars addressing the role of reading in composition courses (Adler-Kassner; Ettari; Harkin; Helmers; Jolliffe; Morrow; Salvatori), their articles and book chapters were extremely influential and helpful for me as I designed my dissertation research. Particularly useful were the ways that these scholars present theoretical rationales for including reading instruction in writing courses (Helmers; Salavtori), suggest reasons that reading isn't being addressed in the field (Harkin; Morrow), and articulate challenges that instructors—particularly new graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs)—might face when trying to teach reading (Adler-Kassner; Ettari). This body of scholarship draws extensively from the authors' own teaching and/or administrative experiences, and provides a variety of ways to reconsider how reading might function in composition courses. At the same time, the evidence presented in these articles and chapters remains primarily theoretical and/or anecdotal.

In contrast, David Jolliffe and Allison Harl's recent article, "Studying the 'Reading Transition' from High School to College," is a much needed example of the kinds of qualitative research that can be done by compositionists on the issue of reading. Jolliffe and Harl studied the reading habits of twenty-one first-year writing students at the University of Arkansas for two weeks, and found that the students "were extremely engaged with their reading, but not with the reading that their classes required" (600). Similarly, the 2005 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) offers valuable insight into the reading practices of 80,904 high school students in nineteen different states. Among the research questions that the 2005 HSSSE seeks to answer are: "How Do Students Spend Their Time?" and "How Engaged are Students in Class Assignments and Discussions?"

Both studies use qualitative methods to arrive at their findings. As valuable as they are in demonstrating how such methods might be used by compositionists to conduct research, both studies focus entirely on students. This isn't a limitation of these studies per se, but nowhere in composition studies scholarship have I found a sustained focus on the ways that instructors teach reading in composition courses. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem note: "Studies that focus on the contexts that *instructors* create for students' reading . . . are few and far between" (36, emphasis original). Their own article recounts their efforts at Eastern Michigan University to address "the need for more theorized reading pedagogy in the context of first-year writing programs," yet their focus remains programmatic and does little to address how instructors are teaching reading.

This dissertation incorporates qualitative methods to provide the opportunity for instructors at one institutional site—the University of Michigan—to explain how they think about and teach reading in writing classroom.[4] The dissertation is composed of several interrelated chapters dedicated to understanding both the role that reading plays (or could play) within the field of composition studies and within composition classrooms, and the role that instructors play (or could play) in teaching reading in first-year writing. The first chapter suggests several possible reasons for why the field of

[4] My research also allows a select group of students to comment on issues such as the extent to which they find the reading they do in class useful in improving their writing and what motivates them to complete assigned readings.

composition studies has largely neglected the issue of reading, and builds upon conceptions of reading and writing as connected activities to argue that it is insufficient to teach writing without also attending to reading.

The second chapter reviews relevant scholarship to present the first-published topography of reading approaches that instructors might use and/or teach in first-year writing. Throughout this topography I make efforts to illuminate the specific goals behind each approach as a way to distinguish between what at times seem to be indistinguishable reading approaches.

The third chapter provides the methodology for collecting qualitative data at the University of Michigan. In dedicating an entire chapter to my research methodology, and by making transparent the questions, aims, and biases guiding the qualitative component of my work, I hope readers can adequately and accurately assess my findings and the arguments based on those findings.

The fourth chapter discusses several of the reading approaches that instructors at the University of Michigan report using and/or trying to teach, and compares how instructors define and describe these reading approaches with the definitions and descriptions found in scholarship/my topography. Exploring instructors' views on these reading approaches contributes to a better understanding of some of the ways that reading is currently being taught in first-year writing. Instructor comments reinforce just how inexact the definitions for these reading approaches are, and how this imprecision can make it difficult to teach reading effectively in first-year writing.

The fifth chapter investigates some of the ways that instructors at the University of Michigan discuss the connections between reading and writing, and highlights two distinct strategies that instructors use to teach these connections: teaching students to "steal" or imitate writing strategies/techniques located in the assigned texts, and assigning model texts to serve as exemplars. This chapter presents these two strategies in detail, followed by a discussion of some of the implications for adopting these strategies in first-year writing. The chapter concludes by drawing on the instructor and student data to suggest that demonstrating *how* to read for class, explaining the purposes of course reading, and being explicit about the connections between reading assignments and

writing assignments, can increase student motivation to complete assigned course reading and help them to read and write more effectively.

The sixth and final chapter recasts writing workshop as a pedagogical strategy for teaching reading-writing connections. By asking students to read with an eye toward improving their own writing—to read like writers—workshop integrates reading and writing in ways that can help students to recognize important connections between the two meaning-making processes. The chapter suggests that instructors teach workshop as something more than the search for error in student writing, and proposes a new, fuller conception of workshop in which students analyze both published texts and student-produced texts to identify what could be improved upon but also what is working well. Students return to their own writing better prepared to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to implement specific new strategies and techniques.

Chapter 1

WHAT'S READING GOT TO DO WITH IT?

> "To put it starkly: reading as a concept is largely absent from the theory and practice of college composition."
>
> -David Jolliffe, "Learning to Read as Continuing Education"

This chapter begins by suggesting several possible explanations for why the field of composition studies has largely neglected the issue of reading in the collegiate writing classroom. I then build upon the definition of reading as the negotiation between writers and readers to demonstrate how reading and writing are connected processes. These connections mean that it is insufficient to teach writing without also attending to reading, so that courses dedicated to writing also have a responsibility to address reading.

These connections between reading and writing and the pedagogical responsibilities they carry with them make first-year writing courses the most suitable site for this kind of research. Though many collegiate courses require extensive reading and writing assignments, first-year writing is the only universally required course at most colleges and universities dedicated entirely to writing. I'm not suggesting that first-year writing should become a reading course or a course about reading, or that instructors need to uniformly assign more reading (the amount of reading assigned depends on the goals for the course). What I *am* arguing is that reading is already a major component of nearly every (if not every) first-year writing course, and as a result the field of composition studies needs additional research on the reading and the teaching of reading that is being done in these courses.

A Lack of Focus on Reading

Whether they are reading published texts, reading (and re-reading) their own drafts, reading their classmates' work in preparation for workshops, or reading syllabi and assignment prompts, students in first-year writing are reading all the time. Failing to adequately address these various types of reading in the professional discourse leaves an incomplete picture of what goes on in first-year writing and neglects a major type of work that students do in these courses. It also leaves a pedagogical gap. David Jolliffe explains that over the years he has repeatedly encountered composition instructors who have wanted to teach an approach to reading that helps students to understand "how readers and texts work together to determine meaning," but that "because the topic of reading lies outside the critical discourse of composition studies, these instructors would not have access to ample resources to help them think about a model of active constructive reading in their courses or about strategies for putting that model into play" ("Learning" 478).

Individual instructors must determine for themselves (keeping in mind the larger goals of the writing program and institution where they work) what they want students to learn and how they should teach. It makes sense that instructors might look to the ever-growing body of composition scholarship to help guide their choices about reading, but the majority of scholarship on reading in composition studies is at least a decade old. Scholars that currently address reading most often do so tangentially while focusing on other issues such as classroom power dynamics, particular types of writing assignments, or a historical overview of the field. This lack of scholarship dealing *specifically* with the role of reading in composition creates a potential void for instructors (like me) who have begun to question their approach to classroom reading instruction and want suggestions and advice. Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem note that "at the same time as instructors ask for more explicit guidance with reading pedagogy, that pedagogy is rarely included in composition research, graduate composition courses, or first-year writing programs' developmental materials" (36). If there is one thing composition studies

provides in abundance, it is guidance regarding pedagogy; why does the issue of classroom reading continue to be neglected?[5]

In a 2005 article in *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*), "The Reception of Reader-Response Theory," Patricia Harkin argues that the "process of the professionalization for compositionists . . . depended upon emphasizing writing as opposed to reading" (420). In order to distinguish the new field of composition studies from literary studies, compositionists consciously moved away from discussions about reading toward discussions of writing, a topic they alone seemed best qualified to address. As the fledgling field of composition studies tried to disentangle itself from literary studies throughout the 1980s, reading theories and theorists of all kinds "went out with the literary studies bathwater" (Harkin 421).

The result for composition studies has been that only limited scholarship regarding the role of reading in composition courses—including first-year writing—has been published in the past fifteen years. As Marguerite Helmers states plainly, "despite being surrounded by reading and things to read, assignments given and assignments read, the act of reading is not part of the common professional discourse in composition studies" (4). Jolliffe notes that in 574 concurrent sessions, workshops, and special-interest group meetings at the 2003 Conference on College Composition and Communication the word reading only appeared in a title twice ("Who" 128). My own examination of the several hundred titles of concurrent sessions from the 2008 CCCC convention found that the words "read" or "reading" appear a total of only five times. The 2009 CCCC convention yielded only slightly higher numbers, with "read" or "reading" appearing a total of 12 times (including my own panel).

While it makes sense that compositionists may be reluctant to produce scholarship about reading since it was a focus on writing—particularly the writing process—that helped establish the field, it is a mistake not to attend more closely to the ways that reading operates in writing courses. As Adler-Kassner and Estrem suggest:

[5] The most notable exception is David Jolliffe, who has written several articles in the past few years (three of which I cite in this dissertation) arguing a need for greater attention to the reading that takes place in composition courses, discussing his interaction with graduate student instructors who attempt to teach reading, and exploring the ways that students read as they transition from high school to college.

> [I]t is important to disentangle the complicated layers of reading expectations, cultural definitions of reading, students practices of reading, and the pedagogical imperatives surrounding reading in the writing classroom in order to examine and cultivate the kinds of reading we want students to perform (43-44).

In addition to this field-based priority of writing over reading, Helmers offers another reason why there may be so little scholarship dealing directly with reading in the writing classroom when she writes that "the issue of reading as a practice to be studied seems moot, for, by the time the students arrive in college, they are assumed to 'know how to read'" (4). David Jolliffe also discusses this assumption and offers a possible reason behind it when he notes that "[b]y the time students are graduating from high school, the course called 'reading' has been absent from the curriculum for at least three or four years, having usually made its last appearance in the eighth grade, at the latest" ("Learning" 473). Katherine Gottscalk and Keith Hjortshoj explain that for many instructors reading "seems a 'basic' skill all students should have acquired before they entered college. College teachers therefore view the necessity of 'teaching reading' as a remedial form of instruction beneath the level of college work" (124).[6]

On one level, students *do* arrive at college already knowing how to read. Every student I have worked with in first-year writing knew how to read on the first day of class. Few, however, seemed to be practicing reading approaches—which I define as systematic ways of engaging with a text that encourage readers to attend to certain textual features while reading with very particular goals in mind—that might be considered "critical" or "close." Few students appeared to be reading texts "rhetorically." Jolliffe recounts how each of the writing programs he has taught in required that instructors to assign a diagnostic writing assignment in the first week to assess students' writing abilities, but that none of those programs asked for a similar diagnostic in terms of the students' reading ability ("Who" 131). Each of the three writing programs I've worked in—the University of Pittsburgh, Point Park University, and the University of Michigan—encourage instructors to collect a diagnostic writing sample during the first few class sessions, but make no similar recommendation toward diagnosing students'

[6] William Thelin offers an additional, and more troubling, explanation for the scarcity of collegiate reading courses when he writes that "college instructors often try to distance themselves from high school educators. A symbolic act of this distancing is the lack of credit-bearing reading courses in most colleges and universities" (2).

abilities to do the kinds of reading required in first-year writing. Knowing how to read means many different things in many different contexts, and it's incorrect to assume that students already know how to do "it" by the time they get to college.

A possible third reason for the virtual absence of composition scholarship dealing with reading in the writing classroom has to do with the ongoing debate over the proper role of literary texts in the composition classroom.[7] As compositionists have worked for professional recognition and to distinguish their own work from that of literary scholars, diverse issues related to reading in first-year writing have been subsumed by discussions of whether literature belongs in the writing classroom. This debate over literature, in turn, has spawned further debates over the proper subject of composition, an issue that engulfed the profession during the 1990s as "multicultural" texts were being introduced into a variety of English classrooms; controversy regarding the proper subject of composition have also surfaced in response to writing courses that assign students reading on social and political issues.[8] Patricia Harkin notes that:

> [D]iscussions of reading have been so thoroughly conflated with discussions of teaching literature, of the purpose of English studies, of the future of the humanities, of the politics of general education, of the definitions and uses of literacy, and so forth, that a pedagogical or curricular decision not to teach literary text in writing courses became or entailed a decision not to teach reading (421).

[7] A famous exchange on the role of literature in the composition classroom can be found in the March 1993 issue of *College English.* Gary Tate and Erika Lindemann each revised their presentations from the 1992 Conference on College Composition and Communication for publication in this issue. In addition to these two articles, a number of other scholars weighed in on the issue of literature in the composition classroom by providing written responses to Tate and Lindemann's pieces.

[8] Nowhere has the controversy regarding the proper subject of composition been on better display than at the University of Texas at Austin in 1991. The debate exploded into national headlines when the UT English department approved a new syllabus for its required first-year writing course, English 306. This new syllabus, titled "Writing About Difference," was put together by a committee of faculty members headed by Linda Brodkey and overwhelmingly approved by a vote of the English department. Yet, the syllabus met with firm resistance from some English department faculty and a number of professors in other departments. Critics worried that this emphasis on difference was really a thinly-veiled attempt to indoctrinate students in a particular kind of liberal thinking and concluded that such attempts had no place in first-year writing. Soon articles about the proposed syllabus were appearing first in local papers such as *The Daily Texan* and *Austin American-Statesman*, and then nationally in the *New York Times*. Political pundits joined compositionists in articulating the proper subjects and goals for first-year writing and what had once been left to Writing Program Administrators and individual instructors now appeared to belong to the larger public domain.

Similarly, Robert Scholes remarks that "[t]he natural reciprocal of writing—which, of course, is reading—had somehow disappeared, apparently subsumed under the topic of literature" ("Transition" 166).

A faulty argument that often accompanies the literature debate—that compositionists are best qualified to teach writing and should leave the teaching of reading to literature faculty—ignores the reality that the majority of courses in both composition and literature require students to complete reading *and* writing assignments. As Kathleen McCormick notes, "Whether or not they are conscious of it . . . teachers at all levels are always teaching their students how to read" (*Culture* 7). Christina Haas echoes this point when she writes:

> All English teachers are teachers of reading *and* of writing. Whether a teacher's scholarship, instruction, and institutional identity lies primarily within literature or within composition, the day-to-day business of the English classroom is inherently bound up in texts: student texts, teacher texts, canonical texts, marginal texts. These texts are read and reread, written and rewritten, and teaching and learning proceed (19, emphasis original).

My contention—in agreement with Harkin and Scholes—is that these important but narrow debates over the assigned texts for composition studies have unintentionally prevented a wider discussion of the various kinds of reading that are happening in first-year writing. Perhaps more important than questions regarding what kinds of texts students should read in composition courses is the issue of *why* instructors ask students to read for class. As Nancy Morrow writes: "[C]ommentators have frequently asked the wrong starting questions. What if instead of asking, 'what should we read in composition classes?' we asked 'why do we read in composition classes?'" (452).

In their article, "Seeking Common Ground: Guiding Assumptions for Writing Courses," Denise David, Barbara Gordon and Rita Pollard make efforts to answer this question, though their answer is still grounded (unnecessarily, and perhaps unproductively) in an assertion about which kinds of text should be read in composition courses. They write:

> Writing courses focus on the texts students produce. The focus is not on a published reader, for example, but rather on students' writing as texts evolving into meaning. Students read their own texts to consider their needs, goals, strengths, and decisions as writers . . . Students may also read published texts to

> analyze the texts rhetorically, considering how the author's choices have created meaning. This approach to published texts differs, though, from an exclusive analysis of contextual issues and ideas, or a rhetorical analysis that merely labels types of writing. Put simply, in a writing course the "how" is privileged over the "what" (525).

The authors mention three potential reasons that we might ask students to read texts: 1) "to consider their needs, goals, strengths, and decisions as writers"; 2) "to understand other positions and information" related to the writing they produce; and 3) "to analyze the texts rhetorically, considering how the author's choices have created meaning." Any one of these goals is an excellent reason to assign student reading, and an approach that integrates all three goals could serve students exceptionally well.

In addition, David, Gordon and Pollard correctly assert that in the reading done for a writing course "the 'how' should be privileged over the 'what.'" This priority operates on at least two different levels, only one of which is suggested by the authors. First, as this dissertation will make clear, *how* students read texts is far more important than the kinds of texts, or *what* students read. The authors, in their insistence that courses "focus on the texts students produce," miss this important point. The second idea, which the authors emphasize, is that students read texts in writing courses primarily to understand *how* such texts are composed, not to understand *what* the texts have to say. While students will surely comprehend content while reading, they are first and foremost reading to learn how texts are put together so that they can write better themselves.

Composition studies needs additional research on reading in the writing classroom. This includes attention to the particular ways that instructors are teaching students to read and whether these reading approaches (and the assignments that accompany them) rely on the use of particular kinds of texts. Such work will contribute to our understanding of how and why instructors ask students to read, will help develop a clearer picture of what is actually happening in first-year writing, and can lead to ideas for how to improve classroom reading pedagogy. Mariolina Salvatori puts it aptly when she writes: "'the question of reading in the teaching of composition' is not merely the question of whether reading should or should not be used in the composition classroom. The issue is *what kind of reading* gets to be theorized and practiced" ("Conversations" 443).

Reading-Writing Connections: Reading as the Negotiation of Meaning

It's important to remember that despite their many similarities, reading and writing are in fact *separate* activities. As Jill Fitzgerald and Timothy Shanahan accurately note: "If reading and writing really were identical and not just similar, then it may make sense to teach only reading or writing. Everything learned in one would automatically transfer to the other" (46). Yet, while the two processes are separate, they are also *connected*. In this section I build upon conceptions of reading as the negotiation of textual meaning in order to establish important connections between reading and writing. These connections serve as a basis for my arguments that the field of composition studies needs to increase its focus on reading and that instructors should consider teaching reading in ways that highlight these important connections to writing. As Fitzgerald and Shanahan go on to write, though it is "necessary to provide separate instruction" in each, teaching reading and writing in "various combinations can be valuable for taking advantage of overlaps" (43). In the case of first-year writing, I take this argument a step further: because the two processes are connected—because meanings of texts are negotiated mutually between writers and readers—a course dedicated to teaching writing that does not also address reading is inherently incomplete.

I conclude the section with a brief historical snapshot of the ways that reading and writing have been taught both as connected and disconnected activities within English departments and within American higher education more broadly. Understanding this history of connection and disconnection is important, for any contemporary efforts to bring reading and writing together in first-year writing will be carried out within the context of this contested relationship.

Both reading and writing rely on an individual's prior experience and knowledge (both the writer's and the reader's) to make meaning, and that meaning-making process is mediated through a text. It is widely accepted within the field of composition studies that writing is a meaning-making activity, but it's just as important to recognize that the same

is true of reading.[9] Readers construct meaning by drawing on their own personal experiences (Stein; Lindberg), but also by drawing on other types of knowledge (Hayes; Lemke). As Deborah Brandt puts it: "[R]eaders bring to a text stores of prior knowledge about the world and about the nature of discourse that allow them to fill in the inferences and make the predictions necessary for comprehension" (119).

One of the most famous advocates for the reader's responsibility in making meaning from a text is Louise Rosenblatt. Rosenblatt, and particularly her 1938 book *Literature as Exploration*, is often associated with the "reader-response" school of literary theory which acknowledges the reader as an active agent who constructs a text's meaning through interpretation. In a more recent article first published in 1994, "The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing," Rosenblatt provides an updated theory regarding the meaning-making "transaction" that occurs between texts and readers. Rosenblatt writes:

> Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The "meaning" does not reside ready-made "in" the text or "in" the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text (1369).

Rosenblatt argues that reading should be viewed as an event, or a "transaction" between a reader and a text. The success of this transaction will (at least partially) depend on the reader's prior knowledge and experience and how this helps him/her to make sense of the text.

Kathleen McCormick has criticized proponents of reader-response such as Rosenblatt for what she sees as their inability to adequately define what a "text" is (*Culture* 36). Rosenblatt does say a bit about texts in "The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing," arguing that "[f]ar from already possessing a meaning that can be imposed on all readers, the text actually remains simply marks on the paper, an object in the environment, until some reader transacts with it" (1369). I appreciate Rosenblatt's efforts to put forth a model of reading that emphasizes the reader's very important role in

[9] Readers desiring an explanation of the ways that writing is a meaning-making process might read Ann Berthoff's classic text, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*.

making meaning, but it's reductive to claim that the "text remains simply marks on the page." On a literal level this is obviously true, but such a view obscures the important role that texts—most notably as the embodiment of an author's own process of meaning making—play in mediating the negotiation of meaning that occurs between the writer and reader. A more useful conception of texts, then, acknowledges that texts have been *constructed* by someone or by a group. In composition courses texts are most often stretches of coherent, written discourse with a clearly identified author.

As my later chapters illustrate, instructors at the University of Michigan assign students to "read" not only written texts but websites, posters, and even locations on campus. These visual texts, just like more familiar written texts, have been constructed by an author—the individual who drew the political cartoon or the team that designed the homepage. Even a spot on campus is "authored"—that is, constructed—in the ways that the space was mapped out and designed to look as it does.

It's important to keep in mind that texts exist in specific social contexts. Patricia Alexander and Tamara Jetton elaborate on this aspect of texts:

> Given their purpose and their structures, texts possess a dual nature in that they are both *individual* and *social, permanent* and *dynamic*. The individual nature of texts is illustrated through the voice of the authors, whose goal is to convey their feelings and thoughts through language, printed and oral. When authors construct text, they seek to externalize deeply held ideas or sensations. However, the author's thoughts do not exist in a vacuum. Much of the understanding they possess comes from other voices, other authors (Bazerman, 1995). For example, authors might quote, paraphrase, or summarize others' writings as they develop their own ideas. Texts are, therefore, both private and public and the ideas, expressions, and language come through both an individual author and the social world (289, emphasis original).

Alexander and Jetton's point that "thoughts do not exist in a vacuum" offers simple but compelling insight into the crucial role that cultural influence plays in the creation of texts. Similarly, all interactions with texts—for both writers and readers—also occur in specific social contexts.[10] Writers and readers are heavily influenced by the culture(s) they take part in and the particular contexts in which they read and write (Brandt; Gee;

[10] These "contexts" include the physical space(s) in which individuals perform reading and writing. As Deborah Brandt writes in "Remembering Writing / Remembering Reading": "The actual conditions in which people encounter writing and reading are important to consider because they influence the meanings and feelings that people bring to the two enterprises and can influence the ways people pass on literacy to subsequent generations" (476).

Lemke; Linkon). Text creation and reception rely on a combination of cultural factors and the individuality of the author(s) and reader(s).[11]

Thus the meaning(s) derived while *reading* a text are the result of many connected factors, among them:

- the purpose(s) for a writer creating a text
- the ideas or emotions that a writer is trying to express through the text
- the prior experience and knowledge of the writer
- the choices that the writer makes while composing the text
- the cultural factors influencing the writer during text production
- the physical makeup of the text itself
- the purpose(s) a reader has for reading
- the prior knowledge and experience of the reader
- cultural influences affecting the reader
- the specific contexts for both writing and reading

While this list is hardly exhaustive, it suggests that the processes of meaning making from texts is a *negotiation* between the knowledge and purposes of the writer and the knowledge and purposes of the reader. In "The Social-Interactive Model of Writing," Martin Nystrand describes this form of negotiation: "If we conceptualize writing not as the process of translating writing purpose and meaning into a text but rather as the writer's negotiation of meaning between herself and her readers, we radically alter our conceptions of writing, text, and text meaning, and of the relationship of the composing process to the text" (76). Such a view of writing—as the negotiation of meaning between reader and writer—also alters our conceptions of reading. Rosenblatt elaborates on this idea when she writes:

[11] It is difficult—if not impossible—to determine whether cultural influence or individuality plays a greater role when reading and interpreting texts, a point reinforced by Stuart Greene and John Ackerman: "Models of reading and writing activity are best at depicting the interactive, and at time systematic, nature of composing; by doing so, they often weigh equally such 'universals' as knowledge, strategies, and context. Other researchers of literacy tasks, however, seek to unbalance these features, suggesting that external influences such as cultural orientation and history in school alter any apparent system of interaction" ("Expanding" 387-88). Most likely it varies from case to case as to which of these factors exerts the greater influence.

> Both reader and writer engage in constituting symbolic structures of meaning in a to-and-fro transaction with the text. They follow similar patterns of thinking and call on similar linguistic habits. Both processes depend on the individual's past experiences with language in particular life situations. Both reader and writer therefore are drawing on past linkages of sign, signifiers, and organic states in order to create new symbolizations, new linkages, and new organic states. Both reader and writer develop a framework, principle, or purpose, however nebulous or explicit, that guides the selective attention and the synthesizing, organizing activities that constitute meaning (1387).

This ongoing negotiation over the meaning of texts illuminates crucial connections between the activities of reading and writing. The understanding and meaning derived from texts are based not only on the characteristics of the text itself and on the reader's recognition and understanding of those characteristics, but also by a connection between writers and readers that links the knowledge and purposes of the author with the knowledge and purposes of the reader—as well as the properties of text itself—together into a broader meaning making activity. As Nystrand puts it: "*meaning is between writer and reader"* (78, emphasis original).

I prefer Nystrand's description of reading as a "negotiation" over other conceptions of reading, including Rosenblatt's notion of "transaction," because negotiation—more that any other term—implies the degree of cooperation and even compromise needed for writers and readers to make meaning effectively from a text. The term negotiation implies that two parties—in this case the writer and reader—are approaching the enterprise with the *mutual* goal of creating meaning. It's not that a "transactional" model of reading, or Kathleen McCormick's "interactive" model, are off target, only that negotiation is the most useful conception of reading as the necessary process of give and take between writers and readers. [12]

While it might be easier to see how readers must "give" and consider the intentions of the writer during this negotiation since these intentions are often clearly presented in the text, writers also "give" in that they attend to the intentions and goals of readers while composing. In "Reading and Writing as 'Mind Meeting,'" Jill Fitzgerald explains that "[w]riter's goals and intentions and the texts they create are affected by

[12] McCormick prefers an "interactive" model of reading which she believes stresses that "first, both readers and texts contribute to the reading process and second, that both texts and readers are themselves ideologically situated" (69, *Culture*).

knowledge of the readers' goals, expectations, and beliefs." Fitzgerald suggests that this authorial knowledge of readers affects the ways that writers compose: "For example, writers learn that readers expect most texts to sequence information in certain logical or commonly accepted ways so writer's goals for their texts take such reader expectations into account" (87). This common sequencing of information can be as basic as the writer organizing the text into conventional paragraphs or beginning the piece with an introduction—sequencing that is usually done with future readers in mind. It also occurs at the sentence level. In composition courses, we can emphasize this connection and teach students to anticipate the needs and responses of readers as they write—both by increasing their rhetorical awareness of audience and by helping them construct well-sequenced, coherent writing.

Writers also rely on readers to make inferences and assumptions regarding interpretation of the text. As Nancy Nelson Spivey writes, "Writers expect—even depend on—readers to make inferences. When creating texts, writers make some assumptions about the knowledge that their readers will bring to the texts, what readers will be able to supply" (277). It can be difficult for students to learn how to determine not only who their intended audience is, but what they can rightly assume readers will already know about their subject matter. First-year writing offers a space in which to provide students practice.

In addition to considering their readers while writing, Deborah Brandt found that reading while composing served multiple functions for student writers.[13] Discussing think aloud protocols conducted with students, Brandt details the practice of one student—Mark—suggesting that "excerpts demonstrate that the writer paused to read or scan as a way to gauge what a reader would likely be bringing to bear at any point in the text. And what a reader would likely be bringing to bear had a great deal to do with what the writer could do or mean" (116). In this case, Mark was making inferences about the knowledge that a reader might bring to his text and tailoring his writing accordingly. Similarly, Brandt found that "[a]nother purpose that reading served for Mark during

[13] John Hayes, citing a series of studies of adult advanced writers, found that writers routinely reread through the sentences they have produced so far before adding new parts to an incomplete sentence (1423). Writers frequently stop to look over what they've written, studying the text both on a sentence level and on a more macro level by examining the in-progress text as a whole.

composing was to test for ambiguity or multiple reference. Reading allowed him to anticipate and consider possible alternative interpretations that the language of his text invited" (117).[14]

Richard Beach and JoAnne Liebman-Kleine suggest that it may be important for novices and student writers to move *beyond* making assumptions and inferences about the writer or reader and actually adopt the perspective of the other:

> Simply thinking *about* a reader 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, they must also think *as* readers. They need to be able to adopt their readers' presumed perspectives, assessing their writing in terms of how their readers may react to or comprehend that writing (64).

While Beach and Liebman-Kleine focus on student writers adopting the perspective of potential readers, it can be equally valuable for readers to come at a text as if they were a writer. Students routinely shift between the roles of reader and writer (sometimes adopting both roles simultaneously) throughout their time in first-year writing.[15] For just as writers stop to read the texts they are composing, readers often "re-write" the various texts they read. Robert Tierney and his colleagues explain that:

> Our data suggested that the responses of readers assumed a reflexive quality as if readers were rewriting the text that they were reading. Sometimes the reading appeared to be occurring in collaboration with the perceived author of the text being read; sometimes it appeared as if the reader had decided what he or she needed to know or do and compose meaning with little regard to the writer or the text. These responses to the text appeared to occur as readers became involved in "coming to grips" with their own goals and understandings at the same time as they were dealing with the author's goals, assumptions and suggestions ("Author's" 222-23).

These results supply further evidence that the meaning of texts is negotiated between writers and readers. Some of the readers studied chose to "re-write" texts independent of what they felt the author had intended. However, in order to "re-write" the texts these

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[14] Brandt's overall assessment is that writing instructors should do even more to encourage in-process reading such as Mark's. She concludes that "[a]lthough much attention has been given to strategies of planning before composing, and revising after composing, more can be done to encourage students to pause and scan and read during writing and to develop ways to make that reading profitable" (121).

[15] One important strategy might be for instructors to highlight this shifting (or dual) role for students so they can begin to understand the benefits that adopting the "other" perspective can have on both their writing and reading.

readers had to first engage with the texts as they had already been written. Meaning remained a negotiation between writer and readers through the intermediary of the text.

Research such as Brandt's and Tierney's reinforces our understanding that the meanings of texts are negotiated between writer and reader—that reading and writing are connected processes. Any view of texts or text interpretation that fails to acknowledge the connections between reading and writing remains incomplete. As Anthony Petrosky writes: "Reading, responding, and composing are aspects of understanding, and theories that attempt to account for them outside of their interaction with each other run the serious risk of building reductive models of human understanding" (20). Nancy Morrow supports Petrosky's call to account for the connections between reading and writing when she claims that "[t]o understand what a text is and how any text might be used in the composition classroom, we might best begin by exploring why and how reading and writing have been described as interconnected processes" (454).

It is reasonable, then, to ask: Why do the teaching of reading and the teaching of writing remain separate in American higher education?

In the opening chapter of the anthology *The Reading-Writing Connection*, Nancy Nelson and Robert Calfee offer a historical perspective of the ways that reading and writing have been taught both as connected and disconnected activities. They explain that in "colonial times" the "first two Rs were taught as separate subjects to children, whether in common primary schools, private schools, or private tutoring" (2-3) and that as schooling developed "[w]riting instruction followed reading because writing was thought to depend on the ability to read and to be more difficult than reading" (3). In American colleges, however, the study of rhetoric helped to mesh reading and writing together as connected activities. As Nelson and Calfee note, "For much of the nineteenth century, rhetoric continued to provide an integrative theory—a center holding together the understanding of texts and the composing of texts" (7).

Yet, near the end of the nineteenth century, "[c]olleges and universities, dissatisfied with the job that academics were doing with respect to students' writing, instituted more instruction in composition" (7). These new collegiate writing courses emphasized rules for correctness and grammar, and much of the previous emphasis on aspects of traditional rhetoric fell away.

In his article, "Rhetorical History as a Guide to Salvation of American Reading and Writing: A Plea for Curricular Courage," James Murphy argues that the establishment of specialized writing courses was a disastrous mistake, a move that has left the academy in a "ridiculous situation" in which "[o]ne set of teachers is appointed to teach us how to read, while a second set tries to teach us how to write" (3). Murphy notes that currently nearly every American institution of higher education "has an English Department . . . and in virtually every department there is a deeply rooted division between those who teach 'reading,' commonly called 'literature,' and those who teach "writing," commonly called 'composition'" (3). Murphy's comments accurately depict the problem discussed earlier in this chapter, that the artificial binary within English departments between faculty ostensibly responsible for teaching reading and those responsible for teaching writing ignores the fact that English are always assigning reading and teaching their students how to read.

The division between professors of literature and professors of composition that Murphy describes is probably familiar to most readers of this dissertation, but it's important to recognize that this division is a relatively new phenomenon caused in part by the removal of rhetoric as a centerpiece of a liberal arts education in favor of English and in part to the rise of courses dedicated exclusively to writing. It was also influenced by a subsequent increase in specialization among professors within the new discipline of English. As Nelson and Calfee note:

> As scholarship became more specialized, criticism was being attached to literature, and literary criticism was being established as a separate component of English. Even though some critical study was still included in composition courses, textual criticism was developing apart from any connection to students' own writing. Literature scholars were becoming responsible for the reading of texts, and those in composition were becoming responsible for the writing of texts (8).

In 1980, Charles Bazerman described an academic landscape in which the splintering caused by increased specialization transcended the boundaries of English departments and served to sever the connections between reading and writing across entire campuses:

> This lack of attention to this essential bond of literacy results in part from many disciplinary divorces in language studies over the last half century: *Speech* has moved out taking *Rhetoric* with it; *Linguistics* has staked a claim to all skilled

> language behavior, but has attended mostly to spoken language; *Sociology* and *Anthropology* have offered more satisfactory lodgings for the study of the social context and meaning of literacy; and *English* has gladly rid itself of basic *Reading* to concern itself with the higher reading of *Literary Criticism* (656, emphasis original).

The diminishing stature of rhetoric in American colleges and the rise of specialization both within English departments and in other disciplines ushered in a new era when various aspects of human communication such as reading and writing were viewed as belonging to several different fields and disciplines.

Despite the trend toward *dis*connection in recent decades, there remain instructors and researchers across disciplines who are dedicated to fostering the conception of reading and writing as connected activities. As Nancy Morrow writes:

> The study of reading and writing connections occurs in several disciplinary sites, from literary theory to composition studies to educational research. Not only reader response theorists but those interested in deconstruction, semiotics, and phenomenology claim that reading and writing are interrelated (455).

I recommend three separate book chapters and two articles for developing a fuller understanding of connections between reading and writing. Robert Tierney and Margie Leys' "What is the Value of Connecting Reading and Writing?" is a short chapter that offers an accessible starting point for learning about connections between reading and writing. Tierney and Ley explore the degree to which gains in reading seem to contribute to gains in writing and summarize educational research to address the potential ways that reading and writing influence each other. Timothy Shanahan's "Reading and Writing Together: What Does It Really Mean?" provides a theoretical explanation for the importance of recognizing reading and writing as connected activities, while Tierney and Shanahan's combined effort, "Research On the Reading-Writing Relationship: Interactions, Transactions, and Outcomes," gives a thorough overview of research on the reading-writing connection and addresses issues such as characteristics that reading and writing share, how readers and writers transact with each other, the degree to which writers consider their audience, and the extent to which readers consider their authors. A fourth piece, Stuart Greene and John Ackerman's article "Expanding the Constructivist Metaphor," includes a section on interactive models of composing that also address the reading-writing connection. This article makes the argument that both reading and

writing—as composing activities—are always rhetorical actions. Finally, in "Reading and Writing Relations and their Development," Jill Fitzgerald and Timothy Shanahan propose a preliminary description of a developmental perspective on the relation of reading and writing, focusing on cognitive abilities that are shared by both processes.

This dissertation is my own initial contribution to this body of research on reading-writing connections. The field of composition studies would benefit from more research on the ways that reading is being taught in first-year writing courses, and instructors would benefit from learning additional ways to teach reading and writing as connected processes. Yet, as Mariolina Salvatori warns, "It is one thing to say that, even to articulate how, reading and writing are interconnected . . . and it is another to imagine and to develop teaching practices that both enact and benefit from that interconnectedness" ("Conversations" 446). A major challenge of writing this dissertation was sorting through the scholarship on reading-writing connections and through my qualitative data to determine which practices might be most useful for instructors to learn more about. In the next chapter I detail several of the reading approaches described in scholarship that suggest how instructors might teach reading in first-year writing classrooms, including approaches that emphasize connections between reading and writing.

Chapter 2

SELECTING A PROPER LENS: A TOPOGRAPHY OF FIVE READING APPROACHES

> "If as teachers of writing we want to prepare our students to enter into the written interchanges of their chosen disciplines and the various discussion of personal and public interest, we must cultivate various techniques of absorbing, reformulating, commenting on, and using reading."
>
> -Charles Bazerman, "A Relationship between Reading and Writing: The Conversation Model"

This chapter is the result of my efforts to better understand various reading approaches—systematic ways of engaging with a text that encourage readers to attend to certain textual features while reading with very particular goals in mind—as they are represented in scholarship. The chapter addresses five different approaches in all. The first three—close reading, critical reading, and rhetorical reading—are each related to a major historical discipline, field, or movement that has significantly impacted the ways that writing is taught at the collegiate level (literary theory; cultural studies; rhetoric). After presenting these initial three reading approaches, I argue the benefits of considering two additional reading approaches: visual rhetoric and Reading Like a Writer (RLW). These final two approaches have the potential to be particularly effective in composition courses because, depending upon how they are taught; they can emphasize connections between the processes of reading and writing.

This survey of relevant scholarship offers the field of composition studies the first available topography of reading approaches that instructors might teach students to adopt as they read assigned texts. An essential question for instructors to ask of any reading approach—including the five reading approaches covered here—is this: W*hich reading approach (or approaches) is best suited for use in my first-year writing course?* If instructors are looking to scholarship to help guide their pedagogical choices, then it's

important to know what, exactly, is available in the scholarship that might inform these choices.[16] Conducting a review of the scholarship also allows me to compare the ways that instructors at the University of Michigan teach reading and articulate their pedagogical goals with the ways that reading approaches are defined and described in professional discourse. There are significant overlaps in the ways that the various reading approaches are defined, and for this reason I have chosen to quote extensively throughout the chapter—to reprint the exact words of each scholar at length—in order to help readers recognize just how similar some of the descriptions are and to better detect subtle differences.

I want to acknowledge at the outset that many instructors find success using more than one approach or in cobbling together certain attributes of several approaches into their own hybrid approach (an issue I discuss in Chapter 4). At the same time, as my later discussion of instructor survey and interview data from the University of Michigan

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[16] There is a notable exclusion from this discussion of scholarship on reading that I wish to mention here. Nowhere in this dissertation do I address reading online or other technologically-mediated forms of reading. One reason not to address such reading is that several scholars are currently working on issues of New Media in relation to literacy (see Wysocki *Writing New Media*; Kress *Literacy in a New Media Age*; Manovich *Language of New Media*). Yet, I take seriously David Jolliffe and Allison Harl's finding that "the texts that [students] interact with most enthusiastically are technology based. In addition, students have become proficient in the art of multitasking as they navigate in and out of electronic media. Virtually all of the students indicate in their journals that they spend a substantial amount of time reading online" ("Studying" 612). My own recent teaching efforts support these findings. I've had conversations with numerous students who have expressed a preference for reading online and many have told me that they spend hours a day browsing popular internet sites such as Facebook.

While I acknowledge that online reading is an increasing part of students' reading experience—both in school and especially outside the classroom—and worthy of scholarly attention, my research is primarily concerned with the ways that reading is taught by instructors as opposed to the ways that students themselves read. I have no evidence that a majority of writing instructors are incorporating New Media technology into the ways they teach reading in first-year writing. In fact, recent studies suggest quite the opposite. In a 2005 national survey of tenure-track faculty, graduate students, and non-tenured lecturers, Daniel Anderson and his colleagues found that it was "individual teachers who specialized in new media" who were doing almost all of the teaching involving multimodal composition and New Media technologies (69). In addition, they found that the majority of multimodal composition (which often utilizes New Media technology) was "occurring at the individual level and not necessarily in program-wide efforts" (69). These findings suggest that the majority of reading instruction done in first-year writing does *not* involve New Media, and also indicates the need for me to focus instead on more "traditional" reading approaches and texts.

Kathleen Blake Yancey, in her 2004 Chair's address at the annual CCCC Convention in San Antonio, discussed the proliferation of non-academic reading and writing communities that have blossomed in response to advances in technology such as the internet, and questioned composition studies' failure to incorporate more of these new technologies into the classroom. Yancey noted that "[g]iven a dearth of resources—from hardware to professional development, from student access to what Gail Hawisher calls the bandwidth digital divide—many of us continue to focus on print" (438). As Yancey makes clear, although students are using technology to mediate their interaction with texts more than ever, instructors don't necessarily seem to be catching up, and on the whole the academy still privileges printed texts.

makes apparent, other instructors clearly prefer to promote a *single* reading approach. Still others instructors report difficulty in distinguishing one approach from another and that this deters them from promoting particular reading approaches to students. I try to distinguish the characteristics of the various approaches to the extent that it's possible. As much as is possible, I try to distinguish between the five approaches based on their ultimate aims for reading. Is reading primarily a means for appreciating a text? Is reading a means for evaluating a text? Do we read to help us understand our own writing?

I present each of the five approaches on a continuum, from an emphasis on the text being read to an emphasis on reading as a way to understand one's own writing: I begin with close reading (the approach most focused on the text itself and least focused on the reader's own writing) and end with Reading Like a Writer (the approach least concerned with the text and most focused on reading as a way to understand writing). *I don't view any one of the five reading approach as superior to the others.* Instead, I contend that teaching a particular reading approach will be more or less effective depending on why the instructor wants the students to read, and the purposes behind a given reading assignment. Depending on the instructor's goals, one reading approach may be more (or less) appropriate than another.

While I don't find any one reading approach innately better than any other, it seems to me that because first-year writing is a course dedicated to *writing*, at least some of the reading that students do for the course should be dedicated to helping them improve their own writing. If instructors identify helping students to improve their writing as one of their primary goals for first-year writing, then it makes sense that visual rhetoric, and especially Reading Like a Writer—as the reading approaches that most explicitly connect the reading and writing that students do—would be useful approaches for instructors to teach.

I also believe that any of the reading approaches covered in this topography can be used effectively with *either* published or student-produced texts. Though most of the scholars I draw from emphasize (either explicitly or implicitly) the reading of published texts in association with the reading approach they discuss, there is nothing inherent to any of these approaches that necessitates the use of a particular kind of text. Reading to

appreciate, understand, or evaluate texts can be done equally well with published or student writing. Readers can assess the worldview presented in student-produced texts in exactly the same what they might rhetorically read a published essay. In my own classes, I prompt students to ask the same questions of the visual texts *they* produce as they do of the political posters and websites that they read in class. And while most instructors report asking students to be more critical of student-produced writing than of published work, and to focus more intensely on the search for error in these student texts (an issue discussed in detail in Chapter 6), there is absolutely no reason that readers couldn't read for writerly choice and writerly technique in student texts. There may be a more limited range of techniques or styles represented in student work because these authors are primarily novices, but each and every reading approach covered in this topography can be used with either published or student texts—an idea that I highlight at points throughout the dissertation.

Close Reading

Compositionists Mariolina Salvatori and Patricia Donahue offer a concise definition of close reading in the glossary to their book, *The Elements (and Pleasures) of Difficulty*: "A strategy for reading texts that situates the meaning of a text in the words on the page rather its historical or cultural contexts. Among its guiding assumptions are that texts are self-contained and self-explanatory and that readers discover meaning rather than construct it" (123).

The development of close reading is usually attributed to a diverse group of scholars known collectively as the New Critics.[17] Here is how Paul Dawson describes New Criticism, the theoretical movement associated with the New Critics:

> Despite the differences of critics usually grouped under this title, the New Criticism came to denote a common interest in the evaluative judgment and non-reductive analysis of individual literary works: in order to establish how they

[17] Poet and critic David Kirby names Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren as "the two great popularizers of New Criticism," through their establishment of the *Southern Review* at Louisiana State University and their two popular textbooks, *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943) (105-106).

> create an organic unity out of conflicting elements within the verbal structure, realized in terms such as irony, tension and paradox (75).

The New Critics were first and foremost interested in the artistic potential of poetry. Prominent figures such as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren argued that there is a fundamental difference between scientific and poetic understanding. Ransom writes: "*Science gratifies a rational or practical impulse and exhibits the minimum of perception. Art gratifies a perceptual impulse and exhibits the minimum of reason*" (40, emphasis original). Brooks claims that "[i]t is the scientist whose truth requires a language purged of every trace of paradox; apparently the truth which the poet utters can be approached only in terms of paradox" ("Language" 66). Gerald Graff remarks that the New Critics implemented a "conception of methodological rigor" which "implied the isolation of literature as an autonomous mode of discourse with its own special 'mode of existence,' distinct from that of philosophy, politics, and history" (145). Metaphysical poetry was valorized as literature of the highest order and these poems were promoted as the texts most worthy of study and admiration. In "Poetry: A Note In Ontology," Ransom writes: "'Metaphysics,' or miraculism, informs a poetry which is the most original and exciting, and intellectually perhaps the most seasoned, that we know in our literature, and very probably it has few equivalents in other literature" (42).

The primary method for reaching the type of "evaluative judgment" of literature that Paul Dawson describes came to be called close reading. Close readers are encouraged to search for the inherent unity in each text. Allen Tate claims that "a poetic work has the distinct quality as the ultimate effect of the whole, and that whole is the 'result' of a configuration of meaning" ("Tension" 55). In the introduction to his co-edited anthology *Close Reading*, Andrew DuBois writes:

> The term *close reading* is associated in critical history with the New Criticism . . . The New Criticism had its theoretical side, but critical practice is what finally distinguished it most successfully from other modes of scholarly work. It benefited from being eminently teachable and the entrenchment of its methods, first in universities and then in secondary schools, attests to the amenability of that practice to practioners of varying sophistication (2).

Peter Rabinowitz concurs with Dubois, contending that "close reading has shown itself exceptionally well adapted to classroom use" and as a result has become a staple in many English classrooms (233). Close reading's strict emphasis on the text makes it an accessible and even a seemingly equalizing teaching approach; every student with access to the text has access (theoretically) to all the information that he/she needs to undertake a thorough reading.[18]

Despite its prominence in the classroom and the apparent advantages it offers as a teaching approach, Rabinowitz challenges the underlying premise that close reading can reveal the "organic unity" of a text because "close reading entails a questionable notion of psychology of the creator: it tacitly assumes that authors can consciously or unconsciously maintain such control over the details of their texts that all of those details can fit together and have meaning" (231). Rabinowitz contends that to meet the demands of close reading students will reject interpretations that do not "fit" and will "twist" texts until they do fit the prescribed notions of unity. Other scholars suggest that it's not just students who will twist texts to represent unified forms. Graff describes the problem that the critic R.S. Crane had with this aspect of New Criticism:

> Both the scholars and critics of his time, according to Crane, had invested heavily in an apriori method of interpretation—the 'high priori road,' as he called it—that employed the critical concepts not as "working hypotheses," to be tested against the facts of the text, but as all-embracing positions or 'privileged hypotheses' that could not but be 'confirmed' by the facts, since these hypotheses tautologically predetermined 'the facts' in advance" (234).

This critique paints close reading as a hollow form of textual analysis in which one (or a few) pre-determined interpretation is confirmed by reading despite any and all evidence

[18] Gerald Graff suggests that it may be more than just students' ability to comprehend and use close reading that has made it so popular in classrooms:

> It was perhaps the instructors who needed the New Criticism the most . . . I remember the relief I experienced as a beginning assistant professor when I realized that by concentrating on the text itself I could get a good discussion going about almost any literary work without having to know anything about its author, its circumstances of composition, or the history of its reception. Furthermore, as long as the teaching situation was reduced to a decontextualized encounter with a work, it made no difference that I did not know how much students knew or what I could assume about their high school or other college work (178-79).

to the contrary. This process entails ruling out any elements of the writing that seem to disrupt the unity of the text. Throughout the years numerous critiques have been leveled against both New Criticism and the practice of close reading. Because each text is considered whole and complete with meaning, readers are to resist looking beyond the words on the page for meaning—an aspect that would draw heavy fire in subsequent decades as theoretical turns toward social-constructionism and discourse studies prioritized cultural context in text production and reception. Gerald Graff writes that "the very term 'New Critical' would become synonymous with the practice of explicating texts in a vacuum" (146).

I agree that the New Critical search for textual unity overestimates an author's ability to create a unified text and underestimates the degree to which individual texts might remain fragmented and partial. Yet, as I've read through the critiques of New Criticism I've found that quite often the author is really criticizing the effects of particular ways that close reading has been taught or its wide-spread influence as opposed to what students are actually asked to attend to during the reading process.

Rabinowitz' own article, "Against Close Reading," is a perfect example. In the first five pages alone he directs the following charges against close reading:

- By privileging close reading, instructors reduce attention to other kinds of reading
- The traditional literary canon consists primarily of a collection of texts that have shown themselves to be well suited to close reading

Both of these issues can be problematic. Yet, both of these issues have less to do with close reading as an *approach* to reading than with the way it is usually taught or the results of its immense popularity.

In "The Argument of Reading" David Bartholomae argues that the first-year writing course "should be a course in 'close reading,' the fundamental method of the New Criticism" (245). Bartholomae presents the New Critics and their legacy quite differently from their many detractors when he writes:

> [T]he point of close reading was to enable students to argue with the very forms of understanding produced by the texts they were reading (or writing), to enable them to argue with the forms of understanding they were meant to take for

> granted, that were meant to be beyond question, outside the interests of the reader or the writer or the classroom (252).

What is so interesting—and potentially disheartening—about reading Bartholomae's description of close reading's potential to help students "argue" with texts is that as it has been commonly practiced in English courses at both the collegiate and secondary level, close reading has had the inverse effect by turning many students off to literature and literary texts. Don Bialostosky makes this point when he writes:

> The New Critics were really teaching students to unread a first reading and to reread to a deeper, initially hidden one that might be epitomized in a symbol or formulated, albeit inadequately, in a theme. The New Critics were so successful in promulgating and institutionalizing this practice that our students come to college English convinced they can't understand poetry, or literature more generally, because they have learned to distrust their initial uptake in order to highlight certain words and build from them a reading that will satisfy what they have learned is an institutional demand for deeper, hidden, symbolic meanings (112).

I have seen this myself from students enrolled in both composition and creative writing courses. These students don't feel comfortable reading literature—especially poems—because they're convinced they don't know *how* to read the texts. When I ask them for their general impressions or first responses upon reading, many students preface their reactions with disclaimers along the lines of "I know it's not deep or anything" or "I don't really get this stuff."

I'm sympathetic to these students and to the problems associated with teaching close reading that Bialostosky describes. Yet, Bialostosky's concern that students show up to collegiate courses "convinced they can't understand poetry, or literature more generally" is more a result of the ways that close reading has been taught in secondary schools than with the specific reading approach itself.

Does it really matter if there is a difference between close reading as a theoretical reading approach and close reading as it is usually taught in the classroom?

Maybe. Maybe not. It makes sense to hesitate before abandoning an approach to reading that has as its central aim the desire to teach individuals a way to carefully engage with texts and to better understand the uses of language. There is no question that the use of close reading in the English classroom has a complicated history. If the

prominence of close reading has led to the under-use or devaluation of other reading approaches, this is unfortunate. If close reading has been taught in ways that make students believe they can't understand literature, this is a problem. Still, these are problems of pedagogy, not necessarily of close reading as a reading approach.

Bartholomae imagines a first-year writing pedagogy that avoids these problems, a version of classroom close reading modeled after courses taught in the 1950s at Harvard and Amherst, one that uses *student-produced texts* as the focus**:**

> The hallmark of this teaching is the method. Student essays are reproduced. They become *the* text or one of the primary texts of the course. Students learn to read their writing closely not to make corrections but to ask how language works or doesn't work. Revision is key in these classrooms because writers are always working against the forces evident in their text . . . By teaching reading, the writing course, as I am imagining it, can teach students to engage in complex, revisionary argument with the culture as it is present in their own sentences and paragraphs (254, emphasis original).

There are two things I would like to highlight about the way Bartholomae imagines implementing close reading in the composition classroom. The first is that while close reading is usually promoted as a way to help individuals better understand and interpret published literature (above all else poetry), Bartholomae's pedagogy—at least as it's described here—suggests that students use close reading to examine their own writing and texts.[19] This implies that close reading—as a specific reading approach—can be used with *either* published or student-produced texts, and not simply as a way to understand literature. Perhaps if instructors were to teach students to close read both published and student texts—if students learned to read both types of texts in the same way and ask the same questions of both—it would have an equalizing effect: literature (and published texts in general) might seem less daunting once students realize that they can be read the same way that they read their own writing. At the same time, their own writing may seem more valuable once students realize that it is worthy of the same kind of reading and scrutiny as published texts.

[19] This is perhaps surprising, because, as previously mentioned, before Bartholomae is the co-editor of the anthology *Ways of Reading,* a textbook which encourages students to read difficult *published* texts in order to improve their reading and writing skills. The pedagogy Bartholomae describes here seems to be something of a departure from the theoretical underpinning of *Ways of Reading.*

The second point is that regardless of whether students are focusing on a published piece of literature (the more common kind of text for close reading) or their own writing (as in the pedagogy Bartholomae presents here), in both cases close reading is encouraged mainly as a way to better understand texts. Close reading—as one of the five reading approaches covered in this topography—*is primarily a method of text interpretation.* While Bartholomae suggests that students might eventually "engage in complex, revisionary arguments with the culture," it's clear that before this can happen close reading must be used to help students to identify how cultural influences can be found in the texts they read. With this focus on the text and nothing but the text, close reading represents one extreme of my continuum of five reading approaches. Instructors who want students to practice deriving meaning from analysis of the text itself—instead of focusing on understanding their own reactions as readers or on identifying contextual factors that contributed to the text's production—may want to promote close reading for certain assignments.

Critical Reading

Compositionist David Jolliffe writes that he "would imagine it well-nigh impossible to find any college writing courses . . . that doesn't aim to teach critical reading in some way" ("Who 128-129). He also notes that "some characterization of critical reading exists as the governing analytic method in many of the anthologies of articles, essays, poems and stories designed for use in composition courses" (129). Despite this prevalence of critical reading, Jolliffe finds that "there seems to be no focused view of critical reading in college composition, perhaps because critical reading serves so many functions in writing courses" (130).

In my own efforts to understand critical reading as a distinct reading approach, I came across a few different scholarly definitions. Jack Selzer offers the following:

> Whereas "normal" (i.e., "uncritical" or "reactive") reading involves experiencing first-hand a speech or text or TV show or advertisement and then reacting (or not reacting) to it, critical reading . . . involves studying carefully some kind of symbolic action, often after the fact of its delivery and irrespective of whether it was actually directed to you or not, so that you might understand it better and

> appreciate its tactics. The result is a heightened awareness of the message under rhetorical consideration, and an appreciation for the ways that people manipulate language and other symbols for persuasive purposes (281).

Nancy Morrow writes:

> Critical reading involves more than just understanding a text, though clearly basic comprehension must precede the critical reading. As we read we must be able to assess bias, to articulate opposing viewpoints, to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and to make judgments about texts. We want to recognize when conventions are followed and when they are subverted. We also want to be open to the play of connotation and the persuasive power of words in a text (466).

Both of these descriptions suggest that critical reading can lead to a heightened understanding of the "message" in a text and greater awareness of the potential (and potentially harmful) power of language to be "persuasive." Implied in both definitions is that readers will use critical reading not only to better understand how texts and language work in general, but as a means to assess and evaluate the specific text(s) they are reading.

While close reading is almost always discussed in relation to literature, critical reading appears to be the preferred reading approach when dealing with the media or pop culture. Kathleen McCormick offers a potential explanation for this preference:

> [W]hile the media doesn't usually either represent complex ways of reading or encourage them, in their moments of reception, media texts can become sites of complex, critical reading. For while most texts of the popular culture are produced to encourage simplistic reading strategies, many consumers of these texts, in the process of reception, have in fact adopted somewhat more critical approaches to reading them, even if their attitudes may remain conflicted about them.
>
> One of the reasons that teaching students to critique TV shows or advertisements, or movies, or song lyrics has turned out to be so easy to do in the classroom is that students already have had a lot of experience doing this outside of class. Although they do not have the language to describe their resistant readings to texts, most students have analyzed some media texts quite critically ("Closer" 31-32)

According to McCormick, critical reading works well with media and pop-culture texts because the groundwork for evaluation has already been established outside the classroom as students interact with these texts daily. Popular media is so pervasive in our society—so intrusive into our lives—that students can't help but learn to critique it. She writes that:

> [W]hile the popular media by and large does not encourage its consumers to develop critical reading skills, the more closely the media representation comes to the individual, the more likely he or she is to find points of resistance to it and therefore critique it in various ways. It is for this reason that courses that aim to introduce students to critical reading methods often find using the media to be so successful (33).

McCormick's point that students are already developing their critical faculties outside the classroom is an important one. Often we read reports of students' failures as readers or of their lack of preparation, but McCormick reminds us that the types of reading that many instructors ask for in first-year writing aren't that different from how students are reading on their own; students may lack the vocabulary to describe their critical readings and may feel ambivalent about their reactions, but students *are* responding critically to a wide range of texts.

Yet, while popular media texts may seem a great fit for use with critical reading, I continue to push back against the notion that any of these reading approaches aligns solely with one kind of text. Popular media works well in the critical reading classroom, but is that the only kind of text that would work? Rather than looking for distinctions between these reading approaches based on the kinds of texts they are associated with in scholarship, it is more useful to distinguish between these approaches based on their ultimate aims for reading.

In the preface to his book *The Elements of Critical Reading*, John Peters offers a definition of critical reading that spells out what is only suggested by Selzer and mentioned by Morrow: critical reading—as much as it is a potential method for understanding—is fundamentally a means of text *evaluation.* Peters writes:

> In general, we might define *critical reading* as the act of criticism applied to the act of reading. Criticism . . . is in turn defined by one dictionary as "analysis of qualities and evaluation of comparative worth." Thus we might say that in simple terms critical reading means analyzing and evaluating what we read (9-10, emphasis original).

Significant for John Peters, however, is the diversity of forms that such evaluation can take:

> Once we take up the issue of *how* analyzing and evaluating are to be carried out, however, we soon discover that in practice critical reading means different things

> to different people. To some, it means being on the lookout for falsehoods or logical inconsistencies. To others, it means judging a text according to certain preconceived standards of quality or excellence. Still others see critical reading as the act of interpreting the text's messages or "codes" of meaning. And there are those who see critical reading as a comparative reading—that is, the act of noting similarities and differences between one text and another or between one part of a text and another part of the same text. We could go on (10).

The premise of critical reading as "evaluating" texts becomes far more complicated once we realize that there is little agreement on which types of evaluation should be practiced.[20]

Certain definitions of critical reading propose reading (i.e. evaluating) texts in ways that help readers to identify *antecedents* in order to make sense not just of the text, but of cultures past and present. These conceptions of critical reading encourage readers to examine a text as a means to better understand the cultural influences that contributed to the production of the text and to readers' reactions. Kathleen McCormick writes:

> Critical reading, writing, and thinking is not only the ability to comprehend the texts one reads and link them with one's own personal worlds. Rather, it is the capacity to analyze and evaluate texts of all kinds for their antecedents—the values, beliefs, and expectations of the culture from which they came—and their implications—the effects they have had on their past readers who lived in particular cultural contexts and the effect they may have on present readers who live in varied cultural contexts ("Closer" 36).

Similarly, Sherry Linkon notes that "[g]ood critical readers are conscious of the difference between their own experience and worldview, the culture in which the text was created, and the world represented in the text" (251-52). Linkon describes a form of

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[20] Peters' solution is to allow for *all* the various forms of evaluation to exist under the single category of critical reading. He writes:

> Let us say that critical reading allows for all those possible definitions and more. What then, do they all have in common? . . . What critical reading means exactly will depend a great deal on who is doing the reading. In other words, different people bring different interests to bear on what they read, and thus their ways of criticizing also differ, according to their separate views. Ultimately, then, critical reading must be the process of *personal response* (10).

Surely individual readers will read and criticize texts differently based on their own interests, experience, and goals. But to open up the definition of critical reading as broadly as Peters' does—as "the process of personal responses"—isn't very useful because everything seems to fit.

critical reading—what she calls "critical cultural reading"—that is a recursive process in which the reader shifts attention intermittently between the text and outside information:

> This process of considering cultural context inevitably leads a good reader back to the text, and then back to contextual information, and back to the text again. We defer reaching conclusions because we understand that how we read a text will change over time, not only because we pick up additional information but also because our understanding becomes more complex. We know, from experience, that our first conclusions are not likely to be our final ones, just as we know that the questions we began with may well be revised or abandoned as we continue reading (Linkon 252).

Though the process of reading that Linkon describes here is one that she associates with experienced critical readers, it's one that she advocates for all her students.

The common element across all of these definitions is that *critical reading is primarily a means for readers to evaluate texts.* For instructors who want students to gain a fuller understanding of how contextual factors shape text production and reception, McCormick and Linkon's conceptions of critical reading may be useful. It is the responsibility of each instructor to determine the criteria by which he/she wants students to evaluate the texts, and to teach students to read critically so that they can assess texts based on these well-understood criteria. These are crucial steps to teaching critical reading effectively: instructors must determine how (and why) they want students to evaluate the texts they read, make this criteria for evaluation clear to students, and then teach them to read texts in a way that makes such evaluation possible. This means that the type of "critical reading" promoted in the classroom may vary depending on how and why the instructor wants students to evaluate the text.

Close reading and critical reading both offer readers the opportunity to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of a text and to recognize the inherent power of language, and both are predominantly concerned with the interpretation and evaluation of texts. It's accurate to say that close reading is *more* concerned with interpretation and critical reading is *more* concerned with evaluation, yet both reading approaches are primarily used to better understand the text itself, as opposed to an emphasis on understanding the rhetorical nature of authorship or improving a reader's own writing. These two approaches constitute one end of the continuum of reading approaches that I have established.

Rhetorical Reading

Some scholars contend that reading is inherently a rhetorical process. Christina Haas writes that "[t]he constructive process of reading is also by nature a rhetorical process. That is, the meanings that readers construct are inherently bound up in social relations between author and audience, reader and writer" (23). Yet, suggesting that reading is always (at least)on some level a rhetorical process and that readers actively construct meaning, is different from understanding exactly what is meant by "rhetorical reading" as a reading approach. There is a degree of intentionality of the part of readers when they are rhetorically reading. Here is how Haas goes on to define this reading approach:

> This attention to the motives and contexts of both writers and other readers I have termed *rhetorical reading*. When readers read rhetorically, they use or infer situational information—about the author, about the text's historical and cultural context, about the motives and desires of the writer—to aid in understanding the texts and to judge the quality and believability of the arguments put forth in it (24, emphasis original).

Charles Bazerman offers a description of a comparable reading process:

> Intelligent response begins with accurate understanding of prior comments, not just of the fact and ideas stated, but of what the other writer was trying to achieve. A potential respondent needs to know not just the claims a writer was making, but also whether the writer was trying to call established beliefs into question or simply add detail to generally agreed upon ideas. The respondent needs to be able to tell whether a prior statement was attempting to arouse emotions or to call forth dispassionate judgment (658).

While Bazerman never explicitly calls this process of responding to texts *rhetorical reading,* his article is primarily concerned with the rhetorical—he calls it "conversational"—relationship between writers and readers, and it's no stretch to imagine him using such a label. In both conceptions readers are actively and intentionally trying to understand contextual information that shapes the text and their reactions to the text—a specific approach to and purpose for reading that distinguishes it from the more general conception of *all* reading as a rhetorical action.

The most compelling notion of rhetorical reading comes from Doug Brent in his book *Reading as Rhetorical Invention.* Brent describes rhetorical reading as a way for readers to inform their worldview:

> [E]ven the most coldly informative written discourse presents not just information but a certain worldview, a complex of beliefs held, or presented as being held, by the author. A description of the digestive organs of a frog is not a transparent window on reality but a description of reality as the author believes it to be—even if it is such a basic description of sensory data that there is absolutely no reason to dispute it. Reading such discourse involves not simply a passive uptake of information, but the act of accepting as true the view of reality presented . . . Thus, reading is an active attempt to find in discourse that which one can be persuaded is at least provisionally true, that which contains elements worth adding to one's own worldview (3).

Brent presents this process of rhetorical reading as the direct inverse of a writer's rhetorical task:

> The reader's task is in certain respects the opposite [of a writer's]. The audience is not diffuse, but highly particular—herself. She does not have to ask how to frame propositions that will have the best chance of convincing the largest number of hearers. Rather, she must ask the question that [Wayne] Booth uses as his touchstone in *Modern Dogma*: "When should I change my mind?" This question is synthetic rather than analytic. It does not require the asker to take apart a vast audience and consider what characteristics they may possess as individuals; it requires her to take a disparate group of claims made by individuals, each with his own perspective on the world and his own reason for seeing it as he does, evaluate them, and actively construct a single view satisfactory to herself (13).

Brent sums up his conception of rhetorical reading when he writes: "The meaning of a text must not only be interpreted, but evaluated for the power of its persuasive claims; the reader must decide not only what the text says, but if and to what degree what it says is worth believing" (14).

The descriptions provided by Haas, Bazerman, and Brent all suggest that rhetorical reading is an approach to understanding the context surrounding a text's production—as well as the context surrounding the actual act of reading—in order *to weigh the claims and worldviews presented in the text and determine whether they are worth believing*. In its emphasis on the contextual information, rhetorical reading sounds very similar to the descriptions of critical reading provided by Kathleen McCormick and Sherry Linkon. And just as Linkon associated this sophisticated kind of critical reading

with experienced readers, Haas and her colleague Linda Flower found that rhetorical reading "was a special strategy used only by more experienced writers" (168). In a study of reading strategies conducted with several graduate students and first-year readers as participants, Haas and Flower "observed a sharp distinction between the rhetorical process these experienced [grad student] readers demonstrated and the processes of freshman readers" (168).

In her own article, Haas elaborates on the difficulty that less-experienced readers face:

> [W]hile students may be quite adept at identifying the "facts" in a piece, they may often fail to consider more rhetorical aspects of the text—the author's identity and "agenda," the response of other readers to the argument, other texts with similar or diverse perspectives. It is these rhetorical skills, rather than a focus on content information alone, that students will need as they face complex reading tasks in college, in their disciplinary careers, and in the world of public discourse beyond the university (24).

The issue for instructors becomes how best to teach reading so that students develop the kinds of rhetorical skills that Haas describes. Haas and Flower acknowledge how challenging this can be for instructors when they write: "We believe that teaching students to read rhetorically is genuinely difficult" (182). Such difficulty underscores the need for instructors to be thoughtful about and strategic in the ways that they teach rhetorical reading in the first-year writing classroom. As Haas writes:

> While college students may not arrive in our classrooms completely prepared to interpret arguments, to read rhetorically, there are aspects of the constructive, rhetorical process of reading that we can bring to students' attention: we can lead them to see what kinds of reading strategies they use, the value of those strategies in various reading situations, and ways to increase the "repertoire" of reading strategies at their disposal (28).

The instructor's role in drawing out the possibilities of a text is vital, for as Haas and Flower note: "While experienced readers may understand that both reading and writing are context-rich, situational, constructive acts, many students see reading and writing as merely information exchange: knowledge telling when they write, and 'knowledge-getting' when they read" (182). The authors suggest that "[s]eeing reading as a constructive act encourages us as teachers to move from merely teaching texts to teaching readers. The teacher as co-reader can both model a sophisticated reading process and

help students draw out the rich possibilities of texts and readers, rather than trying to insure that all students interpret texts in a single, 'correct' way" (169).[21] First-year writing instructors can help students recognize that writing and reading are much more than information swaps. They can teach students that careful, attentive reading involves attention to the motives and agendas of an author as well as the consideration of one's own motives as readers, and attention to the contextual factors that influence all of this. This kind of reading can be done with *either* published or student-produced texts; as with all five of the reading approaches in this topography, rhetorical reading can be used with either type, or some combination, of these texts.

Rhetorical reading rests at the center of my continuum of reading approaches. As an approach dedicated to helping readers weigh the claims and worldviews presented in the text, it is heavily text-focused much like close reading and critical reading. Yet the ultimate aim of this assessment is to help readers decide whether those claims and worldviews are worth believing—whether, as readers, they should adopt a different perspective (or even course of action) based on their reading. In this way, rhetorical reading goes beyond a strict focus on the text itself. Rhetorical reading is not designed, however, to directly help readers improve their own writing. While attending to the ways in which authors succeed and fail to establish credibility in their writing—succeed or fail to convince readers that their ideas are "true"—can certainly inform the writing that students do, the purpose of rhetorical reading as an approach is to better understand the ideas in a text in order to determine how to respond appropriately.

Visual Rhetoric

As scholars and practioners in the fields of rhetoric and composition studies have embraced the task of expanding their conceptions of literacy to include visual elements, a new term has emerged in the literature: *visual rhetoric*. Yet, the precise meaning of this term remains an issue of uncertainty and debate. In the preface to their anthology

[21] This idea of instructors demonstrating how they read is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Defining Visual Rhetorics, Charles Hill and Marguerite Helmers explain that the "phrase *visual rhetoric* was being used more frequently in journal articles, in textbooks, and especially in conference presentations. However, it seemed equally obvious that the phrase was being used in many different ways by different scholars" (ix). The authors claim that a particular difficulty in establishing a coherent definition for visual rhetoric was that "there seemed to be very little agreement on the basic nature of the two terms *visual* and *rhetoric*" (ix). Diana George explains why this lack of a clear definition may be a problem:

> [T]here remains much confusion over what is meant by *visual communication*, *visual rhetoric*, or, more simply, *the visual* and where or whether it belongs in a composition course. What's more, to the extent that this confusion remains unaddressed visual and written communication continue to be held in a kind of tension—the visual figuring into the teaching of writing as a problematic, something added, an anomaly, a "new" way of composing, or somewhat cynically, as a strategy for adding relevance or interest to a required course (13, emphasis original).

As long as such confusion remains, George suggests, visual elements will continue to be introduced into composition courses as a mere supplements to written communication or as gimmicks to spice up the writing classroom.

One of the reasons that Hill and Helmers offer for editing *Defining Visual Rhetorics* was to provide contributors a chance to offer their own definitions of visual rhetoric, and many of them do. The most elaborate and insightful of these definitions is found in Sonja Foss' "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory." Foss examines the various chapters within *Defining Visual Rhetorics* and cobbles together a working definition of visual rhetoric. Here is what she finds:

> The chapters in this book suggest that the term, *visual rhetoric*, has two meanings in the discipline of rhetoric. It is used to mean both a visual object or artifact and a perspective on the study of visual data. In the first sense, visual rhetoric is a product individuals create as they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating. In the second, it is a perspective that scholars apply that focuses on the symbolic processes by which visual artifacts perform communication (304).

Visual rhetoric is both a "communicative artifact" and a "perspective." When used as a perspective, visual rhetoric can be considered a reading approach. As Foss writes: "In this meaning of the term, *visual rhetoric* constitutes a theoretical perspective that involves the analysis of the symbolic or communicative aspects of visual artifacts. It's a critical-analytical tool or way of approaching and analyzing visual data that highlights the communicative dimensions of images or objects" (305-306, emphasis original). She elaborates on how visual rhetoric operates as a reading approach:

> Description of the nature of the visual rhetoric usually involves attention to two primary components—presented elements and suggested elements. Identification of the presented elements of an artifact involves naming its major physical features, such as space, medium, and color. Identification of the suggested elements is a process of discovering the concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from the represented elements; for example, the ornate gold leafing found on baroque buildings might suggest wealth, privilege, and power (307).

So while the "presented elements" are found in the text, the "suggested elements" will necessarily differ from reader to reader based on a number of factors, including an individual reader's prior knowledge and cultural background. For example, imagine an artist's photograph of the contemporary New York City skyline with a rudimentary drawing of a fire engine superimposed over the photo right where the World Trade Center used to be. Most readers will notice the drawing of the fire engine—it surely stands out as artificially implanted over the photograph—but readers familiar with the events of September 11th and the fire fighters who lost their lives at Ground Zero are more likely to interpret a particular kind of message from this image than readers/viewers with no knowledge of the role that the NYFD played on September 11th. This artist's image might cause emotional distress for some readers or a sense of pride for others; visual rhetoric can be used to help readers understand why they have the reactions to a text that they do.

It's important to recognize that this conception of visual rhetoric is significantly different from simply "rhetorically reading" visual texts. Whereas rhetorical reading is primarily concerned with the identification and assessment of the worldviews located in texts, *a major purpose of visual rhetoric is for readers to identify characteristics of the visual texts and to consider how those characteristics contribute to the rhetorical*

responses they have to those visual texts. Foss explains what constitutes a rhetorical response:

> Key to a rhetorical response on visual artifacts is its focus on the rhetorical response to an artifact rather than an aesthetic one. An *aesthetic response* consists of a viewer's direct perceptual encounter with the sensory aspects of the artifact. Experience of a work at an aesthetic level might mean enjoying its color, sensing its form, or valuing its texture. There is no purpose governing the experience other than simply having the experience. In a *rhetorical response*, in contrast, meaning is attributed to the artifact. Colors, lines, textures, and rhythms in an artifact provide a basis for the viewer to infer the existence of images, emotion, and ideas. Understanding these rhetorical responses to visual artifacts is the purpose of visual rhetoric as a perspective (306, emphasis original).

While this focus on textual features sounds similar to close reading—visual rhetoric encourages readers to explicate "the distinguishing features of the visual artifact itself" as a way to further "understanding of the substantive and stylistic nature of the artifacts being explored" (307)—this reading approach urges readers to go beyond the text to make sense of how they personally respond to those textual features.[22]

Some scholars criticize the use of visual rhetoric in composition classrooms on the grounds that it only teaches students how to *read* visual artifacts, as opposed to helping them to *produce* their own visual rhetoric. In his article "Visual Rhetoric in a Culture of Fear," Steve Westbrook writes:

> As visual rhetoric emerges as a distinct subject of study within composition it is being defined, rather ironically, through a pedagogy of viewer-or-reader reception. In other words, to "do" visual rhetoric in composition too often means *not* to work with students on authoring multimedia visual texts that combine words and images but, rather, to work on critically reading visual artifacts and demonstrating this critical reading through the evidence of a print essay" (460, emphasis original). [23]

To support his claim, Westbrook provides numerous examples of scholars whose description of working with visual rhetoric is limited to students reading visual artifacts

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[22] This emphasis on understanding personal response to texts is also a hallmark of reader-response criticism.

[23] Westbrook's critique suggests that visual rhetoric—at least as it's currently being introduced into composition studies—may actually invert the current writing-over-reading hierarchy that is dominant in the field of composition studies. Whereas the overwhelming majority of composition scholarship is concerned with the ways that students *write*—and relatively little scholarship is dedicated to the ways that students *read*—the reverse seems to be true in the case of scholarship dealing with visual rhetoric.

for class. He also surveyed ten of the most popular textbooks dealing with visual rhetoric and found that of the 2,620 prompts they contain, "only 143, or roughly 5 percent, require students to engage in multimedia or visual production" (462). Westbrook is concerned that "however 'productive' it may, in fact, be," this approach of only encouraging students to read visual rhetoric:

> [D]oes not position students as genuine agents of change because it places them outside of the discourse that they are examining. Under this model, even if students are actively 'producing' meaning, they must always remain inheritors of that visual culture which already exists, and they must do so regardless of how conformist or resistant their practices of reading may be (465).

The issue, then, becomes how to teach visual rhetoric in a way that positions students as more than mere consumers of visual images—how to encourage students to read visual texts in ways that will support their own role as authors/designers.[24] Mary Hocks poses the question this way: "How do we begin to help students *enact* their understanding of visual and digital rhetoric?" (650, emphasis mine).

I agree that it's crucial for students to both read and produce visual rhetoric in composition courses because these are first and foremost *writing* courses. I'm also concerned that visual rhetoric as it's being adopted in composition classrooms is being used even more narrowly than Westbrook describes: not only are students usually reading visual texts (as opposed to producing them), but as a result they are rarely (if ever) reading student-produced visual work. Assigning students to produce and share their own visual texts helps alleviate both of these imbalances.

Some scholars who advocate for visual rhetoric in the composition classroom suggest *first* teaching students to read visual texts as an initial step in a longer learning sequence. Here is an example of a lesson provided by Anne Wysocki in which she asks students to read a visual text in order to determine the text's intended effect on viewers:

> To help students (and ourselves) learn how the visual aspects of texts function rhetorically, take a visual text—any web page or software interface, any advertisement, any television newsscreen—and ask students how the text would be different if it were changed in some way. *How would it be different if (for*

[24] Diana George's article provides a wonderful overview of the history of visual communication in composition studies, including the idea that students assume the role and designation of "designer" as opposed to "writer".

> *example) the red in the text were replaced with green, if the classical looking typeface were replaced with something hand-painted, if the white woman were replaced by a black man, if the photograph of the mother and child were replaced by the large words "Love is gentle," or if the text were a billboard instead of a web page?* Asking such questions helps us see how the overall effect of a text would change—which helps us see the original overall intended effect (195, emphasis original).

As Wysocki writes of her approach: "Trying to identify everything about a text that could be changed also helps us see how wide the range of possible strategies is in different kinds of visible texts—and helps us think about *our own choices* of strategies when we compose visual texts" (195, emphasis mine).[25]

Approaches such as this one ask students to read for the rhetorical components of a visual text not just to better understand the text, and their reactions to the text, but also with an eye toward their eventual role as a writer/designer of their own visual texts. Visual rhetoric imagined and taught in this way is similar to the previous three reading approaches in that it encourages students to detect and evaluate particular textual features, but because these features and techniques are identified (in part) so that readers might consider whether to incorporate them into their own writing, the ultimate aim of these versions of visual rhetoric makes it more similar to the final reading approach covered in this topography: Reading Like a Writer.

Reading Like a Writer

Reading Like a Writer (RLW)—sometimes referred as "reading as a writer"—is a reading approach drawn from creative writing that now appears in a range of English studies scholarship. Reading Like a Writer *is first and foremost an effort to understand how a piece of writing has been put together so that readers can better understand how to compose their own texts.* In her essay "Reading, Stealing, and Writing Like a Writer," Wendy Bishop explains how her own reading process changed when she began to read like a writer:

[25] Although most of Wysocki's visual texts involve New Media, I want to make clear that the reading and production of visual texts doesn't necessitate the use of new technology. In my own composition courses I ask students to bring in magazines so we can clip out images and create, read, and discuss hybrid visual-verbal collages.

> When I was an undergraduate in college, like many of my students I felt like I just *read.* It wasn't until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings. Soon, I had to question my emotional or story response to a text. It was no longer enough to report my response—hot, cold, indifferent—or to ask what happened next as the paragraphs went down the page. I started asking, *how*—*how* did the writer get me to feel, *how* did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, *how* did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119-20).

Bishop moved from simply "reporting" her personal reactions to texts to attempting to uncover how the author—through his or her writing choices—led her to have those reactions. This effort to uncover *how* writers elicit reactions helps Bishop to identify craft techniques and prompts her to consider making similar choices in her own writing.

The idea is for readers to carefully examine the things they read, looking for the writerly techniques represented in the text in order to decide if they might want to adopt similar techniques in their writing. Reading Like a Writer asks readers to identify some of the choices the author made so that they can better understand how such choices might arise in their own writing. Further, it prompts readers to locate what they believe are key moments in the text—spots where an important writerly decision was made—and to consider what different choices *might* have been made.

In his detailed history *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, Paul Dawson puts it this way: "This is what we understand by the term *Reading as a Writer*: reading with the aim of discovering ways to improve one's own writing" (91). Dawson believes this approach—though not the term—originated with Walter Besant in his 1884 essay, "The Art of Fiction."[26] Dawson quotes a passage in which Besant urges that a reader "must not sit down to read them [works of fiction] 'for the story', as uncritical people say; he must read them slowly and carefully, perhaps backwards, so as to discover for

[26] Dawson credits Dorothea Brande for first *naming* this reading approach in her 1934 bestselling book, *Becoming a Writer*. Brande dedicates an entire chapter, titled "Reading as a Writer," to providing an explanation for how to practice this kind of reading. She opens the chapter by claiming that "[a]nyone who is at all interested in authorship has some sense of every book as a specimen, and not merely as a means of amusement. But to read effectively it is necessary to learn to consider a book in the light of what it can teach you about the improvement of your own work" (74).

himself how the author built up the novel, and from what original germ or conception it sprang" (*Creative* 91).

Besant's notion that literary works are "built up" touches upon a familiar architectural theme. David Jauss, in his essay "Articles of Faith," asserts that "reading won't help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made" (64). Allen Tate, a critic and poet already discussed as a major figure in New Criticism, offers a similar architectural description for Reading Like a Writer in a 1940 edition of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*:

> There are many ways to read, but generally speaking there are two ways. They correspond to the two ways in which we may be interested in a piece of architecture. If the building has Corinthian columns, we can trace the origin and development of Corinthian columns; we are interested as historians. But if we are interested as architects, we may or may not know about the history of the Corinthian style; we must, however, know all about the construction of the building, down to the last nail or peg in the beams. We have got to know this if we are going to put up buildings ourselves (506).

Notice how similar Tate's assertion that architects "may or may not know about the Corinthian style" is to the New Critical disavowal of the need for outside context to understand a text. Tate maintains that everything the architect needs to know can be found in the building itself, revealed through careful attention to the features of construction; everything a would-be writer needs to know can be found in the text itself, revealed through careful attention to the features of construction.[27] The difference between close reading and the reading that Tate describes as occurring at the Creative Arts Program at Princeton (which he helped organize) is primarily a matter of intention: close reading is intended to teach an understanding and appreciation of particular texts, whereas reading for the Creative Arts Program was a means to "find out what words can do" in the hands of would-be writers. Tate claims of participants in the group that "in so far as it is possible we try to read a certain poem as if we were writing it" (506).

[27] Though Tate goes too far in suggesting that *every* aspect of the writing process—every choice the author made—can be identified in the text itself, his general idea of reading for writerly technique is still useful.

R.V. Cassill, in his popular handbook *Writing Fiction,* first published in 1962, attempts to distinguish reading as a writer from other reading approaches:

> "Reading as a writer" differs in a number of ways from other readings of fiction. The ordinary, intelligent nonprofessional expects, quite rightly, that fiction will give him a kind of allusion that something meaningful is happening to characters who have become very interesting in a particular situation . . . But there is another sort of transaction going on when a critic pauses to analyze a work. The critic generally wants to determine where to place the particular story. What kind of fiction is it? . . . The critic's way of reading fiction is a good way, too, and a very valuable approach for a writer . . . But what the writer wants to note, beyond anything that concerns even the critic, is how the story, its language, and all its parts have been joined together (6).

Cassill's distinctions between three kinds of reading are somewhat dated and highly reductive; for example, it's hard to imagine a contemporary literary critic being solely concerned with whether "the form of the story [is] adequate to the meanings the author tried to load onto it" (6). And what distinguishes Cassill's conception of reading as a writer—the pursuit of discovering how a text's "parts have been joined together"—from the New Critical search for textual unity using close reading? Cassill writes that "when you read as a writer you will keep asking how did the author harmonize A with B and B with C and C with D—on through a very long series of decisions," and this certainly sounds like the kind of attention to textual unity fundamental to close reading (8).

The difference, ultimately, is that readers who "read like writers" come to view every text as the product of a series of choices. It is an understanding of the choices, not an appreciation of textual unity, that underscores RLW, even in Cassill's version. In discussing the opening of a Chekhov story, Cassill writes that while "[n]oting the skill of such an opening, the writer who reads it must, *above anything else*, be aware that the story might have opened otherwise" (7, emphasis original). Later, he notes that readers examining a text "should ask constantly whether another set of circumstances would have served this purpose better or worse, remembering that in writing, alternative choices could have been made" (8). The consideration of how a text might have been composed differently and the recognition that similar choices might arise in our own writing are key aspects of Reading Like a Writer.

Stuart Greene contends that reading approaches that emphasize students' eventual work as writers—such as RLW—help students to better understand the writing process. Greene writes:

> [S]tudies of instruction have not accounted for the ways in which individual learners use what they know in reading to further their own goals as writers. This knowledge remains tacit. If we want to help students understand the decisions and processes that a sense of authorship requires, then we need to go further than traditional approaches. We can teach students to mine texts, helping them to engage in critical, conscious reflection as they read in their role as writers ("Exploring" 35-36).

Greene goes on to explain what this mining process entails:

> For this excavation, the miner uses certain "tools" appropriate to the situation to help uncover what is most desired. For the reader who is also a writer, this means using strategies to reconstruct context, infer or impose structure, and see choices in language. In these ways, a reader can begin to make informed guesses about how to use the ideas or discourse features of a given text in light of his or her goals as a writer (36).

Though he fails to elaborate on the kinds of "tools" students use, Greene does offer two students' readings as demonstrative of the difference between a "critical reading" and mining a text as a writer. The key difference between the two is that "each type of reading reflects a different sense of purpose" (36). Both students read John McPhee's book *The Pine Barrens* and then participated in think aloud protocols. The first student, whom Greene describes as conducting a critical reading of the book, had a primary goal of understanding "how McPhee orchestrates his argument, a goal that the reader achieves by staying close to the text, not by consulting her own experiences, nor by reflecting on her own goals as a writer" (37). The second student took "an authorial stance" and used that stance to challenge "the approach that McPhee has taken in developing his argument." This challenging of McPhee's structure was "motivated by her own goals as a writer." Greene claims that this second student "writes the text that has yet to be written, using her experience as a writer to select what is most relevant or important" (37).

Greene favors the second student's reading—her mining of the text as an author—over the first student's critical reading because "[w]hereas teachers often encourage a critical reading of individual texts as an end in itself, mining is part of an ongoing effort

to learn specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions. The strategies students observe in reading can become part of their own repertoire for writing on different occasions" (36).[28] Greene believes that asking students to read texts in relation to their own eventual writing encourages them to "use the source text as a heuristic for structuring and developing their own ideas" (42).

Nancy Walker suggests that the "student who is a writer, even an inexperienced one, perceives more readily than others do that a novel, story, poem, or play is the result of a process in which certain choices have been made along the way" (36). Walker believes that there is value in students recognizing the process of choice through which texts are composed because "the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices" (36).

Charles Moran contends that students possess a built-in advantage when they use Reading Like a Writer:

> When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices . . . We "see" what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves (61).

Moran's passage suggests that students' historical role as writers (not just as readers)—all their previous experience of making choices in their own writing—can contribute to their success with RLW. Moran astutely recognizes that student writers "have written" and therefore are better able to "see" what choices the author is making in the texts they read. The good news for first year-writing instructors is that *all* of our students are writers, and thus benefit from the advantage Moran describes. The question, however, is whether we can do more as instructors to help students recognize how their role as writers might positively influence the ways they read. Reading Like a Writer asks students to read with an eye toward their own eventual writing, and in doing so, helps to connect the processes

[28] The kinds of critical reading advocated by Kathleen McCormick and Sherry Linkon can hardly be seen as a promoting "reading of the individual text as an end in itself," yet it may be the case that McCormick and Linkons' efforts to help students recognize the cultural contexts surrounding texts are not representative of the ways that critical reading is usually taught, or at least not how it is imagined by scholars such as Greene.

of reading and writing in a meaningful way. In turn, the more that students write in first-year writing courses the better prepared they are to read this way, to "see" what the author of a text is doing because, as Moran suggests, they "have written" and "know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves" themselves (61).

Despite this recognition that students are in fact writers themselves, none of the scholars I've cited who discuss Reading Like a Writer make any mention of reading the work that these student-writers produce: none of these scholars discuss using RLW to read student-produced texts. I'm concerned that this emphasis in the scholarship on reading published texts means that when instructors ask students to read for writerly choice and technique in a text, when they ask students to read for what is good or effective or beautiful in writing that they might want to try for themselves, they are assigning students to read published texts and published texts alone.

This worry seems validated by my qualitative data. Instructors at the University of Michigan repeatedly mention having students read model published texts as examples of effective writing while having students focus on locating "error" in student-produced texts (more on this in later chapters). Let me repeat: there is nothing about Reading Like a Writer—nothing about any of the five reading approaches that I address—that makes it inappropriate for reading student work. In fact, asking students to use RLW to read their own and each other's work connects the reading and writing that they do more effectively than any other combination of approaches and texts; they are reading their own work to locate choices that they made (perhaps without even realizing it) while writing, and then considering what other directions they could have taken (and still can take through revision) in their writing.

I don't mean to imply that Reading Like a Writer is the *only* approach that instructors should teach in first-year writing. Reading is a highly contextual activity and no two writing courses are ever the same. The reading approach(es) taught in first-year writing should align with an instructor's purpose for having students read and those purposes may change throughout the semester or even during a given class session.

In distinguishing each reading approach (as much as it's possible to distinguish between them) based on their ultimate aims for reading, this chapter can assist instructors in selecting the best reading approach to use for a given assignment. For example,

teaching students to do rhetorical reading in which they determine whether the claims and worldviews presented in a text are worth believing might be useful for an assignment aimed at understanding the biases of contemporary newspaper reporting, but less effective when reading a text intended to serve as the model of a genre that students will soon be asked to write themselves. In this second case, instructors might read through the topography and decide that RLW would be a more effective as a way to help students detect structural features of the writing. Or, if the text contained a visual component, they might encourage students to read using visual rhetoric.

In offering the first available topography of reading approaches, this chapter can also assist instructors in selecting the reading approaches best suited to their larger course goals. For instructors looking to scholarship to help guide their pedagogical choices, this topography serves as valuable resource for distinguishing between a range of different—and at times seemingly overlapping—reading approaches in order to find the best fit for their class.

Chapter 3

DETERMINING A FOCUS: A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

> "Determining a focus in qualitative research usually includes examining and reexamining the research context, changing one's mind and giving up preconceived notions of what is important."
>
> -Judith Meloy, *Writing the Qualitative Dissertation*

In deciding whether to describe my methodology in such detail as to encompass an entire chapter (as I do here)—knowing full well that readers more accustomed to reading composition scholarship than traditional empirical or qualitative studies might be inclined to skim or skip such a description—I was swayed by Gesa Kirsch's contention that "[o]nly by understanding the nature and assumptions of various research methodologies can scholars and teachers in composition make informed decisions about the relevance, validity, and value of research reports" (248). Similarly, Margaret Eisenhart and Kenneth Howe claim:

> [T]he assumptions and goals embedded in the development and the conduct of the study must be exposed and considered. Only if this is done can the arguments derived from a new study be placed in their appropriate context and the arguments of one study appropriately compared to those of other studies (659).

By presenting my research methodology in detail throughout this chapter, and by making transparent the questions, aims, and biases guiding the research, I'm hopeful that readers can adequately and accurately assess my findings and the arguments based on those findings. But the question might still be asked: why draw on qualitative methods at all?

In her article, "More Methodological Matters," Ellen Barton proposes that "the central problem of our field—how and why written language is produced, understood, learned, and taught in a variety of contexts—demands investigations from a variety of

methodological approaches" (407). One prominent line of research adopted by composition scholars has been qualitative research. In "Qualitative Research on Writing," Katherine Schultz proclaims that several recent advances in writing research have come from qualitative studies and that a range of qualitative studies and methodologies have been used since the 1970s (358). Schultz goes on to assert that:

> Qualitative research has captured the layers of context that are part of composing processes and texts themselves and has contributed to knowledge about writers and writing, extended our understanding of what we mean by writing, how it is taught and learned, and where and how it occurs across the boundaries of school, home and community (368).

Gesa Kirsch also acknowledges the benefits of qualitative research for composition studies and predicts that in the near future "composition scholars will engage in more qualitative, ethnographic, self-reflexive, dialogic, and auto-ethnographic research" (129). Her studies of contemporary composition research reveal a growing trend toward qualitative research within composition studies (130-131).

While considering whether or not to incorporate qualitative methods into my dissertation research, I kept returning to Davida Charney's assertion that:

> [T]he research methods we employ have important consequences for the intellectual authority of our field, for the ethical, political, and intellectual value of our work, and for its potential to effect beneficial changes in the classroom and the workplace (568).

I decided that if I *was* going to incorporate qualitative methods into my research, I wanted their use to be purposeful and well-suited for making the kinds of arguments I hoped to make.[29] Ultimately, I selected the research design described in this chapter because I think incorporating qualitative methods such as surveys (of instructors and students), interviews (of instructors), and observations (of first-year writing courses) gave me the best possible chance of understanding some of the ways that reading is currently being taught in first-year writing courses.

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[29] I am adopting Kirsh and Sullivan's definitions of "*method* as a technique or way of proceeding in gathering evidence, and *methodology* as the underlying theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (2, emphasis original)

Qualitative methods allow participants—in this case writing instructors and a select group of students—to speak and write for themselves. They allow for experiences in the classroom to be described and discussed by multiple voices, and they provide me with a means to compare what is occurring in classrooms at one institutional site with the descriptions found in scholarship. As I formed my arguments about reading pedagogy, I drew from ideas presented by scholars, instructors, and students. Putting these various voices in conversation provides a fuller depiction of how reading is taught—and might be taught—in first-year writing. Some of the instructors I surveyed and interviewed describe using the very reading approaches that I cover in the Chapter 2 topography. Their comments allowed me to go beyond scholarly definitions and scholarly rationales to learn how actual instructors think and talk about using these reading approaches. Student survey responses—for example, their explanations for why they are or aren't motivated to do assigned course reading—were used as another way to triangulate the data sets. How did student responses align with and differ from instructors' perceptions of what was happening in the classroom? How did student responses support or conflict with the ideas I developed while observing classes? At times I was able to draw on the student surveys to strengthen my assertions that instructors should be explicit with students about how their reading and writing assignments connect. The student-centered nature of composition studies makes research that asks instructors and students to reflect on and talk about aspects of their participation in the writing course particularly appropriate and useful.

Guiding Research Questions

In designing the qualitative component of my research that I outline in this chapter, I was heavily influenced by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman's position that:

> [t]he qualitative approach to research is uniquely suited to uncovering the unexpected and exploring new avenues. This demands flexibility in the proposal so that data gathering can respond to increasingly refined research questions . . . The proposal should be sufficiently clear both in research question and in design so that the reader can evaluate its do-ability; on the other hand, the proposal should reserve the flexibility that is the hallmark of qualitative methods (38).

The first step in facilitating discovery of the "unexpected" was to develop a set of questions that could guide my research without unduly restricting my work. At the same time, I was aware of Carspecken and Apple's contention that "all social research is informed from its very beginnings as a set of concerns or questions in the mind of the researcher by a particular orientation that implicitly or explicitly bears a theoretical view" (511). For me, this meant questions regarding the most suitable texts to assign in first-year writing (the issue described at the beginning of Chapter 1 that first led to my interest in this topic), as well as my frustration at not finding more research on reading in composition studies scholarship—particularly in terms of how particular reading approaches might be taught in ways that help establish connections between reading and writing. It seemed necessary to explore how instructors are teaching (or not teaching) reading in first-year writing and what reading approaches they are using—a necessity addressed by Louise Rosenblatt when she writes:

> Results of research assessing different teaching methods raise an important question: Did the actual teaching conform to the formulaic labels attached to the methods being compared? The vagueness of a term such as *reader-response method* can illustrate the importance of more precise understanding of the actual teaching processes being tested in a particular piece of research . . . Much remains to be done to develop operational descriptions of the approaches being compared. Studies are needed of how teachers lead, or facilitate (1394, emphasis original).

I set out to do the kind of research on "actual teaching process" that Rosenblatt calls for, looking for answers to the following questions:

- What are some of the specific reading approaches being taught in first-year writing?
- How (if at all) do instructors attempt to teach connections between reading and writing to students?
- Do instructors ask students to read in the same ways and attend to the same types of questions when working with published texts as when dealing with student-produced texts?

To pursue answers to these questions I incorporated several different qualitative methods into my research design. First, I developed an online survey and emailed instructors who

teach, or have taught, first-year writing at the University of Michigan, requesting that they answer a range of questions about their teaching practice. I asked instructors to include contact information at the end of the online survey if they were willing to do a 30-minute interview, and in total I conducted eight interviews with instructors (both Graduate Student Instructors and Lecturers) who were teaching English 125 (UM's standard first-year writing course) at the time of our interview. After holding these interviews, I observed four of these interviewed instructors' classrooms during two different class sessions: once when they were discussing a published text and once when they were discussing student writing. Lastly, in each of the four courses I observed I distributed a brief printed survey to students asking their views on the reading that they were doing for the course.

The Context of this Research

The University of Michigan is a large, public, state university that enrolls both undergraduate and graduate students. The campus where I conducted research, Ann Arbor, is the flagship campus of a state system totaling three campuses.

The English Department Writing Program (EDWP) at the University of the Michigan coordinates the general studies composition courses, which consist primarily of 100-level composition courses, but also include 200-level composition courses, a 300-level course, and an advanced 400-level course. A first-year writing course is required of all students and the majority of students fulfill this requirement by taking English 125: College Writing. In addition, EDWP offers several sections of English 124: Writing and Literature each semester, which also fulfills the requirement. A small number of students fulfill the requirement by taking courses offered elsewhere in the University, such as History 195, Classical Civilization 101, Comparative Literature 122, Great Books 191, Lloyd Hall Scholars Program 125, and Engineering 100.

As a major R1 institution, the University of Michigan hires lecturers of different classifications and graduate students from several different programs and departments to teach first-year writing courses. UM is a fitting site to conduct my research because this diverse cadre of instructors increases the likelihood that reading pedagogy is being

implemented in a variety of ways. For the 2005-2006 academic year,[30] all 222 sections of English 125 and 124 (the two first-year composition courses) at the University were taught by graduate student instructors or by lecturers (graduate students taught 66.4% of the sections in Fall 2005 and 67.2% of the sections in Winter 2006).[31]

Another aspect of using the University of Michigan as the context for my research on reading pedagogy is the high preparation level and high school grade point averages of many first-year students. The argument could be made that students at UM are of such high caliber that instructors are able to employ more ambitious reading approaches than they would be able to use at other colleges or universities, and there may be some truth to this claim. It was part of my challenge as a researcher as I made sense of the data to determine which responses are specific to the University of Michigan and which findings might offer wider insight into how reading could be taught in composition courses across the country.

I'm aware that studying the ways that instructors teach reading in one specific context will not necessarily provide an accurate picture of *all* the ways that reading is being taught in first-year writing, or how all instructors teach reading in a number of different contexts. By choosing to examine the ways that reading is taught in first-year writing courses at the University of Michigan I am choosing to investigate teaching at one given location and I have tried to be careful not to over-generalize my findings. As a guideline I took R.B. Johnson's suggestion that "[p]erhaps the most reasonable stance toward the issue of generalizing is that we can generalize to other people, settings, and times to the degree that they are similar to the people, settings, and times in the original study" (290).

Using Johnson's criterion, it's reasonable to assert that the majority of the arguments I make in subsequent chapters are applicable to other institutions: though the location and demographics may differ, the primary roles and responsibilities of instructors and students in the first-year writing course are the same across institutions. While programmatic and instructors' goals for the course may vary somewhat from

[30] I received these instructor statistics from a colleague, who was informed by administrators in the Writing Program that these numbers are typical from year to year.

[31] Lecturers for the EDWP are full-time, non tenured instructors who teach two to three courses per semester. The majority of there lecturers received either their MFA or PhD degree from Michigan, but there are a few lecturers teaching each semester who received their degree elsewhere.

school to school or class to class, an underlying principal of all first-year writing courses is that students take the course to improve their writing. Nearly all (if not all) of first-year writing courses assign reading. The students in these courses are roughly the same age (allowing for non-traditional students at many institutions) and are almost always new to their school. So while it would be irresponsible for me to assume that whatever I find at the University of Michigan is automatically generalizable everywhere else, it's also clear—based on my research findings, my own experience teaching at three different institutions, and my extensive discussions with colleagues at colleges and universities across the country—that my conclusions, particularly regarding how instructors *could* teach reading in first-year writing, are for the most part applicable to different institutional contexts.

Just as importantly, the larger issue of theorizing how reading is taught in first-year writing is applicable to every campus that offers such courses. Gary Ettari and Heather Easterling argue that "one of the difficulties that is evident at our institution and perhaps others as well, is the under-examined role of reading and its practice in the different courses we teach" (10). This difficulty transcends any specific institutional boundaries, and the role of reading is an issue of importance not just for individual institutions and courses but for the field of composition studies as well.

Sources of Data

A major emphasis during data collection was to allow participants to describe their experiences with classroom reading and reading pedagogy in their own words. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw address the importance of allowing study participants to use their own terminology and express their own explanations of what they see happening when they write that the "ethnographer puts aside his own inclinations to explain when and why particular events occur in order to highlight members' accounts of them" (124). I worked to avoid writing survey questions or to conduct interviews in ways that led participants to adopt my terminology and language—for example the terminology I use in my topography—in place of their own descriptions. By allowing instructors and students to speak openly in their answers to survey questions and/or during interviews I hoped to

emphasize *their* accounts of how reading was operating in the classroom and not influence these responses with my own preconceived notions.

I. Instructor Surveys

I created an online survey for instructors using a campus-based program called *UM.Lessons*. The program allowed me to invite particular instructors to complete the survey by generating a group email to specified addresses. In the email that I sent to instructors I provided information about the purposes of my study, how I planned to collect data, and assured them that all of their answers would remain anonymous. Instructors were required to enter their UM unique name and password in order to access the survey and to ensure that each instructor only completed the survey once, but the results of the survey were completely anonymous when generated. I knew how many instructors had completed the survey at any given time but never had any indication of which instructors had provided specific answers. The opening screen of the online survey informed instructors that the surveys were anonymous and would never be read by anyone other than me except as excerpts within my written work.

I invited 124 instructors to complete the online survey; these instructors were all graduate students or lecturers teaching for the English Department Writing Program (EDWP) during the semester of data collection. All of the instructors I invited had taught at least one section of English 125: College Writing in the past, or were doing so at the time of the survey. My response rate was an impressive 50%—exactly 57 of the 124 instructors invited to complete the online survey did so.

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman describe surveys as a "mode of inquiry for making inferences about a larger group of people from data drawn on a relatively small number of individuals from that group" (130). Though I received responses from a small number of instructors compared to how many instructors teach first-year writing nationwide, the surveys allowed me to understand and describe instructor pedagogy more broadly than data from in-depth interviews alone, and provided findings that may be generalizable to a larger body of composition instructors.

An important consideration in soliciting responses from writing instructors was the broad range of experience levels represented. Certain Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) may teach only one section of first-year writing their entire time at Michigan. Lecturers, on the other hand, may have been teaching first year-writing and other composition courses for well over a decade. In order to factor in the diverse experience levels of instructors, I included a question asking how many first-year writing courses the instructor had taught, and a question asking how many *total* composition courses the instructor had taught.[32] Of the 57 instructors who responded to the survey, 32 had taught three or fewer sections of first-year writing, while 25 instructors had taught four or more sections. Twenty-six instructors had taught three or fewer total composition courses, while 31 instructors had taught four or more of such courses. Additionally, six instructors reported that they had taught first-year writing 20 times or more. Though there do not appear to be any compelling differences between the responses of the instructors based on their level of experience, the scope of this study is not large enough to account for all of the ways in which experience might influence reading pedagogy. (See Appendix A for a sample instructor survey response.)

As I worked to develop my survey questions, I kept in mind Michael Patton's assertion that open-ended questions allow the researcher to understand the points of view of other people without predetermining those views through the pre-selection of specific categories (21). Apart from the two initial questions requesting specific information about how many writing courses the instructor had taught, and how many first-year writing courses in particular, the survey questions were open-ended and invited instructors to share their views and draw from their own experiences teaching reading in the writing classroom. I strove to develop questions for the surveys that allowed participants to explain their pedagogy (or in the case of students, their experience with certain pedagogies) in their own ways, using their own words. I was careful to avoid constructing my survey questions in ways that led instructors to particular answers, such as describing aspects of their own pedagogy as "reading approaches" when they themselves wouldn't use such terminology or think about their teaching in this way.

[32] I did not specify in these questions whether the courses needed to be taught at UM, but eight instructors specifically mention teaching composition courses at other universities and two instructors mention teaching writing in high school.

The survey questions were as follows:

- How many semester of first-year writing have you taught, including this one?
- How many total writing courses have you taught, including this one?
- Do students arrive at UM prepared to read at the college level?
- What kinds of reading do students do for your first-year writing course?
- Do you teach students to read visual images or non-written texts? If so, what do you do?
- What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?
- Do you teach students to do a particular kind of reading or adopt a particular reading approach?
- Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities?
- How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?
- Are there any differences between the ways that you ask students to read the writing produced by their classmates and the ways you ask them to read published texts? If so, what are the differences?
- Are there any classroom activities or assignments that are better suited to use one type of text as opposed to the other--either published writing or student-produced writing? Please explain your answer.
- Please discuss a few of the factors that have most influenced your ideas about how to teach, or not to teach, reading in first-year writing.

II. Instructor Interviews

The qualitative data gathered from instructor surveys served as the starting point for holding targeted, individual interviews with a much smaller group of instructors. In total, I held audio-recorded interviews with eight instructors who provided me their contact information via email after completing the online survey. Each of the eight interviewees were teaching English 125: College Writing at the time of their interview, and several were teaching the course for the first time. Five of the interviewees were

graduate student instructors (GSIs) and three were lecturers. Each of the three lecturers had taught English 125 at least once before.

I initiated each interview with what Mary Brenner calls a "grand tour question." According to Brenner, a grand tour question "asks the informant to give a broad description about a particular topic," from which the interviewer can ask follow-up questions (358). During the interviews the grand tour question for each instructor was: *Can you tell me about the kinds of reading that students are expected to do in your first-year writing course?*

By starting with this question, which asks instructors to describe a specific aspect of their pedagogy, I encouraged them to speak about their teaching using their own language and conceptualizations. Stephanie Taylor notes that an interviewer should consider how "questions influence the answers given," and that the "questions may raise topics and problems which the participants would not otherwise have considered and, alternatively, discourage other topics as unsuitable" (18). If, for example, I had begun each interview by asking instructors what "reading approach they use in the classroom," it's quite possible that several instructors would have talked about using a "reading approach" even if they had never thought of their pedagogy in such terms before. In contrast, Brenner notes that the grand tour question "starts to give the researcher the 'native' language of the informant and the identification of significant topics within the cultural framework of the informants" (358). The conversational, semi-structured interview style that I employed after asking the initial grand tour question was intended to allow instructors to talk freely about whatever seemed most significant to them in relation to their pedagogy.[33] (See Appendix B for a sample instructor interview.)

It is reasonable to assume that the instructors who volunteered to participate in the interviews have some level of investment in the questions raised by my research, and that

[33] However, David Silverman reminds us that this type of interview scenario still imposes certain contraints on the interviewee. Silverman writes: "[I]t is somewhat naïve to assume that open-ended or non-directive interviewing is not in itself a form of social control which shapes what people say. For instance, where the researcher maintains a minimal presence, this can create an interpretive problem for the interviewee about what is relevant. Moreover, the passivity of the interviewer can create an extremely powerful constraint on the interviewee to talk" (95-96).

they felt they might have something to contribute to it. In their own interviews with writing teachers, Linda Miller Cleary and Earl Seidman found that "in structuring a situation that encourages reflections about past experience with writing and teaching writing, instructors are ready to think deeply about the teaching they do or continue to do" (469). This certainly seemed to be the case during my interviews as the instructors I spoke with were detailed and articulate in discussing their teaching. Asked to explain their pedagogy, participating instructors had an occasion to think about the reasons and goals behind that pedagogy and this self-reflection may prove very useful. At the same time, while encouraging the instructors I interviewed to think reflexively about their practice, I'm aware that interviewees made choices—conscious and unconscious—about how best to represent themselves and their teaching in light of our interview and their perceptions of my research.

III. Class Observations

After completing the instructor interviews, I observed the English 125 classes of four interviewees (exactly half of the total eight interviewees) who expressed a willingness to let me observe their course. I observed each of the four courses on two separate occasions: once when discussing published writing and once when discussing student-produced writing. Observing these class sessions allowed me to compare my perceptions of what instructors and students were doing in the course with both the instructors' self-reported accounts of what they are doing and the students' survey responses. More significantly, I was looking for illustrative cases of effective teaching techniques that I could discuss in this dissertation.

By observing these classes, I was privy to this site of meaning making, and as the researcher/recorder I too played a part in making meaning from these visits. As I observed these courses, I generated fieldnotes regarding each session. I agree with scholars who suggest that writing ethnography is a move to construct and present particular versions of the truth as opposed to presenting what is "actually" observed (Britzman; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw). Though my fieldnotes are constructions based on

personal interpretations, they offer tangible, written data with which to compare *my* sense of what participants are doing with what they self-reported in surveys and interviews.

I view these observations as an essential part of my project. Kathleen McCormick explains the need for observation in her book, *The Culture of Reading*, when she writes: "In order to be able to begin to understand the cultural and institutional reasons why students read and write as they do, one needs to observe first what they do" (129). Though my research deals primarily with instructors, there is no question that a major reason that "students read and write as they do" is because instructors assign particular tasks and teach students to read and write in certain ways. Observing the ways that instructors teach is an important step toward answering questions about how and why students read and.

IV. Student Surveys

As my final data source, I surveyed the students enrolled in each of the four English 125 courses that I observed. This provided the opportunity to compare the perspectives of students with the ways that instructor talk about teaching reading as well as with my own observations. In total, I received survey responses from 66 students.

The survey itself began with a brief summary of my research project and my reasons for wanting to hear from students. Students were invited to contact me via email with any questions about my research, and I also invited questions in person before handing out the written surveys. The four survey questions were as follows:

- Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing? Why or why not?
- Do you have a preference between reading published writing or the writing produced by your classmates? Please explain your answer.
- Are you motivated to read for this course? Why or why not?
- Have you learned about possible connection(s) between reading and writing in this course? If yes, what have you learned?

I wanted these surveys to serve as an opportunity for students to express views and positions that they might not feel comfortable expressing in class. For example, if a student felt that the reading assignments assigned by the instructor weren't particularly helpful (as many of them did), he/she might be more inclined to share that view anonymously in the survey than to express it publicly in class with the instructor present. The survey allowed students to write honestly and openly about their experiences with reading in first-year writing courses without having to worry about the potential impact on their standing or grade in the course because I made it clear that their instructor wouldn't see their responses except possibly as anonymous excerpts in my research. (See Appendix C for samples of student survey responses.)

Like the instructor surveys, these student surveys allowed me to locate patterns across responses, and to compare these patterns with those found in the other data sets. The student surveys, in conjunction with instructor surveys, instructor interviews, and class observations, also allowed me to triangulate my data in ways that helped improve the trustworthiness of my research.

Analysis of Data

The first step in data analysis was to convert the data into various written forms conducive to analysis. Instructor survey responses were available to me online as a spreadsheet, but I also compiled all the responses to a single survey question into a Word document so that I could more easily identify patterns across those responses. For example, having all the answers to the survey question *What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?* in one document made it easier to see that instructors were describing close reading in a number of different ways. These compilations also made it easier to identify contradictions or differences between responses to a single question.

Interviews were transcribed (by me and by a third party transcription service) so that I could analyze the interview data in written form. Because this study did not focus on grammatical structures, pronunciation, or dialect, transcriptions did not include markers for vowel sounds, stretched out syllables, or nonstandard pronunciation.

Transcriptions were verbatim, however, and when quoted in this dissertation the interview data is presented using the exact words that were spoken.

I audio-recoded each of the eight class sessions I observed, in addition to taking written fieldnotes while in the classroom.[34] Upon returning home from each of the class sessions I immediately transcribed portions of recorded class conversations that seemed particularly relevant to reading pedagogy and my research questions. As I analyzed the data from the observations, then, I was working with audio-recordings, handwritten fieldnotes generated during the observation, and typed excerpts of particular moments produced from the audio recordings.

Student surveys were already available to me as separate documents in written form, and I worked from these original documents to compile and analyze answers without any additional modification to the data.

Each of the three methods involved in the qualitative portion of my research—surveys, interviews, and class observations—required related but somewhat different methods of analysis.

In my initial analysis of the instructor survey results, I used an open coding approach similar to that described by Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss. The authors define this method of open coding as "breaking apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions" (195). Keith Grant-Davie explains that one advantage of coding is that it:

> organizes data, allowing researchers to abstract patterns by comparing the relative placement and frequency of categories. It gives them a system by which to demonstrate these patterns to other readers, and it provides researchers with a perspective from which to view the data, so that the coding can directly address the research questions (272-273).

[34] The decision to audio record instead of videotape was one I thought a lot about. While I recognize the benefits of having a camera aimed at instructors that would allow me to detail such things as their body language and method(s) of delivery, these benefits don't outweigh the obtrusive nature of having a video camera in the classroom. I know that my own pedagogy would be greatly affected by the presence of a camera. I also believe that student behavior tends to change when a video camera is in the room and I didn't see the advantages of videotaping being worth the potential changes in behavior on the part of both instructors and students.

Another advantage of using open coding for my survey analysis is that it helped me avoid (as much as is humanly possible) allowing my own biases to determine what I saw. This isn't to say that I didn't have certain questions or categories in mind as I designed the surveys. A quick look at my survey questions (or any portion of an interview transcript) reveals that I was particularly interested in understanding the reading approaches that instructors used in the first-year writing classroom, their thoughts on the connections between reading and writing, and the ways they asked students to engage with published and student-produced texts. Open coding was useful, however, in helping me to avoid making predetermined conclusions based on the data. For example, before looking at the instructor survey responses I had predicted that critical reading would be the first or second most referenced reading approach; this turned out not to be the case.

Thematic coding was the primary approach I used in analyzing the interview transcriptions. I attempted to identify categories within and across the instructor interviews, realizing that any categories and hypotheses I formulated were provisional. During the course of my analysis I used four colors to distinguish interview excerpts that dealt with four reoccurring themes that seemed relevant to my research:

Specific Reading Approaches Being Taught	(Purple)
Reading-Writing Connections	(Yellow)
Uses of Published vs. Student-Produced Texts	(Pink)
Writing Workshop	(Blue)

After generating these four categories and color-coding the interviews, I went back and color coded the surveys looking for the same four themes. All four of these themes were prominent in the survey data, though writing workshop was mentioned less often than the others, most likely because I didn't ask a specific question about workshop in the surveys.

I next performed microanalysis of survey and interview excerpts that seemed particularly telling in regards to the ways that instructors think about and/or to teach reading first-year writing. Microanalysis is "designed to break open the data to consider all the possible meanings" (Corbin and Strauss 59). This more meticulous analysis

allowed me to examine the color-coded portions of the interviews and try to determine the range of possible meaning and implications. It also helped me identify survey responses and interview excerpts that seemed either representative of or contradictory to what other instructors claimed in their surveys and interviews.

Take, as an example, the following survey response to a question asking instructors: *Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities?* While I did not end up including this passage in the dissertation itself, I did analyze and color code the section during my analysis of the data. I have marked in italics the words and phrases that seem to be addressing connections between reading and writing, and marked in boldface the words and phrases that seem related to workshop:[35]

> *Reading makes students MUCH better writers than writing does.* As University instructors, we underestimate how little reading is done in high school now. Especially as AP English courses shift entirely from reading of college-level literature to test prep. *The more they read, the better their language becomes, the better their transitions become, the better their analysis becomes.* **Similarly, I've come to believe that workshopping (especially large group workshop) is one of the biggest wastes of time that exists in the classroom. If there's anything helpful about workshopping for students in a first-year writing course it's the objectivity and critical thinking skills they learn by being forced to write in-depth and VERY guided critiques for their fellow students. But there's little payoff for the amount of time invested in full group workshops. I quit doing them years ago. I now use a 6-person "medium group" workshop model for each paper, dedicating a week's time to each paper--three people are workshopped on one day in their group, the other three the next day.** And, as I said above, they have to do extensive line edits and typed critiques for one another.

In analyzing this response, the first thing I noted is the instructor's strong assertion that reading makes students better writers than actual writing does. Though every survey participant expresses the belief that writing and reading are connected activities, no other instructor even suggests that reading is *more* important for learning to write. As I continued examining the passage, I was also struck by this instructor's claim that workshop is "one of the biggest wastes of time that exists in the classroom," a position that directly contradicts the views expressed by nearly every other instructor who mentions workshop. Lastly, I was confused by what seemed to be an incongruity

[35] In my actual data the passage is color-coded yellow/blue instead of italics/bold.

between the instructor's assertion that workshop is a waste of time and the fact that the class still performs some version of a workshop for each paper. This led me to check the instructor's other survey responses to see whether this apparent contradiction is explained elsewhere (it isn't). If I had wanted to pursue this idea of apparent contradictions between theory and practice further I might have checked to see whether any other instructors reveal similar discrepancies.

In accordance with a method of analysis suggested by Corbin and Strauss, I first read over the fieldnotes in their entirety several times before examining certain sections of the fieldnotes in depth (163). Listening to the audio recordings while reading over the handwritten fieldnotes or typed excerpts allowed me to reconstruct how instructors talked about reading in class, and allowed me to compare the language that instructors used within the classroom with the descriptions they provided during interviews. The observation data also proved useful in identifying exemplary teaching techniques that I could discuss in detail and in exploring differences in the ways that instructors ask students to engage with published vs. student-produced texts.

My analysis of the student surveys was identical to the open coding approach I used for the instructor surveys. I worked to generate concepts from what I saw occurring in the responses, and paid particular attention to answers that confirmed or conflicted with what instructors had to say. In addition to the qualitative data provided by students' responses, the survey data offered quantitative data as well. This quantitative information was useful in shaping my interpretations of the data and developing an understanding of how students feel about and react to the reading they do in first-year writing. For example, knowing how many students find the reading they do for class useful to improving their writing, or knowing what percentage of these students feel motivated to read the assigned texts, helped me to form arguments about which pedagogical strategies might promote reading writing connections and what motivates students to read.

Steps Toward Establishing Ethical and Trustworthy Research

My initial step in designing and conducting ethical research was to submit my design to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Michigan. I met with

an IRB representative on two different occasions during the early planning stages. The review and revision process that I engaged in with the help of the IRB associate ensured that my plans for the study of human subjects had been thoroughly scrutinized by someone protecting the interest of the subjects, and that I had thought through relevant issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and risk.

Survey data was collected anonymously from both instructors and students, and interview participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, of their rights to refuse or discontinue participation at any time, and of my plans for the data collected. The initial screen of the online survey informed instructors that the surveys were completely anonymous and would never be read by anyone other than me except as excerpts within my written work. Each interviewee read and signed a consent form and was given a copy to keep for themselves upon request. Student participants received a consent form attached to their printed survey, though they were instructed not to sign it in order to keep their participation anonymous.

In keeping with the ethical guidelines of qualitative research, I was upfront with participants about the purposes of my research, the nature of my research questions, the participant's role in the research, my plans for the data collected, and their options should they desire to terminate their involvement. Many of the instructor participants know me through my position as a Graduate Student Mentor, as a regular participant in departmental soccer games, and as a colleague or friend, and may have had certain expectations of me or my research due to these relationships. It's also likely that students had expectations of their own. Though I was not in the role of "teacher" while observing classes or collecting surveys, it's reasonable to assume that students expected from me what they might expect from any other instructor at the university—that I would not take advantage of them and that I would be looking out for their well-being as I conducted my research. In making my goals and intentions transparent to participants and by inviting questions about my research, I hoped instructors and students would feel they were being treated ethically and with respect.

Another issue when attempting to design and conduct ethical research is the ever-present risk that the researcher will only see what he/she wants to see in the data;

member-checking served as one important safeguard to ensure that this didn't happen. Mara Casey and her colleagues note that "participants may be unhappy with the way they find themselves represented when the research report is finally written. Research participants are functioning in a hierarchical situation, one in which the researcher has most of the power to tell their stories" (120). Member-checking helps to alleviate this power imbalance. I sent an email to each interview participant, inviting them to read a few brief excerpts from my writing that incorporated some of the things they said during our interview. The email reminded the participant of their right to read my work and to object to any use of their interview that they found inaccurate or problematic. I invited each interviewee to ask questions, express any confusion, and to correct me if they thought there were places where I had misinterpreted them.

All eight of the instructors responded to the member-checking email. While a few mentioned how inarticulate they thought they sounded, and made self-deprecating remarks in relation to their language, every interviewee responded that they were comfortable with my analysis of their interview data. One instructor informed me that in response to our interview she has been making more of a concerted effort to workshop published texts in class this semester. Another instructor made efforts to better contextualize one of the excerpts, though in the end I decided not to use the passage for other reasons.

Triangulation was another way in which I tested the trustworthiness of my findings. As my results formed and developed in one area, I interrogated them in relation to the other data sets and to scholarship. Did survey data support my analysis of interview data? What contradictions were evident, and what might those mean? What did my own observations and fieldnotes reveal about what instructors had to say?

In addition to triangulation among various sources of data, I also employed what Valerie Janesick calls "interdisciplinary triangulation." In her article "The Dance of Qualitative Research Design," she writes that "[b]y using other disciplines . . . to inform our research processes, we may broaden our understanding of method and substance" (215). Interdisciplinary triangulation was a very important part of establishing the trustworthiness of this research because my work draws on scholarship from such diverse fields as composition studies, literary studies, psychology, women's studies, social

semiotics, rhetoric, creative writing, and perhaps most notably, education. As compositionist William Thelin notes, there has long been a bias on the part of English against acknowledging the work done on reading in the field of education:

> Professors do not teach how to read as much as they do how to appreciate and interpret a certain body of novels, poems, and short stories. The de-privileging of reading goes hand-in-in hand with ignoring the voluminous knowledge on reading theory generated by K-12 and college instructors. Despite all the reading problems students experience and no matter how frustrated we get, referring to and adapting ideas from reading research seemingly sullies us, lowering us to the level of teacher and diminishing our role as professor, a position that, after all, stakes claim to advanced, disciplinary knowledge (3).

As my opening chapters makes clear, this dissertation draws heavily on scholarship from a variety of fields—including education—to inform my research in ways that I hope will "broaden our understanding of method and substance." In doing so, I have intentionally and automatically subjected my research to the type of interdisciplinary triangulation that Janesick proposes.

Triangulation offered confirmation of certain hypotheses as they developed, and exposed contradictions that required further reflection. Occasionally, contradiction came in the form of negative cases, which were another way of establishing the trustworthiness of my research. R.B. Johnson explains that when researchers use negative case sampling "they attempt carefully and purposively to search for examples that disconfirm their expectations and explanations about what they are studying" (284). In subsequent chapters I present results that do *not* support my broader findings in order to show the richness and variety of the data I was working with. These negative cases are intended to demonstrate that I was not simply manipulating the data to make certain arguments.

Role of the Researcher

Along with member-checking and data triangulation, reflexivity was an important aspect of enhancing the trustworthiness of my work. As I collected and analyzed data, I tried to be conscious of my own positions and identities, and to consider how they might influence the research. I took to heart Laura Krefting's assertion that "[r]esearch

situations are dynamic and the researcher is a participant, not merely an observer. The investigator, then, must analyze himself or herself in the context of the research" (218). One potential difficulty I faced in relation to the context of the research was the fact that I am an instructor who teaches first-year writing courses very similar to those I observed. As Mara Casey and her colleagues write:

> [E]thnographic theses and dissertations almost inevitably challenge researchers' abilities to position themselves as "outsiders" to their research sites. This challenge comes about primarily because novice researchers, to ease difficulties with access, often choose research subjects and sites with which they are familiar (118).

After teaching writing courses for ten years I have developed my own views on what constitutes effective pedagogy in these sites. A particular challenge for me, then, was to try to identify my biases and to design and conduct this research in a way that kept my own opinions (as much as possible) from influencing the data I collected and the interpretation of that data. By interrogating and understanding my own multiple subject positions—as an instructor, student, and researcher (to name only a few)—I hoped to understand how these positions might influence me in the "context of the research."

Here is an example: one of my many subject positions is that of a fiction writer. For several years I have dedicated myself to writing short stories, first as an undergraduate English major at Santa Clara University and then as an MFA student at the University of Pittsburgh. I have attempted to see the events around me in terms of narratives that might inspire me to write my own stories. I've looked at life through the lens of narrative for a long time in order to find fodder for my fiction, but as Emerson, Fretz and Shaw write:

> Describing life in a narrative form is highly interpretive writing; in doing so, the ethnographer might overdetermine the connections between actions and their movement toward an outcome. Making all experiences fit the formal demands of a story falsifies them (89).

To neatly package my findings in narrative risks falsifying the results, and as I wrote I resisted the urge to form narratives when such depictions weren't warranted.

This is just one example of how being reflexive about my role as a researcher improved the trustworthiness of my research by helping me to recognize my

(unavoidable) personal biases. At the same time, I am aware that these various subject positions also contributed positively to my research. Jenny Staben, who at the time of her article was also working on a qualitative dissertation, states that: "I learned to remind myself that my various identities and their conflicts are not a liability getting in the way of my research. They were the initial source of my research questions, and they continue to generate insights and direction in my research if I let them" (Bencich et al, 301). It was my identity and subject position as a composition instructor that first led me to question the ways that I was teaching reading in the writing classroom—and without such questioning I never would have begun this research. As Wendy Bishop writes: "It's crucial for the researcher to make professional goals personal goals, to merge extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Ethnographic research is highly amenable to this strategy since what we learn in our work often improves our teaching" ("Having" 112). My ethnographic observations and this dissertation as a whole have allowed to me to transform a personal, pedagogical concern into a broader professional project. What I learn from my study of scholarship and analysis of data will not only inform my own teaching practice but contribute to a greater understanding of reading pedagogy within the larger field of composition studies.

Chapter 4

A Lack of Clarity: The Difficulty of Teaching Reading Approaches in First-Year Writing

> "Articulating the kinds of reading that are enacted in classrooms and the roles that readers are expected to perform within them can open important conversations that enable instructors (and/or programs) to more productively approach reading."
>
> -Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem, "Reading Practices in the Writing Classroom"

This chapter discusses several of the reading approaches that instructors at the University of Michigan identify as important for students to learn or that they report trying to teach in first-year writing.[36] The chapter compares instructors' comments to the five reading approaches I cover in my topography, followed by a discussion of some of the implications. Examining what instructors have to say about teaching reading contributes to a better understanding of some of the ways that reading is currently being taught in first-year writing, and allows for comparisons between how instructors define and describe the reading approaches with the definitions and descriptions found in scholarship. My findings reinforce just how imprecise and inexact the definitions for these reading approaches are; several instructors report difficulty in distinguishing between them, and the data also shows instructors confusing and/or conflating the names of various approaches. This chapter explains how a lack of clarity and imprecision can make it more difficult for instructors to teach these reading approaches effectively in first-year writing.

Here is a break-down based on two survey questions, using the respondents' actual terminology:

[36] I present these five approaches in order, from the most-often mentioned (close reading) through the least (or, more accurately, *not*) mentioned (visual rhetoric).

What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?

Close Reading	13
Rhetorical Strategy / Rhetorical Analysis	6
Critical Reading	4
Reading as a Writer (for craft)	3

Do you teach students to do a particular kind of reading or adopt a particular reading approach?

Close Reading	8
Rhetorical Reading / Rhetorical Analysis	5
Critical Reading	3
Reading as Writer	2

The most notable reading approach that falls outside my topography (in terms of the frequency in which it is mentioned) is the "Toulmin method" of reading for argument mentioned by 3 instructors. It's also worth noting that 11 respondents (out of 57 total) claimed to teach *no* particular reading approach at all. Also, no instructors mentioned that students should learn, or that they themselves teach, visual rhetoric—an issue I address later in the chapter.

In response to the question, *What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?*, there were also fifteen different responses—from "reading for content" to "strategic skimming" to "be objective" that were each mentioned only once. Initially I was surprised by such a broad range of responses. When I considered this range of responses in relation to the absence of any specific programmatic focus on how to teach reading and the lack of relevant composition studies scholarship, however, it makes sense that each

individual instructor has had to come up with his or her own ideas about what is most important for students to learn in regard to reading.[37]

The other striking thing about the responses to these two survey questions was that none of the instructors who claim to teach a reading approach covered in my topography—with one possible exception—discuss teaching that approach using either published or student-produced texts specifically, despite the fact that the scholarship almost always associates these approaches with published texts.[38] I'm hesitant, though, to conclude that this means that instructors are using both kinds of texts when teaching these approaches. Survey responses to other questions revealed that there are major differences in the ways that many instructors at UM ask students to read the two types of texts (detailed in Chapter 6). It's quite possible that instructors do prefer to use one type of text with specific reading approaches—perhaps following the lead suggested by scholarship and using these reading approaches primarily in conjunction with published texts. If so, this preference was not reflected in their answers. If I were to replicate this study in the future I would like to ask instructors directly whether they prefer using published or student writing when teaching certain reading approaches, and if so, why.

What are Some of the Specific Reading Approaches Being Taught in First-Year Writing at the University of Michigan?

Close Reading

[37] There is certainly value in instructors deciding for themselves what students need to learn because they are more likely to be committed as teachers to the enactment of those goals. What troubles me is that many instructors have few places to turn for advice if they want help developing their reading pedagogy. Writing programs across the country allowing varying levels of autonomy to instructors in terms of how they teach, the texts they assign, their grading policies, etc. I also know firsthand that many WPAs are striving to refine or develop a coherent set of programmatic priorities and goals for what students will learn about writing and what kinds of writing they will produce in first-year writing. Why should the priorities and goals for what students will learn about *reading* and what kinds of *reading* they are asked to do in first-year writing be left out of such conversations?

[38] As the potential exception, one surveyed instructor wrote: "Rhetorical analyses are I believe only suited to 'professional' papers, since the authors are conscious of both the choices they are making and the implications of those choices. Rhetorical analyses of student papers are difficult since they often aren't sure what they're doing, let alone why they're doing it." It's unclear from the rest of the response exactly what these rhetorical analyses entail and whether they are similar to or the same as rhetorical reading.

For the most part, instructors at the University of Michigan portray close reading as a reading approach used to help students to identify and appreciate specific aspects of a text, a portrayal consistent with those presented in scholarship. Here are two survey responses that speak to this goal:

> For close reading, we isolate a particular paragraph in a text. I ask students to write everything they can about this passage—to reflect on word choice, characterization, etc. I also ask them to raise questions about the passage, and to draw connections with other passages.

> I'd go with good, old-fashioned close reading. Many times my students missed an argument because they were misinterpreting sentences or failing to notice how the sentence structure and grammar really worked. We ended up spending time in class on how to actively read and get the main idea from a paragraph, take notes in the margins, stuff like that.

In both responses, close reading is presented as a way for students to better understand the text under consideration by focusing on the language. Close reading is a means to "raise questions about the passage" and to avoid "missing" the text's overall argument. These two passages are very representative of the ways that instructors discuss close reading throughout the survey responses, and are similar to the ways that close reading is presented in the topography—for example, Salvatori and Donahue's definition of close reading as a "strategy for reading texts that situates the meaning of a text in the words on the page rather than its historical or cultural contexts" (123).

The one notable exception to this depiction of close reading as a means of focusing primarily on the text occurred during the interviews. While three instructors allude to close reading only in passing and four other interviewees never mention the approach at all, one instructor claims to teach close reading to her students in first-year writing. The interview excerpt below demonstrates this instructor's notion of close reading.

Interviewer: And when you say "close reading" what do you mean by that?

Sally: Literary exegesis.

Interviewer: And how would that operate in your English 125 class?

Sally: Well, I've kind of had to avoid it, because it's more of something that might be appropriate to English 124, so I've moved from close textual analysis to reading for argument.

Interviewer: And how are those different do you think?

Sally: I'm trying to think of who's the agent in each one. I think that a text has much more agency when you analyze it as an argument. I think that the student has a lot more agency when they are engaging in exegesis - when they are tearing it apart with the goal of writing their own argument. So that's something to take into account. I may do something involving exegesis, because I do want to put the agency back on them.

What is interesting about this response is that Sally distinguishes her notion of close reading from "reading for argument," and suggests that in her version of close reading "the student has a lot more agency" as he/she tears apart the text "with the goal of writing their own argument."[39] Sally's response is the *only* moment in either the surveys or interviews in which an instructor describes close reading as a way for students to think about their own eventual writing while they are reading. In fact, the following response is the only other moment in which close reading is described in conjunction with any writing at all on the part of students:

> Just the close-reading approach, which includes reading with a pencil in hand, circling words you don't understand, underlying key phrases, and writing questions and responses in the margins.

It's clear from this response that such writing is meant to foster a greater understanding of the text; the writing is meant to supplement and support reading, not the other way around. Sally's depiction in which close reading offers students a degree of agency over a text in order to think about their own eventual writing is the exception to an otherwise consistent portrayal of close reading as a reading approach useful primarily in helping students to understand and appreciate aspects of a text.

Rhetorical Reading

[39] All interviewee names are pseudonyms.

Although rhetorical reading and/or rhetorical analysis are the second most frequently mentioned reading approach in the survey responses, only one instructor elaborates on what such an approach might involve:

> I believe students need to learn to read rhetorically. By reading rhetorically, I mean being able to carefully track how writers use language to do things like create a stance, make evaluations, and engage their readers -- to pull readers along with their arguments, focus their attention, acknowledge their uncertainties, etc. I think it's important for students to make connections between seemingly minor choices in language (word, phrase, and clause level choices) with larger rhetorical and social purposes. Even when reading "dry" academic texts, they need to learn to ask questions like "why did the author say it this way and not that way? Why did he or she use this phrase? Why did the author put this word in scare quotes?

What emerges from this description is a sense of students attending carefully to the language of a text in order to "track how writers use language to do things like create a stance, make evaluations, and engage their readers." Such an approach is helpful because it allows students to see how authors might "pull readers along with their arguments," using language. This focus on the reader and on "larger rhetorical and social purposes" is consistent with the descriptions of rhetorical reading presented in the topography, though this instructor makes no mention of students interpreting the worldview presented in a text and deciding whether that worldview is worth believing.

Though there are several responses promoting the value of helping students to read rhetorically and a few scattered references to reading for "rhetorical moves" or "rhetorical choice," there are no other clear explanations in the survey responses of what, exactly, rhetorical reading is that might offer a glimpse of how it is used or taught in the first-year writing classroom. Two of the interviewed instructors mention having students do rhetorical analysis or read for "rhetorical techniques."

Here is how Dianne describes this process in response to a question about the kinds of reading students do in her first-year writing course:

> *Dianne:* I have them do rhetorical analysis of a film. So I have them read a film and also to start them out we will do rhetorical analysis of advertisements, print advertisements and magazine covers. So if I say, "What's the argument in this cover?" they have to read both the text and the picture, the image . . .

> . . . we watch a documentary film, PBS Frontline, about – it's called *When Kids Get Life.* It's about juvenile offenders being sentenced as adults to life in prison. And before they watch that film I have them read a chapter on rhetorical analysis and then we watch short films in class . . . and we'd talk about: Who do you think the audience is? What argument is it making? How is it doing that? What kinds of things did you notice? Do you think those were intentional? What was it supposed to do? Let's think about the appeals that we've been talking about. And I said, "Okay, that's what I want you to do with the documentary when you watch that."

What is clear from my conversation with Dianne is that she considers rhetorical analysis to be a specific kind of *assignment*; she hasn't conceptualized of and named rhetorical reading as a broader reading approach that she can teach to students, despite leading them through a series of questions that she wants them to ask while "reading" a movie on their own.

Interviewer: You mentioned a couple of times so far that you asked the students to do sort of rhetorical analysis. I'm wondering if there is a- would you say that in your class that you're trying to teach the students any particular reading approach or reading skill or anything that you're really trying to sort of impart?

Dianne: I mean, not one that has a name. I don't know like the Michael Bunn reading approach. I have no idea. But I do want them to read for – I want them to be very *critical* of what they read meaning basically it's no bullshit approach. I want them to have bullshit detectors on at all times and be able to tell is this trustworthy, should I buy this, is there some kind of ulterior motive for why this person is arguing this and basically not trust everything they read and separate the good stuff from all the crap that's out there.

Although Dianne offers no technical name for a reading approach that she teaches in first-year writing, she wants students to develop their ability to understand how an author is making arguments and to determine whether what they read is trustworthy or driven by ulterior motives. With this emphasis on assessing a text to determine whether it is worth believing, the reading that Dianne promotes sounds very familiar to Doug Brent's conception of rhetorical reading presented in Chapter 2, in which the "meaning of a text

must not only be interpreted, but evaluated for the power of its persuasive claims; the reader must decide not only what the text says, but if and to what degree what it says is worth believing" (14). Despite this similarity, Diane offers no name for the kind of reading she promotes in class and doesn't seem to conceptualize of it as a coherent approach—an idea I return to later in the chapter.

The other interviewee to allude to rhetorical reading, Kath, offers the following response to a question about what she hopes students will read for when reading assigned published texts:

Kath: So basically, I'm trying to get them to think, like, okay, you should be able to recognize two sides of arguments, but you should also be able to move past that and say, okay, this is more complicated than there being two sides to this, and often, they overlap.

So the point of the readings is to get them looking at strategies of argument specifically, and then specifically towards that theme that the class is structured around. Also, being able to recognize . . . I've done a lot more with logos, ethos, pathos strategies where – like argumentative appeals – than I ever did before. I've been having them identify that stuff in the things that they've been reading and looking for, and then doing analyses of, like, the rhetorical techniques.

Interviewer: And how often do you ask them to do that? With every text, with a few texts?

Kath: I've been doing it with almost all of them – I guess all of them since I first introduced that idea . . .

By encouraging students to read for elements of logos, ethos, and pathos, Kath is drawing on classical rhetorical terms, but like Dianne she doesn't describe this approach as teaching students *rhetorical reading.* And while Dianne and Kath are each able (with some prodding) to articulate what they hope students will read for—paying particular attention to rhetorical elements such as audience, logos, ethos, and pathos—neither instructor offers a specific name for the reading approach that they teach students.

Critical Reading

Although four of the instructors surveyed specifically mention critical reading as the reading approach they teach, none of them elaborate on what is involved in this approach. Here is how one of those instructors answered which "reading skill" or "particular reading approach" is most important for students to learn:

> I think probably learning to read critically and learning to respond to a text beyond saying, "I really liked it" or "I really hated it." Learning to ask questions and to also provide evidence; it's fine to hate a text, but can they tell me WHY they hate it? Sometimes it helps if I focus their reading—"I want you to read to see if the writer provided evidence for their argument," which, of course, requires that they determine the argument.

If we return to John Peters' basic definition of critical reading from *The Elements of Critical Reading*, that "we might say that in simple terms critical reading means analyzing and evaluating what we read," then this instructor's approach is fulfilling at least half of Peter's definition: this instructor pushes students to use critical reading as a way to *evaluate* texts by asking them to explain why they hate certain readings and (presumably) why they like others. What is less clear is the degree to which students are critically *analyzing* the texts they read. Nothing in this response suggests that critical reading is used as a way for students to develop greater language awareness or to understand the social factors that influence their interaction with texts. In fact, only two instructor responses come anywhere near Kathleen McCormick's conception of critical reading as "the capacity to analyze and evaluate texts of all kinds for their antecedents—the values, beliefs, and expectations of the culture from which they came—and their implications—the effects they have had on their past readers who lived in particular cultural contexts and the effect they may have on present readers who live in varied cultural contexts" ("Closer" 36). Here is the first of them:

> The kind of deep reading - call it "critical" or whatever you like - in which the students take their reading experience beyond the page. They look up words, references, and allusions that they find confusing, intriguing, etc., and ask questions about or elaborate upon what they've read.

Here is the other:

> Critical reading, or reading against the grain, is also useful for students to develop a critical eye toward the social and material forces that shape

> consciousness. Teaching critical reading is akin to teaching a perspective that students can apply to a wide range of cultural artifacts and phenomena.

In urging students to examine words, references, and allusions, the first instructor seems to conceptualize critical reading along the same lines as McCormick and Sherry Linkon—critical reading is fundamentally about recognizing the antecedents and contexts that contribute to a reader's sense of the text, as well as past and present cultures. The second response is very much in keeping with McCormick and Linkon's conceptions: by critically reading a range of "artifacts and phenomena" students begin to develop their consciousness and assessment of both social and material forces. Yet, these two are the only responses that portray critical reading as the opportunity for students to move "beyond the page."

As the only *interviewee* to mention critical reading, Mason describes critical reading as an approach that students need to learn in first-year writing that will benefit them throughout their collegiate career.

Mason: [T]hey should be able to pick up some critical reading skills that will apply very broadly to the reading that they will be doing as a college student, because most students don't come in with that – with that ability to sort of break down a piece and see how it's put together and understand what is a counter argument? How is it organized – you know, how is it put together, how is it rebutted? You know they don't really understand how – how a piece of writing is sort of crafted and organized and put together. They understand content. They can talk about content 'til the cows come home, but they don't really understand the – the choices that a writer makes and how those choices affect the overall impact of a piece.

Yet, as Mason speaks of his desire to help students read for and recognize "the choices that a writer makes and how those choices affect the overall impact of a piece," I can't help questioning him about whether what he is calling *critical reading* is actually much closer to what in my topography I describe as Reading Like a Writer.

Interviewer: Is it fair to say that when you use critical reading, you're talking about the ways that choices are made and texts are composed to have certain stylistic effects, certain effects on readers, that type of thing?

Mason: Absolutely . . . I think I've been using this term a lot – the *choices* that a writer makes when putting together a piece, and that could be anything from word choice that affects tone to, you know, does the writer engage with counterarguments. Is this – is this argument fully supported with examples, things like that. So yeah the sort of rule of thumb, layman's way of talking about it – and I use this in the classroom too - is the choices that a writer is making in order to communicate, whatever it is, the argument is that the writer wants to – wants to get across.

Mason's reading approach calls for attention to "the *choices* that a writer makes when putting together a piece"—the most fundamental aspect of Reading Like a Writer—yet as the excerpt below indicates, it also retains the evaluative aspect of critical reading as defined by Peters:

Mason: [I]t's simple things like locating a thesis and putting a thesis in your own words to the things I just mentioned a minute ago, to being able to comment critically or with some sort of opinion upon how effective a particular piece of writing is.

As is the case with rhetorical reading, it's difficult to develop a definitive view of how instructors at the University of Michigan are conceptualizing and teaching critical reading in first-year writing. While at least two instructors seem to be encouraging the type of "critical cultural reading" espoused by Sherry Linkon, as a distinct reading approach critical reading is only mentioned a handful of times and never clearly articulated except during Mason's interview, and his version of critical reading sounds an awful lot like Reading Like a Writer.

Reading Like a Writer

The reading approach that Mason describes in his interview clearly includes elements of both critical reading and Reading Like a Writer. Although Mason is the only interviewee to specifically mention Reading Like a Writer—and he only adopts this terminology once I introduce it into our conversation—one other interviewee and two of the survey responses echo points he raises. Here is one of those survey responses:

> I try to teach them to read like authors. They're encouraged to critique the way something is written or designed (not just the content) like we do with workshop, but also to find out what works about a piece, so they can use it in their own writing.

This instructor, like Mason, wants students to read in ways that help them understand "the way something is written or designed," and not just to read for content. Another instructor addresses this same issue:

> Most students have been fairly well exposed to reading and analyzing content in a text—although some do struggle with basics such as plot summary and causal relationships—but reading for technical aspects of writing, or the choices a writer makes when composing a piece, tends to be a new skill for many freshmen.

While I can imagine some debate regarding the degree to which students have been taught to read and analyze content, this instructor is absolutely correct that reading for technical aspects in writing and authorial choice is something new to nearly every college student.

A third instructor explains how he/she asks students to break texts down and read them as a series of authorial decisions:

> I try to get them to look at everything in the text as a decision. "Why," I want them to wonder, "did the author do this?" What were the other alternatives? How would a different decision have made a difference in the overall argument?

Particularly compelling here is the instructor's effort to get students to conceptualize possible alternatives to the current text while reading. Students are prompted to imagine what alternative techniques *might* have been used and how that would've contributed to the overall effect of the piece.

In his interview, Don discusses using the metaphor of a car to explain to students how he would like them to read for technique and writerly choice:

Don: [T]he metaphor I use often in the class is looking under the hood of the car. Were not telling how the car moves, or if this car handles really well, we are opening up the hood, and we're seeing like how it functions the way it does. And ideally when they turn in the paper of their own, I like to point to a section and say, "Why did you do it this way?" And I want them to be aware that they made a

> decision to do it that way, and I want them to be making those decisions consciously rather than just kind of writing blindly.
>
> . . . It's sort of what's called what and why. You have a lot of what. You're telling me – you give me a lot of *what's* happening here. I want you to analyze *why* the author made this choice.

Each of these responses reveals aspects of Reading Like a Writer: students go beyond reading texts for content and concentrate on determining what "works about a piece" by reading for the "technical aspects" and considering "other alternatives" in order to incorporate the most effective of these aspects into their own writing. They are asked to consider "*why* the author made this choice." These processes seem similar to Wendy Bishop's desire to understand "*how* did the writer get me to feel, *how* did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out" ("Reading" 119-120) and Paul Dawson's assertion that Reading Like a Writer is "reading with the aim of discovering ways to improve one's own writing" (91). These instructors' comments suggest that reading for writerly choice is a new skill for most first-year writing students at the University of Michigan and one that at least a few instructors prioritize in their teaching.

Visual Rhetoric

No instructor participants mention teaching "visual rhetoric" as a specific reading approach in their first-year writing classroom. One possible reason for this absence is that I asked a specific survey question about instructors' use of visual texts, *Do you teach students to read visual images or non-written texts? If so, what do you do*?, prior to the survey questions asking about reading approaches. Perhaps instructors felt that they had already addressed this issue. Two other potential reasons for this omission are that visual rhetoric is a relatively new term within the field of composition studies, and that the term visual rhetoric is also used to describe the actual visual text—the artifact—that a person views/reads (as explained by Sonja Foss); instructors may not think of visual rhetoric as

an approach to reading.[40] In fact, the only two instructors to use the term "visual rhetoric" each seem to be using it in the sense of an artifact:

> Yes, we discuss visual fallacies and we also have a section on advertising analysis in which we discuss the parts of visual rhetoric and how they make meaning.

> I have them analyze visual rhetoric by examining the connotations and denotations of visuals in films and advertising.

While instructors may not be teaching visual rhetoric as a reading approach (or fail to *name* their approach visual rhetoric), there is no question that instructors at the University of Michigan *are* teachings students to read visual texts in first-year writing: 45 of the 56 instructors who answered the survey question acknowledge teaching students to read visual texts. In addition, five of the eight instructor interviewees mention having students read visual texts, despite my not asking a single question on the subject. These texts include graphic novels and comic books, magazine covers and advertisements, television shows and movies, commercials, websites, photos, and YouTube clips.

There are also six surveyed instructors who ask students to treat locations on campus (especially the campus art museum) as texts to be read. In a survey response one instructor explains:

> I have them "read" a place—I do place-based pedagogy in that course—where they observe a place on campus, do primary and secondary research on it, and then write up an analysis and present it to the class. So, it's an ethnographic exercise that helps them learn how to read different kinds of "texts."

Another instructor participant is doing something very similar:

> [T]hey write one "observation and analysis" paper. For this paper, the college campus serves as a non-written text.

In addition to the notion of asking students to visually read a place and treat the campus itself as a text, it's significant that as a result of this reading students are asked to produce

[40] It's worth noting that visual rhetoric is the only of the five reading approaches that does not include the term "reading" in its title, an omission which might help explain why instructors at UM didn't name visual rhetoric as a reading approach.

an analysis of the "text" they observed, not to produce their own visual texts.[41] These instructors, despite developing a fairly innovative way for students to "read" the visual world around them, fall back on the traditional read-to-write model of teaching visual rhetoric that Steve Westbrook claims "places [student] outside of the discourse that they are examining" so that they "must always remain inheritors of that visual culture which already exists" (465).

Of the 45 surveyed instructors who report teaching students to read visual texts, only 11 explain the kinds of writing they assign students to do as a result of this reading (including the two instructors just mentioned above). Nine of these instructors (82%) discuss assigning students to write papers, analyses, or reviews in response to the visual text they read. Here is a sampling of those responses:

> The first essay assignment is to analyze a consumer object they own. This assignment also makes them focus on the visual aspects of the object and to think critically about it.
>
> I have them write a 4-5 page image analysis of a print ad or TV commercial.
>
> In my 125 course, students write their second essay, Justifying an Evaluation—or a movie review—on a movie of their choice. I ask them to select criteria and develop those criteria with examples from the visual text.

Only two instructors specifically mention assigning students to create their *own* visual texts. One of those instructors asks students to produce *both* a visual text of their own and a more traditional analysis paper:

> I did do a brief unit on visual media and visual arguments, we started with a good article questioning whether "visual arguments" could even exist at all, and the students had to take an initial position in favor or against the article. Then the students brought in samples of ads or other visual arguments to analyze the techniques used . . . At the end they had to create their own visual arguments and then write their final position on the idea of visual arguments and whether they could ever truly be considered as arguments.

[41] It's interesting to consider what happens to the idea of visual rhetoric when a physical location becomes the text to be read. The two connected aims for visual rhetoric that I put forth in the topography—for readers to recognize the characteristics/attributes of a text and to understand their own rhetorical responses to a visual text—are still applicable when studying locations. Students can take note of their environment much like they would identify aspects of a poster or painting. The aspects students identify might transcend the strictly visual realm, or instructors might ask students to focus solely on what they see. Students can then try to determine how those attributes are leading them to have the reaction(s) to the place that they are having.

The other instructor gives students the choice to either create their own visual text or to write a more conventional paper:

> In 125 we read Maus and focused on 1) the impact of the images 2) the relationship between images and words 3) the narrative structure 3) the author's decision to use a graphic novel as a genre. Students could also elect to write a graphic novel response instead of their usual ones when we were doing that unit.

This instructor is very detailed in explaining what he/she asks students to attend to while reading visual texts. A few other surveyed instructors alluded to *how* they want students to read, or what they want them to look for during reading:

> What I stress is the relationships between all meaningful texts. My focus is on change and contrast in all texts . . . How does a photograph, for example, acknowledge its audience's pre-existing assumptions? How does it challenge those assumptions? What modifications to those existing assumptions does the piece explicitly offer, and what does it imply?
>
> As for what I "do," my approach (and goals) are nearly identical to non-written texts. Both forms require the same kind of analysis, synthesis of ideas, attention to authorial choices, etc. And 90% of the time the terminology is the same.
>
> I do usually include a segment on reading images. Students are asked to comment on a political photograph or advertisement and discuss the implicit or explicit argument that the image attempts to convey.
>
> Sometimes teach them to analyze photos or icons w/respect to concepts such as placement, gaze, repetition, symbolism, context, etc…

In addition to Diane's description of leading students through a series of questions in class while reading/viewing a documentary film, only one other interviewee describes in detail how he asks students to read visual texts. Don begins the semester by having students analyze visual texts before moving on to analyze written texts. Here is how he explains it:

Don: So we started off talking about photographs, right? We moved from photographs to advertising to film, because I thought it was kind of a natural segue. Photos don't have words . . . Advertisements – you've got a little bit of language as well, and then a movie is you know pictures and language, and you can use it kind of working together. So first I tried to get them – teach them how to write effectively about something that was visual.

> I mean with the photos . . . I want them kind of breaking down the scene into all of its component parts: what the camera angle is, what the composition is, the colors and all that kind of stuff. And then in advertisement, we talk a little bit about – more about, the message and the intended audience and then with the film kind of a fusion of all those things.

As the semester progresses this "breaking down" of texts slowly transitions away from texts that include visual components to a strict focus on written texts. Reading visual texts at the outset provides students an introduction to how to read for more than just content, a lesson equally relevant when they eventually switch to reading written texts.

Implications

It is evident that many instructors at the University of Michigan are encouraging and/or teaching students to adopt the five reading approaches covered in the topography in Chapter 2. For the most part, when instructors promote these approaches, they seem to be doing so with the same goals in mind as the goals articulated for each approach in scholarship.

One unexpected discovery was that a few instructors are teaching a combination of reading approaches. Here are the various approaches that one surveyed instructor claims to use in class:

> We read texts critically, which is to say we look at the ways they resist or reinforce asymmetrical power relationships. We do 'appreciative reads' of some texts, which means we talk about the stylistic and rhetorical choices that contribute to a text's purpose, speculate about the ways the texts might affect a given audience. We also do close readings (especially with poetry), which means we look at salient formalistic and structural issues in a text. We also do generic readings of texts, which means we read and analyze texts as articulations of/or resistance to a particular set of genre conventions.

In this list the instructor is quite adept at distinguishing and naming each type of reading approach, and asks students to adopt several approaches throughout the course of the semester. Another instructor claims that teaching multiple reading approaches is an important component of first-year writing: "I think that teachers need to expose students

to the various approaches and let students know that there isn't a single way to approach reading for all situations." Another instructor makes a similar comment: "Learning how to read a text through a variety of lenses is important. That is, knowing when you approach an essay what angle you are using to interpret that text helps you get more focused and applied meaning out of the text."

Perhaps the one aspect of reading pedagogy that no one disputes is that there are many different ways to read, and as a result many different ways to teach reading. Some scholars claim that the fundamental aim of teaching reading in the writing classroom should be to address these multiple ways to read. Marguerite Helmers suggests that teachers should help students develop a "more sophisticated level of reading in which they are able to distinguish between and articulate varying purposes for reading" (9). John Bean asserts that "students need to know that a good reader's reading process will vary extensively, depending on the reader's purpose" (134). Peter Rabinowitz concurs when he writes that "we need to do more than teach our students that there are these different ways of reading; we also have to give them actual practice in these alternative ways of reading" (241). One UM instructor describes giving students just such practice in the classroom:

> [I teach] multiple reading approaches to manage a varied workload and requirements that vary per text and rhetorical situation. I teach them to skim, to map ideas visually, to outline logic of arguments, use graphic organizers, "diagram" an argument's structure, annotating a text. I try to provide reading instruction that meets my students' needs, whatever that may be. When a student tells me they have trouble reading something, I provide a concrete strategy (or two) for them to help them develop a toolkit that they may draw from for future reading situations.

A reoccurring thread throughout these comments is that reading is done for different purposes and in many different contexts that may require different kinds of reading. The circumstances surrounding reading matter. In "The Role of Reading in the Composition Classroom," Nancy Morrow reiterates the importance of *context* for reading:

> If we want our students to recognize that reading and writing are interconnected processes, it seems only logical that the goal of a composition course should also be to help students compose a theory of reading—or perhaps more specifically to compose *theories* of reading that will help them to understand their relationship to the act of reading in different contexts (464).

The most effective scheme for teaching reading in first-year writing might be to raise student awareness that particular reading approaches (or, to use Morrow's term, "theories of reading") can be more or less suitable depending on the specific purpose/context for reading. This can be difficult to accomplish, however, if instructors are unable to distinguish between or name the different reading approaches that students could use.

Another discovery from analyzing the instructor data is just how imprecise and slippery the definitions for each of these reading approaches are. Here, for example, are some additional ways that "close reading" is defined in the survey responses:

> I find that close reading difficult texts is necessary—where students really must break down a paragraph, figure out its logic, and then describe how it works.
>
> Close reading - getting the main point, but also reading "between the lines." (Figuring out what effect things like word choice, order, etc. have on meaning.)
>
> Close reading--reading that understands not just the surface-level arguments of a piece, but also the underlying social and political warrants that motivate it.

In these three definitions alone, close reading is attributed with everything from helping students to identify the logic of a text, to understand how word order affects meaning, to recognize the "underlying social and political warrants that motivate" the argument of a text. In addition to uncertainty regarding what, exactly, constitutes a specific approach, it remains unclear how well certain reading approaches can be distinguished from other approaches. For example, take this description of Reading Like a Writer:

> I think it's most important that they learn how to read as writers. Considering why the author chose a particular genre, how they supported their argument, how they established their authority is important not because I want students to unlock the secret meanings of texts, but because I want to expose them to a range of writing approaches.

What distinguishes this reading approach—reading to understand how an author selects a genre, supports an argument, and establishes authority—from the *rhetorical reading* approach described in other responses?

It becomes difficult to persuade students that they should adopt a specific reading approach, or to make the case that a particular approach is useful, when instructors can't even tell them apart. For example, Don Bialostosky believes it's impossible to address

the effectiveness of close reading because over time the term has come to describe so many divergent practices. He writes:

> To literalize the spatial metaphor reveals its absurdity, for we realize that the only visual distance from texts on the page is the ability to resolve the letters—not too far or too close to make them out . . . To say that a reading is 'close," then leaves everything up for grabs, and that of course may be why the word continues to be so appealing. It roughly distinguishes projects committed to reading texts from those interested in questions collateral to reading them (112).

In addition to overlapping and even incongruous definitions for reading approaches, the survey responses also show instructors confusing the names of various reading approaches. As one instructor writes in response to the question about which reading skill is most beneficial for students to learn: "I don't know that it's a particular reading approach, but I guess I'd say 'active reading'—to question and challenge a text as one reads it, to be questioned and challenged by the text, to recognize the rhetorical moves an author is making. Maybe this falls under 'critical reading'." In this response and others like it, the instructor is able to approximate the reading approach that he/she teaches or believes will best serve students without being able to label that approach accurately. This inability (or perhaps unwillingness) to name a reading approach is certainly reflected in the fact that of the 50 surveyed and interviewed instructors who report assigning students to read visual texts, not a single one of them names this kind of reading as visual rhetoric. During their interviews, Dianne and Kath discussed how they wanted students to read in ways that seemed to be rhetorical reading, but neither instructor gave their reading approach a name. Does it matter whether instructors choose to name the reading approach they teach in first-year writing, especially if they are having success without naming it?

In our interview, Kath offers a compelling reason why establishing clearer and more distinct definitions for reading approaches, names and distinctions that instructors can share with students, would be beneficial. I asked her whether she had ever received training in how to teach reading in the writing classroom and she said no, but that such training would have been very helpful.

Interviewer: If you could imagine what would have been helpful that you didn't receive but that maybe you would have liked to have talked about

or had happen, do you have any ideas what that would be or look like?

Kath: I guess – I mean, I don't even know the names – like, if there are different tactics or strategies . . . I don't even know the differences between reading strategies myself, so even just being made aware of what they *are* would be really important . . .

Interviewer: And when you say reading strategies, do you mean, for example, what I'm calling—or in my dissertation what I call close reading, rhetorical reading, critical reading—these sorts of different lenses or frameworks from which to have students look at texts?

Kath: Yeah, because I couldn't tell you what each of those things consists of that are different from one another . . . I mean, there are terms that I *use*, but that I don't necessarily feel like I have definitions for myself.

Interviewer: What would be an example of one that you would say that you use?

Kath: Probably close reading, just because that's such a literary analysis skill that it's easy for me to be, like, okay, so where in the text can you point to support for this argument? Where do these words – where do the author's words, like, give you this information? So just getting them to actually look for specific information rather than making generalizations . . . But also, I guess – I don't even know if rhetorical analysis is something separate within close reading . . .

I asked Kath to explain why it matters whether instructors are able to accurately distinguish between reading approaches and name them. Here is her response:

Kath: I need to be able to give a rubric to my students . . . I can teach you, like, this particular strategy or thing. And just being able to do that gives students, I feel, the feeling that they've got a measurable skill and that they have learned a particular technique and tactic that they can go back to.

Interviewer: It sounds like what you're saying would be being able to be explicit and say to students "You're learning this technique, you're learning this reading approach," and then from that "and this serves you in this way."

Kath: Yeah.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, instructors can help motivate students to read and read in particular ways. It becomes far more difficult to convince students they should adopt a specific reading approach, however, if instructors can't accurately name the various approaches or distinguish between them. On the other hand, when instructors are able to tell students "I'm teaching you X reading approach and it will benefit you in these specific ways," they are passing along a distinct and measurable skill—something far more likely to motivate students to read than encouraging an unnamed approach whose benefits remain unclear.

Chapter 5

HELPING STUDENTS TO STEAL: TEACHING READING AND WRITING AS CONNECTED ACTIVITIES

> "Students have to read in college composition, but rarely does anyone tell them why or how they should read."
>
> -David Jolliffe, "Learning to Read as Continuing Education."

This chapter explores some of the ways that instructors at the University of Michigan discuss the connections between reading and writing and the extent to which, and ways in which, they try to emphasize those connections in the first-year writing classroom. All of the instructors surveyed at the University of Michigan express a belief that reading and writing are connected processes. In reply to the survey question, *Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities?*, the answers broke down as follows:

Yes	25
Absolutely	15
Of course	6
Yes, but . . .	3
Definitely	2
Certainly	1
It is a fact, not a belief	1
They are fundamentally the same act	1
Often, but not always	1

Not only does every single instructor profess a belief in reading-writing connections, but only four instructors express any form of reservation or qualify their answer in any way. The overwhelming majority of instructors respond using the expressions "absolutely" and "of course."

In the instructor survey and interview data, two distinct strategies emerged for trying to teach students about reading-writing connections: teaching students to "steal" or imitate writing strategies and writing techniques located in the assigned texts, and assigning model texts to serve as exemplars for students.[42] Both of these approaches call on readers to study the text with an eye toward their own eventual writing—for all intents and purposes, asking students to read like writers.

Instructors employing the first approach (in which readers are literally selecting from the text techniques that they will adopt in their own writing) tended to be very explicit with students in explaining connections between reading and writing. In the case of assigning model texts, the data was far less conclusive in terms of whether instructors are actually teaching these connections, or simply assigning model texts in the hopes that students will recognize reading-writing connections on their own. This discrepancy, especially when paired with students' survey responses indicating that they are more motivated to complete assigned course reading when they see how that reading connects to their writing, forms a powerful argument for the need for instructors to be explicit with students not only about how they want them to read assigned texts for class, but how that reading connects to writing. At the same time, instructors seem to be using these two strategies almost exclusively with published texts, presenting an unnecessarily narrow conception of what constitutes exemplar writing and potentially sending the message that "good writing" is something other than student writing.

This chapter presents each of these two strategies—stealing from writers and assigning model texts—in detail, followed by a discussion of some of the implications for adopting these strategies in first-year writing. The chapter concludes by drawing on the instructor and student data to suggest that demonstrating *how* to read for class, explaining

[42] Although the idea of writerly "imitation" has a long pedagogical history (see Delbanco), and the term "stealing" may raise concerns about plagiarism for some instructors, I don't wish to make a distinction between the two concepts because as they are discussed in the instructor data they are essentially the same move: identifying elements in the text being read that can later be tried out in the reader's own writing.

the purposes of course reading, and being explicit about the connections between reading assignments and writing assignments, can increase student motivation to complete assigned course reading and help them to read and write more effectively.

How Do Instructors at the University of Michigan Attempt to Teach Connections Between Reading and Writing to Students?

I. "Stealing" from Writers and Student Reflexivity

The first strategy reported by instructors at the University of Michigan for emphasizing reading-writing connections involves asking students to read for writerly strategies and techniques that they could then "steal" and try out in their own writing. The following responses to the survey question *How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?*, portray instructors asking students to read in a manner that greatly resembles Reading Like a Writer:[43]

> I ask students to pay attention to various techniques utilized by the authors and "steal" the ones they find helpful for their own writing.
>
> I ask them to engage with the texts they read by responding to them in writing (challenging them, asking questions, etc.) and then to pull out strategies to use in their own writing.

In her interview, Sally presents a specific classroom activity intended to encourage students to read for what they can use in their own writing:

Sally: One thing I've started doing – it happened on kind of spur of the moment and next term I plan to fully develop this, but – we've been sort of informally keeping a personal style journal where after we read a text and we've examined it for structure and we've looked at the argument, we also talk about the aesthetic piece. What did they notice that they like, and what can they take from that text to try out in their own writing?

[43] Although none of the instructors who discuss this strategy in the surveys specifically use the term Reading Like a Writer to name the kind of reading they encourage students to adopt, this process of reading texts to locate techniques and strategies that can be imitated is similar (if not identical) to Reading Like a Writer. Even if instructors don't name this approach as RLW (which isn't too surprising given the overlapping and incongruous definitions of reading approaches discussed in the previous chapter), it's clear that they recognize Reading Like a Writer's potential to connect the reading and writing that students do in the classroom.

> So, if we found a really good example of a parallel sentence, if they have never tried that before, then they make a note of it and they've got it in the text so that they can refer back to it.

This exercise prompts students to read with an eye toward their own writing by locating specific strategies and techniques that they intend to use, and reinforces the idea that both texts and reading serve purposes beyond the transmission of content. (It's unclear from this passage whether students are reading published or student-produced texts, but from my longer interview with Sally it's safe to say that the majority of style journal entries are written in response to published texts.)

In her interview, Dianne described her own efforts to get students to "steal" from writers:

> *Dianne:* I urge them to look at what other people are doing and to *use* it. And be like these are not tricks that only professional writers can use. These are things that *writers* use.

A crucial aspect of Dianne's teaching is that she prompts students to consider how *they* think reading might be connected to writing:

> *Interviewer:* [H]ow explicit would you say you are or aren't with the students in the course in terms of how the readings connect to the writing?
>
> *Dianne:* I think I make it pretty clear.
>
> *Interviewer:* What kind of stuff do you do?
>
> *Dianne:* Well a lot of times I have *them* tell me . . . I had them read this essay from the *New York Times* book review called "Plagiarists: You Get What You Pay For" or something like that . . . And I asked them afterwards, "So why did I have you guys read that?" And we were working on the arguments based on credibility and they were able to say, "Oh yeah, we can see how she establishes credibility . . . And I'm like, "What's important about that?" They say, "Well, she's saying 'we' and it makes it kind of less formal."

Interviewer: So the students were able to articulate when you posed the question of why were we reading this?

Diane: Yeah.

Not only were the students able to identify techniques in the published book review that helped the author establish credibility (such as adopting a less formal tone), but just as impressively they were able to articulate an answer for *why* they were reading the assigned text.

In the survey responses, another instructor describes encouraging students to be reflexive about the ways that they might imitate the writing of an author they are reading:

> I have students analyze claims, evidence, organization, metaphors, and language sound in articles we read. I encourage them to adopt one or two strategies in their papers using imitation in their writing. I ask them to try to make it seamless (to not let me see it). However, I ask them to write a submission note about their writing process, and in this, they are invited to explain how they mimicked a writer we have read and what the experience felt like as well as if they believe the result is rhetorically effective.

By requiring students to reflect on their adoption of the writerly aspects they locate in texts and compose a "submission note" in which they assess the effectiveness of this borrowing, this instructor prompts students to identify and detail connections between reading and writing—connections that are all the more meaningful because they are located in the students' own writing. Student papers and submission notes can serve as proof that the reading done for the course has influenced their writing.

In his interview, Mason describes an assignment in which he pushes students to reflect on how their reading and writing connect:

Mason: I'm trying something new this term in which students will write their last essay will be analysis of their progress as a writer . . . I'm going to ask them to pick a couple of the craft essays from our earlier reading and talk about how those influenced their writing and hopefully have them quote parts of them in their works.

Mason designs his final assignment as an opportunity for students to reflect on how the work of the course—including the reading they have done and texts they have read—have contributed to their progression as writers.

Sally mentions another activity that can be used at the end of a class session to help students reflect back on the work of the day and to posit connections between reading and writing:

Sally: Okay, it's a – they take a sheet of paper, or have it prepared; they put their name on it. What's one thing that you found interesting today? . . . What really worked? What are you hesitant about? And what's a "stop"? What confuses you?

Interviewer: And have you ever posed a question at the end of class explicitly about: How does today's reading tie into the writing?

Sally: I'm sure I have . . .

This idea of using what Sally calls "exit slips" to have students reflect on and write about the work they're doing for the course can be a useful way of prompting students to think about how the reading and writing they do are connected.

Implications

In having students identify writing strategies and craft techniques they can "steal" from other writers—essentially having them read using RLW—and explain why *they* think they are reading certain texts, Dianne initiates a conversation about the purposes of reading in the course (which, as I discuss later in this chapter, can help generate student motivation to do the assigned reading), and also creates a space for students to articulate how they see reading and writing interacting. She creates a classroom dialogue in which, to use Paulo Freire's words, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (80). Together, Dianne and her students explore the ways that reading and writing connect and learn from each other through mutually-informative conversation.

Assignments such as the ones described by Mason and activities like Sally's can enhance students' understanding of themselves as writers and of the writing process more broadly, for as Kathleen Blake Yancey writes in *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*: "Students can theorize about their writing in powerful ways. Through reflection they can

assign causality, they can see multiple perspectives, they can invoke multiple contexts" (19). That is certainly the case with Mason's assignments that asks students to reflect on the causal links between the reading and writing they have done by explaining how reading particular texts directly influenced their writing.

In Mason's case, he prepares students to consider the links between reading and writing and reflect on their role as readers at the start of semester. Here is an excerpt in which Mason talks about his initial efforts to discuss reading with students:

Mason: I tell students on the first or second day, actually, I phrase it in the form of a question. I ask them, "Is it possible to be a better reader? Is reading a skill? Can you get better at reading?" And there's a little bit of confusion typically, because we've been reading since first grade . . .

But then they sort of think about it, and we get a little discussion going. And yeah it's possible to be a good reader, a better reader . . . . that idea of being a good reader sort of woven through a lot of our discussions throughout the term - is this sort of secondary thread.

Mason goes on to explain how the weaving together of these two threads occurs throughout the semester, helping to illuminate connections between the processes of reading and writing:

Mason: The reading is a secondary thread I think. The primary – that primary thread is good writing . . . these two threads are kind of being woven through a lot of our discussions, a lot of our exercises and so forth throughout the term. And as a result, I hope that by the end they're sort of understanding that connection between being a critical reader and being an effective writer. And that connection being – you know if I can take a published text and sort of break it apart, identify the thesis, check and see how the example supports the thesis, press it in places that feel a little weak, question it and so forth – then I might be able to sort of transfer that over into my own sort of critical writing process . . .

Interviewer: So it sounds like you're very explicit in sort of attempting to teach students the connection between the readings they do and how it can affect their writing.

Mason: Absolutely. Yeah.

In prompting students to reflect on the work they do in first-year writing, instructors such as Dianne, Mason and Sally help students posit specific connections between reading and writing that allow them to see how they can engage with and benefit from both activities. As Kathleen Yancey suggests, as students reflect on their reading and writing, they can use that process of reflection to theorize how the two activities interact and to develop an understanding of how they might individually improve at both reading and writing by thinking of them as connected activities that can be better developed in unison.

The various moves by instructors at UM to have students reflect on their reading, their writing, and potentially on the ways that those two connect, are similar to a strategy described by Donna Qualley. She writes:

> Throughout the course, I encourage "metacognitive" reflection—in which students read themselves and their work to gauge their own development as readers and writers . . . Students reflect on their progress at midterm and in their final piece of the semester. They read their semester's efforts and describe themselves as readers, writers, learners, and thinkers" (123).

What is striking about Qualley's strategy, when compared to the UM examples, is that she prompts students to re-read and reflect on their own writing, as opposed to asking students to read or reflect on published texts. This slight difference means that students focus the same kind and degree of attention on their writing as is typically reserved for published texts.

As I discuss in the next chapter, instructors at UM have a tendency to associate published texts with effective writing and student-produced texts with error. This artificial dichotomy (there are thousands of examples of poorly written published texts and countless pieces of exquisite student writing) is reflected—perhaps unknowingly or unintentionally—throughout most of the instructor descriptions of the two pedagogical strategies discussed in this chapter. Instructors who ask students to steal and imitate writing strategies and techniques that they find while reading only report doing this when students are reading published texts. This discovery returns us to a point from Chapter 2: any of the reading approaches I've discussed, including Reading Like a Writer, can be used with *either* published or student-produced texts. In asking students to steal from and

imitate texts, instructors at UM are promoting aspects of Reading Like a Writer, but they seem to be doing so exclusively with published texts.

II. The Use of Model Texts and the Need to be Explicit

In some instances the second strategy for teaching reading-writing connections described in the instructor data—assigning students to read model texts—is simply a continuation of the first strategy. Instructors at UM routinely assign students to read model texts in the hopes that the students will steal or imitate writerly strategies and techniques from these examples, and that they will read them using RLW. Here are two responses representative of how instructors describe using model texts as a way to encourage students to read for writing strategy:

> We ask a lot of questions of texts that are relevant to the essay they are in the process of writing to help them ask questions from which they can write. I also focus heavily on the structure and rhetorical approaches used in the published essays we read, pointing out that these are models for them to use in their own essays.

> We'll examine the strategies used in introductions and conclusions in the published texts to get students thinking about what strategies they may want to use in their essay. Students should use the published readings as models, essentially looking for things they appreciate and want to use in their own work.

In both of these responses the instructor describes using model texts to demonstrate strategies and structural techniques that students can imitate in their own writing. According to Peter Smagorinsky in his article "How Reading Model Essays Affects Writers," this idea of imitation serves as the underlying belief behind the practice of assigning model texts: The primary assumption behind using models in writing instruction is that students will see how good writers organize, develop, and express their ideas . . . Students are then expected to imitate the writing presented in the models (162). Model texts are referred to a total of twenty-seven times in the survey data, and as noted above, one of the two primary ways they are discussed is as models of effective writing strategies and techniques that students can study and potentially steal or imitate.

The other way that model texts are discussed is as a strategy for teaching reading-writing connections are as examples of a specific type or genre of writing that students will later be assigned to write themselves. This is similar to asking students to steal from writers in that they are (at least theoretically) reading with an eye toward their own writing. Rather than focus on individual writerly techniques that they can imitate, this use of model texts asks students to look at the structure of the piece or the conventions associated with a particular genre.[44] Here are two examples of survey responses related to providing students models of a specific genre or style of writing:

> We read examples of the kinds of essays they would be writing--descriptive narratives, researched arguments, etc. I subscribe to the theory that students should read models of the genre in which they will be writing.

> If I'm teaching prosody, it makes sense to use metered poetry. If I'm teaching the personal essay, it makes sense to use other personal essays . . . as models. The same can be said for the teaching of other genres.

Although these two uses of model texts—as templates to steal from and as examples of genre—needn't be mutually exclusive, nearly every instructor who mentions using model texts in the survey refers to *either* one use or the other, but not both. Instructors assign these texts in the hopes that students will read them as models of writerly decision making and/or as models of genre, but it's uncertain whether instructors are teaching students *how* to read this way and use texts for these purposes.

The two instructor responses that describe encouraging students to read for writing strategy each use the word "approaches" or "strategies" and refer to students using these strategies in their own writing. Another instructor explains that "[w]hen teaching the essay as model, I've found that allowing them to break down the essay, to focus on structural choices, to actually 'map' the essay out, how it moves, how it builds, is the most instructive tool for their own writing." These responses describe promoting a specific way of looking at texts—Reading Like a Writer—whereas the numerous survey responses alluding to assigning models texts as example of genre don't usually mention

[44] I'm well aware that there can be overlap between these two—that certain writerly techniques may be a direct result of the larger structure of the piece or a conventional aspect of the genre. I make this (somewhat artificial) distinction because instructors at UM reported these as two distinct strategies, and it therefore seems problematic for me to conflate them.

any kind of explicit classroom instruction.[45] The closest is one instructor who writes, "We read models of what students will write and break down what those writers do and how they do it." What, exactly, this breaking down of the text entails is something the instructor doesn't share.

There is a potential problem if instructors aren't showing students how to read model texts as examples of genre, because as Don discussed during our interview, students don't necessarily know how to use the texts to improve their own writing:

Don: I'm [teaching model texts] in a way that's not beneficial to most students, because for me – for me problems in writing have mostly been solved by doing more reading . . . when I feel like I'm having problems with some portion of the novel I'm writing, I kind of solve that problem by reading a lot of things that I think either have a similar kind of prose, or are organized in a similar way. And so with my students, they say, "I'm not quite sure how to write this kind of paper." For me, the answer is, "Well you need to read more in the genre. So okay you're having a problem understanding what an analytical essay is, because you've never read any." So here is a little bit of outside reading you could do . . . this is the species of the thing. And I don't think they do that. And maybe they do that, but it's not enough to kind of see models.

Don's comments suggest that students don't naturally turn to reading as a way to improve their writing, something that conflicts with how many instructors try to improve their own writing. Every single instructor participant expressed the view that reading and writing are connected activities and several referred to the idea of using one to improve the other, but students may not recognize this reciprocal relationship.

Don argues that instructors must go beyond simply providing model texts as genres of writing because students won't necessarily recognize the genres on their own:

Don: So I guess one kind of big shift is that a professional essay, as a model for what I'm looking for – using those is kind of like a fundamental part of the course, has *not* been all that effective . . .

[45] None of the instructors specifically mention Reading Like a Writer. Perhaps it isn't surprising that instructors are less specific about how they ask students to read model texts as examples of genre because Reading Like a Writer simply isn't intended as a way to examine genre: it's a means for identifying *individual* techniques and authorial choices that can be imitated or replicated. A combination of attention to writerly strategy and attention to genre conventions while reading *is* possible, however, and later in this chapter I offer Tawnya's pedagogy as a successful example of how to teach students to read for both simultaneously.

> [I]t seems like the way that they're learning form and how to put thoughts together is not the way it kind of would come naturally to me . . . it can't be like whoa, look at these four models. Let's just do what they're doing. They can't really – can't really see what's happening in those pieces. I think they see an analytical essay and like – I use the word analytical essay because you know it is a kind of genre. You know but to them it's totally *not* a genre, and I think they're kind of blind to most of what is happening.

Don suggests that students are ill-equipped to use model texts effectively on their own because they often don't know how to use them in the ways that the instructor wants them to. This view is confirmed by at least one UM student who explained in a survey response: "I am not very motivated to read for this course because I never really know what to look for in the reading."

After conducting his own study of student writers using model texts, Peter Smagorinsky reports "that the typical student is not up to the formidable task of teaching him- or herself these composing procedures" (173-174). Smagorinsky sounds a warning when he writes: "Simply reading a model piece of writing . . . is insufficient to teach young writers how to produce compositions . . . most novices need more direct instruction" (174).

Another instructor interviewee, Tawnya, attempts to provide the kind of direct instruction that Smagorinsky recommends by being very explicit with students about potential connections between their reading and writing assignments. Here is how Tawnya describes the connections between reading assignments and writing assignments in her course:

Tawnya: For both of the papers they've done so far, I've given them readings that do what I'm asking them to do, with the hopes that when they sit down . . . they can re-read it and say "Okay, how can I use this as a template for my writing?"

Interviewer: And when you say "ask them to do," you mean readings that are demonstrating a genre or something?

Tawnya: Right, so the first one was a descriptive analysis, and the second one was the review, due tomorrow. And then for the third one as well, which is more of a standard argumentative paper, I will do the same, so that they can use it as a template or whatever . . .

Tawnya uses these examples of genre to try and establish connections between students' reading and their writing, as the following exchange reveals:

Interviewer: How effective do you think, in your experience, this idea of assigning text as models or genre types or so on, has been with the students? . . . Do you feel like that's working pretty well, or how has that worked out?

Tawnya: Yeah, I think it does . . . I've seen four drafts and they've been pretty strong, so I feel like that's been successful.

Interviewer: . . . How explicit are you with students about how you imagine these readings and writings connecting?

Tawnya: I'm pretty transparent . . . I gave them the assignment sheet for paper two that said you will be asked to write a review, here are the four parts of the review . . . And we talked about it and I said now, also, for next class I want you to read these four reviews I put on C-tools and think about how they are doing the things that I'm asking you to do . . . and how well they're doing them, and we'll talk about that in the next class. Both be thinking about what you're going to see, and how you're going to be able to do these things that I'm asking you to do . . .

Interviewer: And would that be a pretty typical mode for your class, where the students would know their writing assignment ahead of time and in some ways you're encouraging them to read the text with that assignment in mind?

Tawnya: Uh huh

By encouraging students to use these texts as a template and read with an eye toward their own eventual writing—to read them as examples of the specific genre or form they will be writing themselves—Tawnya helps students to connect the reading they do to their writing tasks.

Her belief that reading in this way is helping students improve their writing is supported by the survey responses of her students. In response to the student survey question, *Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing?,* Tawnya had the highest total number (14) and percentage (82%) of students say yes. The following three responses are representative of how nearly every student in her

class mentioned the benefit of reading texts that serve as models for their writing assignments:

> The readings are useful because they typically display the style of writing that needs to be utilized in the upcoming paper. For example: in preparation for writing a critique of a live performance, we will read different styles of critiques from various periodicals.
>
> The reading done for this class is helpful because it usually relates to a paper we are going to write. This makes the process of writing papers easier by giving students a reference.
>
> Yes, I do because the readings we do are often the same as the paper we are writing. When we discuss the readings we look at things they have done well and we might want to do in our papers.

The key to Tawnya's success, however, is that beyond merely assigning model texts in the same genres that students will be writing themselves—something suggested by the first response—the class *discusses* these model texts with an emphasis on the writerly strategies and techniques represented by that text—something suggested by the third response. Tawnya speaks with the students about how they should be reading the model texts and combines the two most common uses of model texts reported at the University of Michigan: she asks students to read model texts for both writerly strategy they can steal and as examples of genre.

While observing Tawnya's course, I witnessed firsthand a class-wide discussion of the writerly strategies and techniques employed in a published text that also served as a model of the essay genre. Tawnya initiated discussion of the assigned essay by telling students: "I thought maybe we could go through this part-by-part and talk – obviously this is pretty different from what you have to do in your next paper in some ways – but he is doing an analysis and his use of detail, his ability to state his thesis and what he's thinking should hopefully help you."

She then directed the students to re-read the first paragraph. When they were finished, she asked the class: "What did you think of this introduction? Why was it either effective or ineffective at pulling you in as a reader?"

Throughout the discussion that ensued, Tawnya pushed the students to explain in specific detail why they did or didn't find the introduction effective. She also led students to examine some of the specific writerly choices the author had made. For

example, she asked the class to consider the pros/cons of only discussing two areas of the country (Franklin County, PA & Chevy Chase, MD) in an essay dealing with the polarization of America. Two students offered responses to this question:

Student 1: I thought the pros were because he only focused on to two places he could go into more in-depth analysis of the places, but because he only focused on two places, while maybe fundamentally red and blue states are still there, there are still differences everywhere. So if he wanted to make a more specific essay he should focus on those two, but if he wanted to get a really good grasp of the difference between red and blue he should have covered more ground.

Student 2: I think it works for his purposes because these places are so polar opposite.

Both of these students respond insightfully to the author's strategy of only covering two locations in the essay, particularly the first student who offers an alternative strategy that the author *might* have used as well as a rationale for that alternative.

A bit later in the same discussion, Tawnya asked the students to look at a specific metaphor operating in the text, and told them that they too could use a metaphor to help structure their next paper. She said, "This is another kind of strategy you can use in papers is coming up with a metaphor that describes what you're trying to say. So you analyze your performance, and then you come up with a clever way of expressing it to your audience." With this move, Tawnya directs students' attention to a specific technique operating in the model text and tells them explicitly that they can make a similar move in their own writing. It's difficult to imagine a more straightforward way of connecting the reading and writing that students do.

Implications

I present Tawnya as a successful example of teaching reading through the use of model texts for a couple of important reasons. First, she assigns students to read model texts with the *dual* purpose of having students read for writing strategy/technique and providing examples of the genre that they will eventually write themselves. She prompts

students to use the model texts in both ways simultaneously, whereas the majority of instructors at UM describe assigning model texts for only one purpose or the other.[46] This means that Tawnya's students get direct instruction in how to use the model texts for both purposes, each of which can be helpful as they think about their own writing. Second, she *demonstrates for her students* how she would like them to read, and while doing so emphasizes some of the connections between the reading they are doing and their own writing. She has considered how her reading and writing assignments connect with each other and makes an effort to help students recognize those same connections.

While every instructor surveyed expresses the belief that reading and writing are connected activities, few instructor report being explicit in addressing those connections with students. A survey question asking *How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?* elicited the following responses:

> Good question. I don't think I have addressed this connection explicitly.
>
> The connection between the two is one that I suppose I demonstrate more than talk about explicitly.
>
> I'm not sure I teach that connection explicitly, though I believe the connection is made obvious by writing assignments and studies of texts.
>
> I don't draw connections explicitly, but I constantly tell them that the best way to improve their writing in a given genre is to read a lot in that genre.
>
> I'm not sure that it's something I teach directly. This may be a fault on my part. Instead of telling them the connection is important, I assume they already know or they'll see the connection as we work toward reading texts objectively.

A reoccurring theme throughout some of the survey responses is that instructors don't teach the connections explicitly and/or that they *assume* the connections are already clear to students. As one instructor claims:

> This connection is not something necessary to parse. First of all, the students realize that by reading and questioning texts, they will better engage in analysis which will directly translate into their own writing.

[46] It is reasonable to assume that some of these other UM instructors, like Tawnya, are using model texts for both purposes, but simply chose to stress one purpose over the other in their survey responses. It is also quite possible that instructors may be teaching in ways that emphasize both goals without having theorized this teaching to the point that would lead to an explanation.

This instructor's response implies that students are able to recognize that "reading and questioning texts" will "directly translate into their own writing" without any intervention on the part of instructors. There is a tremendous assumption in this response, one that directly contradicts Don's assessment that students don't necessarily see reading as a way to improve writing. Sometimes students arrive the first day of class with the idea that being a good reader helps someone become a good writer, but in my own teaching experience I've seen no evidence that they are aware of *specific* ways that reading connects to writing. As Sally said during out interview, "I assumed today, since we're talking about narrative and they're going to be writing narratives, I assumed that [a connection between the course reading and course writing assignments] was evident. But I think we assume a lot of things, and shouldn't."

Sally goes on to say a bit more about why it's important for instructors to make connections between reading and writing explicit to students:

Interviewer: To what extent do you think about that connection?

Sally: The reading, I believe, should always tie into what we're doing.

Interviewer: And when you say "what we're doing" you mean the writing assignments?

Sally: It means like the modes, the writing assignments. I don't think that I always make that explicit to the students? . . . I think earlier on I made it more explicit, but I think that that's something that I should continue to make explicit.

Interviewer: Why? Why do you think that's worth doing or important?

Sally: . . . Well, one: Buy in . . . I mean student motivation, and in terms of doing the reading, they can understand why it's valuable because I've made that explicit to them. It's not valuable just because I've told them to do it. It's valuable because it's going to be applied.

According to Sally, if instructors explicitly teach reading and writing as connected activities students are more likely to complete assigned reading because they recognize

its value in relation to the rest of the course—students don't have to settle for instructor's suggestion that reading is valuable.

A few surveyed instructors seemed to recognize that perhaps they should be more explicit about the way(s) they would like students to read. One instructor writes: "I don't know that I'm ever super-explicit with them about an approach to reading, which I probably should be." Another instructor denies teaching students a particular kind of reading or reading approach, but admits that "I should probably come up with something more systematic than I currently do."

In his interview, Don explains how he made the mistake of assuming students would know how to read in particular ways without him teaching them how:

Interviewer: How explicit would you say you are, either in that week and a half or throughout the course, about how you want the students to read?

Don: Uh huh. Not explicit enough, because I thought that if you kind of simply instructed the students to read with a pen or a pencil – to read with a pen or a pencil in hand, that it would kind of *make* them into kind of more analytical readers, because they would be kind of parsing the text up into different parts. But instead it seems that – you know they take the pen or pencil, and they just kind of do the same sorts of reading with meaningless hieroglyphics on the side. So it's not like putting a pen into somebody's hand makes them into a critical reader . . .

Don's comments suggest that simply instructing students to "read with a pen or pencil in hand"—merely *telling* students to read in a certain way or to adopt a particular approach—probably isn't enough to ensure that they actually read (or know *how* to read) in that particular way. As Sherry Linkon points out, "If we want our students to develop the ability to read, research, and analyze cultural texts, we need to employ more strategic, deliberate methods of teaching" (248). Or as John Bean explains it, drawing upon a metaphor of fishing:

> Armed with a yellow highlighter, but with no apparent strategy for using it and hampered by a lack of knowledge of how skilled readers actually go about reading, our students are trying to catch marlin with tools of a worm fisherman. We have to do more than take our students out to sea. We have to teach them to fish in the deep (133).

One way to teach students how to read—as demonstrated by Tawnya—is for instructors to model some of the ways they want students to read during a guided discussion of assigned texts. This is a different conception of modeling in that the guided discussion of an assigned text—perhaps even more than the text itself—becomes the real *model* for students' learning. This strategy was also discussed in the survey data. As one instructor writes, "We read together in class, we do close-reading exercises, we also talk about the relationship between reading and writing. Explicitly, I have core texts that my students read and we discuss these in class, so that our discussions serve as models for how to form an argument and write a paper." Another instructor states: "I try to model the kind of reading I hope students will be able to do. I think it is important for teachers to model reading that is driven by careful, critical thinking." In addition to serving as a model for how to form an argument and write a paper, this type of classroom discussion can model the ways that instructors want students to read assigned texts; the guided discussion of a text becomes every bit as much of a learning opportunity as the student's independent reading. As one student explained in his/her survey response: "The readings themselves are not that helpful. It is the discussion about the readings . . . that is useful." Another student writes, "After reading the articles each week, I believe it is the discussion that really helps me with my writing." A third student writes: "While I read the pieces I ask what does this have to do with making me a better writer, but when we talk about them I learn about ways to improve. Much more than a book would teach."

Instructors can also model for students how they themselves read. As Louis Menand put it in a recent *New Yorker* article: "Teachers are the books that students read most closely" (112). In response to the survey question, *How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?*, one instructor writes: "I mention it as often as possible. Specifically when we read a text that is difficult or seems particularly opaque, I walk them through how I read the text, what comments I wrote in the margins, and hopefully how taking the time to read methodically will help them write methodically." John Clifford claims that instructors' "reasons for reading and writing in particular ways should be made explicit, both to demystify how the teacher is always able to see more and to provide a vantage point from which students can situate themselves knowingly within the theoretical debates raging the professions. Students can

then understand that they can choose an approach that makes sense to them" (259). John Bean suggests a similar strategy for instructors when he writes:

> Students appreciate learning how their professors read and study. You might take some class time to discuss with students your own reading processes. One approach is to create little research scenarios to help students see how and why your reading strategies vary (137).

In such a discussion, instructors might highlight the kinds of questions they themselves ask while reading. They might also discuss with students how different purposes for reading—say, trying to determine the author's intended message or looking for writerly techniques they can try out in their own writing—call for different reading approaches. For example, in his essay, "A New Framework for Understanding Cognition and Affect in Writing," John Hayes explains how readers who are reading their own written work in order to *revise* are far more likely to attend to features of the text—bad diction, wordiness, and poor organization—than readers simply hoping to *comprehend* a message (1413). Hayes' longtime colleague, Linda Flower, notes that the "distinction between reading to compose and reading to do something else matters because different purposes push the reading process into distinctive shapes" (6). Instructors can talk with students about how readers often have very different purposes for reading, and this can lead directly into a discussion of why, specifically, instructors want students to read a particular piece or read using a particular approach. Explaining to students why they are reading assigned texts is important, for as Katherine Gottscalk and Keith Hjortshoj note:

> [T]he impression that college students do not know *how* to read usually results from the fact that they do not know *why* they are reading assigned texts. This lack of purpose, in turn, results from the way that reading is typically assigned in undergraduate courses: as an undifferentiated, solitary activity to be completed for the vague purpose of knowing what the text contains (125, emphasis original).

In their article "Studying the 'Reading Transition' from High School to College," David Jolliffe and Allison Harl explain how valuable it is for instructors to discuss with students the purpose(s) behind having them read. They write:

> An instructor dedicated to improving connected, engaged reading throughout the curriculum could explain explicitly to students how the documents that they must read relate directly to the aims and methods of learning that are most valued in the course environment, show clearly how students' reading for the course should

> be manifest in projects and examinations, and demonstrate specifically *how* students should read the course material (614, emphasis original).

Jolliffe and Harl emphasize that instructors should "demonstrate specifically *how* students should read the course material," and this means more than simply assigning model texts and hoping that students will recognize how their reading can influence their writing.

By explaining "explicitly to students how the documents that they must read relate directly to the aims and methods of learning that are most valued in the course environment," instructors can build motivation for assigned course reading by discussing how such assignments will contribute to students' learning and achievement of the designated course goals. The hope is that as students learn about and improve in the specific reading approaches that instructors are teaching them, and as they come to understand *why* they are being asked to read in those ways, their motivation to read will increase. Jill Fitzgerald states plainly: "People must feel some urge, some motivation, some reason to read or write. If there is no urge, there is no reading and writing" (84). John Guthrie and Allan Wigfield make a similar point that "a person reads a word or comprehends a text not only because she can do it, but because she is motivated to do it" (404).[47] Research supports these claims. In their review of reading scholarship, Patricia Alexander and Tamara Jetton argue that:

> Learning from a text is inevitably a synthesis of *skill, will,* and *thrill* (Garner & Alexander, 1991). Few would argue with the premise that readers need to be skilled. Yet, learning from text cannot take place in any deep or meaningful fashion without the learner's commitment (i.e., will). Nor will the pursuit of knowledge continue unless the reader realizes some personal gratification or internal reward from this engagement (i.e., thrill) (296).

For significant reading and writing to take place in the first-year writing classroom (or anywhere else for that matter) individuals must combine their skill with a desire to perform the given activity. In explaining to students how "reading for the course should be manifest in projects and examinations," as Jolliffe and Harl suggest, instructors make

[47] Guthrie and Wigfield's "Engagement and Motivation in Reading" is an excellent text for anyone interested in learning more about how motivation affects reading. In this book chapter, the authors discuss the concept of "engaged reading" and how an individual reader's motivation dramatically influences their level of engagement. They also discuss various forms of reader motivation and offer an overview of the research on both reading engagement and reader motivation.

the move to connect course reading to future assignments and tests; in first-year writing, this means explaining a direct connection between course reading and course writing assignments. Establishing this sense of connection between the assignments, and between reading and writing, in the classroom may be a motivating factor for students.

First-year writing remains a chore in the minds of many students—a necessary hurdle on the track toward graduation. However, many students *do* recognize the value of writing and learning to write. In his extensive interviews with Harvard students Richard Light found that "[o]f all skills students say they want to strengthen, writing is mentioned three times more than any other" (54). Light maintains that "[t]his is not just a Harvard story. My visits to other campuses have convinced me that the findings in this book apply broadly" (11). This means that instructors in first-year writing may have a real opportunity—an opportunity not found in many (if any) other courses—to dramatically improve the dynamic in the classroom by drawing on students' own recognition of the importance of writing as a way to motivate them to do the work of the course.

While many college students already recognize the value of learning to write (as evidenced in Light's interviews), it's doubtful that students experience this same level of motivation toward course reading. As Jeanne Henry notes about her own experiences of teaching reading at the collegiate level: "My freshmen were very much *able* to read; they were simply disinclined *to* read" (64, emphasis original). Jolliffe and Harl make a similar point regarding their research on student reading at the University of Arkansas: "In short, we discovered students who were extremely engaged with their reading, but not with the reading their classes required" ("Studying" 600). Increasing students' motivation to read hinges on helping them to understand that reading and writing are connected and course reading can assist them in their writing—an activity that many students already value.

For instructors, the recognition that both reading and writing depend on student motivation might lead us to interrogate why we teach reading and writing the way we do for understanding our own pedagogical purposes makes us better able to explain these goals to students. As Diane DeVido Tetreault and Carole Center write: "In order to persuade students that they need to read, first-year composition teachers have to understand the purpose of reading assignments in our teaching practices" (46). This

understanding should start at the very beginning, when instructors are designing their course and developing their syllabus. Often instructors start by selecting texts with little consideration for how these readings will connect with writing assignments, leaving these instructors themselves uncertain about how the two connect. Richard Larson provides a more useful way to envision sequencing assignments: "Think of a sequential program not merely as a chronological arrangement of assignments but a structure in which assignments are closely related to each other in service of the goals of the program" (212).

Four of the five interviewees I spoke with about course design mention selecting texts as the very first step in course design, often picking these texts based on a course theme. Exploring a theme in class can be a useful way to make the assignments feel connected around an idea or issue and less like a series of isolated exercises, but it's also important to sequence the course so that the reading and writing assignments directly connect with each other. During our interview, Kath mentioned that as she prepared for her next class she would think more at the outset about how the readings and writing assignments were connected:

Interviewer: [W]hen you were then putting the course together and so on, how much did you think about the ways that the readings would connect to the writing they were doing?

Kath: Not as much at the start as I did when I was realizing that I didn't know exactly what I wanted my writing assignments to be. It was only toward the very end of planning the course that I started figuring out . . . I started the wrong way, like, by saying okay, this unit fits the theme of binaries really well, by talking about gender and then talking politics and then talking about religion and then race. That's how I started, and then I went back afterwards and was like okay, what assignments will fit these texts? . . . Next time I would . . . I think I would do that first, and try to figure out the major assignments that I wanted – the progression of writing assignments first.

Interviewer: And why would you, if you were going to change it or do this again, why would you start with the writing assignments?

Kath: I think because . . . I'm realizing that my class potentially gives students the opportunity to do is connect their writing to stuff that they're already interested in or reading about in other classes . . .

One of the surveyed instructors also speaks to this idea of drawing on what students are already interested in designing his/her assignments:

> I'd like to give students more opportunities to build the personal or academic reading they already do into their writing. One kid already followed a punk webcomic, so it was easy for him to write a paper about it; it made me realize that having assignments tailored to students' interests, majors, or other class assignments would be a good way to build the reading they ALREADY do into the writing they do for me. I still have to work on developing assignments that build on knowledge students already have.

If the goal is to generate motivation for assigned reading, then one potential place to start is by considering the reading that students already do. The most common reason given by students for why they were or weren't motivated to read for class—by far—was how interesting and/or engaging they found the texts. Twenty students mentioned that they were motivated to read for the course because the texts were "interesting," while five others wrote that they weren't motivated to read because the texts were "uninteresting," "not engaging," or "boring." Drawing on the kinds of reading that students already do or the sorts of topics they already care about is a useful way to generate student interest, and instructors should think about ways they might do this as they design their course.

One way that I have tried to do this in my own composition courses is to allow students to select, bring in, and present some of the texts we will be reading, and they often bring in the kinds of texts they are commonly engaged with outside of class. (I will return to this issue of text selection with regard to workshop in Chapter 6.) For example, in my argumentative writing course (a sophomore/junior level writing course open to students in all majors), we spend the first two-thirds of the semester discussing what constitutes an effective argument. I then assign the students (usually in groups) to locate and present on an argument that they feel successfully meets the criteria we have been discussing all term. I also ask that the text be *interesting* for us to talk about: they should find something they find compelling and that they think will interest their classmates. A similar move could be made in first-year writing by asking students to locate and bring in interesting texts that do (or don't) conform to principals of good writing that have been

discussed in class, or that serve as effective examples of particular genres. Instructors could talk about specific purposes for writing—say to raise public awareness about an issue—and then ask students to locate and bring in interesting examples to discuss in class.

It's difficult, if not impossible, for instructors to know all the different kinds of texts that students read outside of class; asking students to be responsible for brining some of those texts into class takes pressure off instructors. Similarly, it's impossible for instructors to determine all the various ways that students read, but instructors can ask students about the reading they already do in order to help students see how reading occurs in many different contexts and that these contexts call for various kinds of reading. Such conversations become an opportunity for instructors to discuss and promote the particular reading approach(es) they want students to adopt.

The second most common reason given in the student surveys at the University of Michigan for why students were or weren't "motivated to read" for their first-year writing course was how well the texts they read connected to the other work of the course, particularly their writing assignments. Five students specifically mentioned being motivated to read because the reading helped them with their writing assignments, while nine other students mentioned that they weren't motivated to read because the texts seemed unrelated to the rest of the work of the course. There is probably no course in all of academia in which the need to motivate students is greater than in the universally-required first-year writing course, and these findings suggest that students' motivation to read in this course is directly related to the extent to which they find that reading relevant to their writing.

Here are a few of those student responses:

> Yes, I am motivated [to read] because all of the readings relate very directly to the essays that we are assigned.
>
> Yes, because I know that we discuss the details in class and then are able to expand on them in our essays.
>
> I am not motivated to read for the course because I feel the reading does not relate to what we talk about in class. It does not help me improve my writing so I am not interested in it.

> I sometimes know that the reading will not connect to the class, which makes it harder for me to focus and concentrate on the reading.
>
> I am not motivated to read for this course because the readings are unrelated to what we are writing about.
>
> Not at all. Why should I feel obliged to read when the assigned readings offer no help or advice on the assignments?

Again, these responses suggest that students are more motivated to read assigned texts when they believe that such reading connects to other aspects of the course including their writing assignments. Instructors considering how best to design a writing course or how best to teach reading would do well to think carefully about how the reading and writing assignments fit together and how they can teach reading in ways that make these connections clear.

As previously noted, every instructor at the University of Michigan who participated in my study expressed a belief that reading and writing are connected activities. Several of them attempt to teach these reading-writing connections by encouraging students to read for writerly strategies and techniques they can steal or by assigning model texts as examples of genre. At this point I want to complicate these two strategies a bit further.

Student survey responses indicate that both strategies can be effective ways to teach reading-writing connections. Yet, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, when instructors at UM employ either of these two strategies they are almost exclusively doing so in combination with published texts. It is impossible for me to know for certain whether any instructors *do* use student texts, but every single example in the data that specifies a type of text indicates using published work. (Even when neither kind of text is directly specified, the surrounding comments almost always make clear that students are reading published texts.)

Could these two strategies be used in combination with student writing?

In the case of the first strategy—stealing writerly strategies and techniques—the answer is *absolutely*. In my own writing classes, for example, I assign students to read certain texts—both published and student writing—using RLW, and in certain writing assignments I require students to try out a strategy/technique that they identified while reading a published text *and* a strategy/technique that they identified while reading their

peers' work. I assign this for papers later in the semester after students have had an opportunity to read some of their classmates' work. Even in a classroom primarily full of struggling writers, there is always *something* that students can identify in their classmates' writing—a particular way of starting a sentence or paragraph, a particular ways of phrasing or introducing an idea—that they can try in their own writing.

In the case of assigning model texts, the answer is *yes*, but it can be more difficult to use student writing. Depending upon the genre, it may be difficult to find an effective student text to provide as an example. It may be difficult, in particular, to find examples of more experimental structures and styles. (This is in part because instructors rarely assign students to do experimental writing.) One of the wonderful things about assigning model texts as a means to connect reading and writing, is that implicit in this formulation is that students will write in the same genres that they read; students shouldn't be left to write about innovative or experimental texts in the same useful, but "non-innovative" (if not outright stale) academic paper genre so common in read-to-write pedagogies. If instructors are willing to ask students to write in various genres, and are willing to collect exemplary student writing over the course of the semester, they can build a collection of student-produced texts that (with the students' permission) can be assigned alongside published texts as examples of effective writing. During that initial phase of designing the course, instructors could decide to assign student writing as model texts, perhaps even including these texts in a course pack and listing them on the syllabus. As one surveyed instructor writes: "I'd like to believe that you could use student-produced or published writing for any class activities. However, it seems noteworthy that I don't assign a coursepack of student writing in my class." Making the move to put student-produced texts alongside the work of published authors in a coursepack could send the message that both types of texts are equally worthy of careful study.

No matter which strategy is used, learning how to teach reading-writing connections is crucial. As Gary Ettari and Heather Easterling note:

> If we, as the next generation of university professors, can't more clearly articulate not only the different kinds of reading we demand from our students but also how student reading and student writing inform and contribute to one another beyond such stale truisms as "reading helps your writing," we risk not

> only oversimplifying a complex and important issue, but also compromising both our students' education and our own as professionals (20).

Instructors should be demonstrating for students how they want them to read, and teaching reading in ways that illuminate connections between reading and writing. Instructors can speak with students directly about how they want them to read particular texts and how that reading informs and connects to the writing they will do. One surveyed instructor sums it up well: "I've only recently come to see that explicitly teaching reading strategies is probably one of the most important things I can do to help students write better."

Chapter 6

Reimagining Workshop: A Pedagogical Strategy for Teaching Reading-Writing Connections

> "Students leave high school, if they are lucky, with some notion of the 'writing process.' Even if they don't feel like competent writers, many of them have worked in groups or experienced peer editing sessions. Most have some idea of revision (or what I would call editing). However, their understanding of reading process is very literal and limited."
>
> -Donna Qualley, "Using Reading in the Writing Classroom"

The previous chapters have argued why it's important for the field of composition studies to attend to the reading and the reading instruction that happens in first-year writing; surveyed relevant scholarship and elaborated on five different approaches that instructors might use to teach reading in the classroom; shown the benefits of instructors being explicit with students about how they want them to read; emphasized the importance of teaching connections between the processes of reading and writing; and elaborated on two specific ways that instructors at the University of Michigan attempt to teach those connections. In this final chapter I explore the idea of using writing workshop—a pedagogical strategy borrowed from creative writing and regularly used in first-year writing courses—as a way for instructors to teach reading and writing as connected activities in the first-year writing classroom.

Though workshop has a long history of use in both creative writing and composition courses, it's generally understood as a way to improve *writing*. Even the name "writing workshop" potentially obscures the fact that workshop involves as much (if not more) reading as it does writing. As a pedagogical strategy for teaching reading, workshop holds great potential because it asks students to read with an eye toward improving their own writing, and it integrates reading and writing tasks in ways that can help students to recognize important connections between the two meaning-making

processes. In *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, Paul Dawson points out that "the pedagogical practice of the workshop is fundamentally one of critical reading" and that "what enables the writing workshop to function is not a theory of writing, but a theory of reading" (88). Dawson goes on to note that "because it is seen as a writing workshop, the critical principles which underpin and allow discussion (reading) tend to remain invisible and undertheorised" (88).

The reading that takes place in workshop needs to be theorized, and this chapter is an attempt to begin that process of theorization. Workshop is already being used extensively in first-year writing at the University of Michigan and at other institutions. During analysis of the instructor surveys I found that workshop was mentioned repeatedly by instructors—especially in conjunction with student writing.[48] As a strategy that emphasizes connections between reading and writing and encourages students to read with an eye toward their own writing, workshop is well-suited for use in the first-year writing classroom and addresses many of the issues raised throughout this dissertation. Yet, traditional workshops are often too narrowly focused: participants concentrate on the search for error and only read student-produced texts. Composition studies needs a broader vision of how workshop can operate in first-year writing. This re-envisioned workshop is one in which both published and student-produced texts are read and discussed. It's a space where students have some say in the selection of texts to be read, and are encouraged to read for what is both problematic and effective in all texts. Such a workshop poses a number of potential benefits that I detail throughout this chapter.

The chapter begins by focusing on the origins of the discipline of creative writing as one primarily concerned with the reading/critique of exemplary literature—goals that contributed directly to the development of the writing workshop—in order to argue that workshop has always been (and continues to be) a pedagogical strategy designed to have students read in particular ways. The next section draws on data from the University of Michigan to present how the two main goals that instructors provide for workshopping in first-year writing—cooperative learning among students and helping students improve

[48] Workshop is a required component of teaching first-year writing at the University of Michigan, discussed at length during new teacher orientation, which helps explain the abundance of references to workshop in the data.

their writing—both reinforce the idea of workshop as a strategy for reading. The chapter then considers critiques that workshops may marginalize certain groups of students, and responds with an explanation of how workshopping published texts might help to alleviate these concerns. The chapter ends by addressing my third research question of whether instructors ask students to read published and student-produced texts in the same ways, and elaborates on what these findings mean for efforts to re-envision workshop.

The History of Creative Writing as a History of Reading

It may seem odd for contemporary readers to think of workshop, and creative writing more generally, in terms of reading rather than writing, but as it developed in America the field of creative writing was first and foremost a program for reading and critiquing literature. This section investigates the origins of creative writing, and its original emphasis on the reading, appreciation, and criticism of published literature, as a way to show that workshop—as it developed in response to these goals—has *always* been used to ask students to read in particular ways.

The person most often attributed with the development of creative writing as a field/discipline in American colleges and universities is Norman Foerster, a professor of English at the University of North Carolina from 1914 to 1930 and then at the University of Iowa from 1930 to 1944.[49] D.G. Myers, a creative writing historian, claims:

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[49] While this chapter is primarily concerned with creative writing and writing workshop as they developed and spread throughout American colleges and universities, it is also worth noting that both creative writing and workshop have roots in earlier progressive educational reform efforts. Mark McGurl writes that "[w]e owe the widespread use of the term 'creative writing' to a particular phase of the progressive education movement in the late 1920s, when the practice of self-expression became paramount in progressive theory" (85). McGurl also notes that "[c]reative writing as we know it is the product of a historical moment when traditional concepts of formal education as an occasion either for externally imposed mental discipline or the conveyance to the student of standardized subject matter came under sustained attack" (82).

D.G. Myers suggests that "what would come to be known as the 'workshop method' grew out of progressive ideas about teaching" (116). Myers goes on to explain that the "workshop method, or the communal making of poetry, was an effort to apply the principal of manual arts training to the study of English" (117). This idea of manual arts training—"the education of artists through their work"—first emerged in the 1870s around the figure of Calvin Woodward and was later reinterpreted by John Dewey (117). In Dewey's conception of schooling and manual arts training, the "theory of knowledge [as] its own end was dislodged by a theory of knowledge as the means to productive activity. *Work* replaced *leisure* as the prerequisites of education (118). In the progressive classroom "empirical methods were supplanted by the communal, workshop method (or what progressive educators liked to call the 'project method') and inquiry gave way to creativity" (118). Paul Dawson suggests that this switch in emphasis to work from

> Although it was taught here and there, haphazardly, creative writing as a university discipline was not instituted as the unforeseen consequence of a dozen haphazard experiments—or even three dozen—operating under nearly as many aliases. It was a deliberate effort carried out for an articulate purpose in a single place. As such it was founded by Norman Foerster (124).

Foerster is now associated with a movement that came to be known as New Humanism, a contingent of critics opposed to the scientific-oriented research taking place in many English departments throughout the 1930s. In the lead essay to his 1941 anthology, *Literary Criticism*, Foerster writes that literary criticism during this time "has reflected the scientific spirit of our age. Like literature itself, it has been realistic, appropriating the aims and methods of the natural sciences. It has aimed at truth, especially factual truth; it has sought exactness and thoroughness; it has cultivated detachment and impersonality; it has risked tediousness and triviality" ("Study" 3).

The New Humanists were "devoted to the development of criticism as an attempt to establish humanistic and traditional standards for identifying universal values which can be used to judge literature" (Dawson 69). In this vision of English studies, creative writing courses were primarily opportunities to read and critique literature. In his own contribution to *Literary Criticism*, Wilber Schramn suggests that whatever valuable knowledge students learn about writing in the workshop is secondary: "The students who are graduated from the university, whether or not they have published good writing, will have a chance to see much *in* literature, as well as learn much *about* it" (211, emphasis original).

The method students were supposed to use to "see much *in* literature," according to Foerster, "would seem to be obvious: by learning, on the highest plane, how to read . . . the scholar is a man who reads literary works but reads them with superior understanding and judgment . . . he must also and especially read them closely" (24). *Close reading*, the reading approach discussed in Chapter 2 and associated with New Criticism, was to be the means through which creative writing courses would develop student-critics.

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leisure was the key aspect in the development of writing workshop. Dawson writes: "The idea of craftsmanship . . . is the necessary precondition for workshop. For, in keeping with its original meaning of a place of labour, the workshop was also in part a challenge to the Romantic poet for whom ease of composition, and spontaneous excitements rather than voluntary will, was the mark of genius" (82).

The initial expansion of creative writing in American colleges occurred hand-in-hand with New Criticism. D.G. Myers asserts that Foerster, along with the New Critics, intended to:

> break out of the purely literary domain and carry literature, *studied purely as literature*, into a social and cultural institution—the university. Like proletarian literature, creative writing and the new criticism were attempts to end separatism in American literary life—not by socializing literature, but by making the social institution of the literary study more purely literary (139, emphasis original).

Allen Tate, the famous New Critic, suggested that if "the course in Creative Writing in the university can be made into a special kind of literary study, it will fill the void left by the disappearance of the old discipline of rhetoric" ("What" 184).

According to Dawson it was "the practice of critical reading as an aid to writing, which developed from handbooks and courses on short-story writing and was reformed by the New Critics, that enabled the pedagogical development of the workshop" (74), and that as "Foerster provided a rationale for the place of Creative Writing in Literary Studies, the workshop developed and became the dominant mode of teaching because of the influence of the New Criticism" (76). Dawson cites Hugh Bredin's description of what this reading practice—what Bredin calls *practical criticism*—looked like in the classroom: "[T]he close and attentive reading of literary texts, usually poetry, usually by a small group, under the guidance of a tutor" (76).

What, then, explains the rift that has developed over the past several decades between creative writers and other English department faculty at many colleges and universities? As Myers acknowledges: "In the hallways of the English departments, exchanges between poets and scholars are marked by mutual hostility" (4). R.M. Berry agrees that a spilt has grown between creative writers and the rest of English studies, and that a creative writing program today "is less likely to consider itself a sub-specialty of literary scholarship than to define itself in contrast to literary scholarship" (66). Berry continues:

> Creative Writing's historical trajectory since 1930 has not paralleled changes in literary criticism but has followed more closely the steps taken by American professions such as law and medicine during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in their attempt to establish and control their vocational practices. That is, within the university, Creative Writing's energy has gone

> toward establishing its professional autonomy, not its intellectual affinity with humanists or with any other group (67).

Myers agrees that Creative Writing's moves toward disciplinarity and then professionalization contributed to this rift, but he also offers an ideological explanation:

> Creative writing . . . has been an effort to treat writing as an end in itself. As such, it has acted with hostility toward two different conceptions of literature and writing, which for convenience might be labeled the scholarly and social practical. On the one side are those for whom literature is a primarily a genre of knowledge . . . On the other side are those for whom literature or writing is a social practice that serves either dominant powers or the forces of opposition . . . Historically, creative writing has beckoned a third way . . . it was founded by writers . . .[as] an effort on their part to bring the teaching of literature more closely in line with the ways in which (they believed) literature is genuinely created (8).

Dawson argues that it was the eventual establishment of the writing workshop as the chosen model for creative writing that led to the separation of creative writing from the rest of English studies. He suggests that the workshop has "become the only place within the university for writers to assert their literary authority as writers. However, this authority has been directed towards the narrow goal of training other writers, rather than a more general contribution to the academic study of literature" (85). In addition, it was workshop through which "potential publication came to be seen as the main aim of creative writing" (81). Over time the goals of writing workshop became more about producing writers than about appreciating literature.

In a short article in the February 15, 2008 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jennifer Howard discusses the Association of Writers and Writing Programs' (AWP) newest guidelines for teaching creative writing, and draws attention to the increased emphasis on teaching *reading* in creative writing classes. Although AWP revises their guidelines every year in response to member feedback, Howard cites the executive director of AWP, David W. Fenza, as saying that the latest rounds of revisions represent a substantial departure from past approaches (A14). Howard goes on to write:

> The new guidelines are designed to respond to growing anxiety among creative-writing instructors, brought on by recent reports citing a decline in reading and what many consider the tenacious grip of deconstruction and other modes of literary theory.

> The revised guidelines put reading front and center. And they suggest that writing programs may now be the best place to cultivate the humanistic outlook traditionally found in literature classes (A14).

This move on the part of AWP might be seen as an effort to return to creative writing's origins and once again embrace the humanistic study of literature. The first paragraph under the new guideline's heading of *General Curriculum* reads: "Undergraduate creative writing course should emphasize reading literary works. Students cannot fully understand the possibilities of a genre or realize their own potential without a grounding in literary tradition and broad exposure to various literary models" ("AWP" 20). Point number four in the guideline's *Methods* section reads: "Close reading of literary works and student manuscripts is the central mechanism in creative writing courses. Close reading enables students to learn craft strategies, discern authorial intentions, and deepen the pleasure they take in the work. Creative writing courses are especially concerned with the way literature explores ambiguity, tension, and figurative language, to generate meaning" (18). The constant mention of the terms "literary" and "literature" in these passages—combined with the reference to "close reading"—suggests that perhaps creative writing has come full circle to once again focus on the reading and criticism of literary texts.

Creative writing has certainly changed over time—placing greater emphasis on the potential for participants to produce publishable work or to be trained as teachers of writing—but workshop, as the pedagogical strategy that serves as the foundation for creative writing, has remained consistent in its emphasis on reading and criticism. Despite possibly being "the only place" in the academy for writers to assert their authorities as writers, workshop has always been, and remains, a hub for reading. As D.G. Myers writes: "Creative writing remained a discipline of criticism, but the criticism was neither 'know-how' nor an absorption in technical detail . . . Creative writing was the knowledge of how literary texts are made, how they work" (159).

Creative writing never stopped focusing on the reading of texts, but what *did* change was that over time the focus switched from a focus on reading published works widely regarded as "literature" to an exclusive focus on work produced by students in the workshop itself. It's now the case that the farther one climbs on the creative writing ladder—through advanced undergraduate creative writing courses and into MFA

workshops—the less attention to published texts one will find. Published texts often fall away completely in graduate MFA workshops. Perhaps this is what the new AWP guidelines are responding to; concerned that other faculty in the English department have abandoned the teaching of literature in favor of theory, creative writers feel they must take it upon themselves to provide students with a "grounding in literary tradition."[50]

This strict focus on reading and responding to writing produced by participants in the workshop is the common feature than underlies workshops in *both* creative writing and composition courses. It is exceedingly rare (as I discuss later in this chapter) to find students workshopping published texts; instead they read and respond to the writing of their peers. The primary difference between workshops in creative writing and composition courses has to do with the *genres* of the student-produced texts being read and discussed. Writing assignments in creative writing courses usually ask students to produce fiction and/or poetry (and, increasingly, creative nonfiction essays), while assignments in composition courses more often ask students to complete academic essays, reading responses, rhetorical critiques, and other forms of "academic writing."[51] The result is that a diverse range of genres are being workshopped in collegiate writing courses. The common elements in all these different workshops are reading and responding to texts, regardless of genre.

The "central mechanism" (to borrow AWP's expression) for learning "how texts are made" is the reading done in workshop, and this same mechanism is at work in both creative writing and composition workshops—including in first-year writing. Thirty-three different instructor survey responses mention workshop, despite there being not a single question about workshop on the survey. It's also common practice for composition programs to discuss the use of workshop during new instructor training; this was the case for me at the University of Pittsburgh, Point Park University, and the University of Michigan, as well as for many of my UM colleagues who have taught

[50] For a more detailed look at Fenza's position on this topic see his "Creative Writing and Its Discontents published on the AWP website in February of 2001.

[51] This term "academic writing" is a contested one, and it's not entirely clear what characteristics of a piece of writing allow its inclusion within this category and what characteristics keep other writing out. I hope, however, that readers understand the general distinction I'm making here between what are often called the "literary" genres and the "academic" genres of writing. I also recognize that there is sometimes blurring within individual courses; a creative writing instructor might assign academic reading responses, or a first-year writing instructor might assign students to write poems.

previously at other institutions. In first-year writing, and in every other course that uses it, workshop remains an important pedagogical strategy for asking students to read in particular ways.

The Workshop as a Strategy for Student Reading

While I hadn't asked any questions specifically about workshop on the instructor survey, I quickly realized during my initial analysis of the survey responses that there were many references to workshop. As a result, I made it a point to ask about workshop in each of the eight instructor interviews, and all eight of the interviewees reported spending time workshopping in first-year writing. Two main goals for workshop emerged during these conversations: workshop as cooperative learning and workshop as a way to help students improve their writing. In this section, I explore how each of these goals hinges on the reading that students do in workshop and reinforces the idea that workshop is useful as a pedagogical strategy for teaching reading.

It is important to have a sense of what writing workshop is before trying to understand how it serves as a reading pedagogy in first-year writing. In "Materializing the Sublime Reader," Chris Green describes the typical workshop format:

> Copies of student work are passed out to the class at the end of one class period and are commented upon the next. Generally, the class is spliced equally so the group as a whole may give roughly equal time to all the work submitted, and students are also encouraged to respond both verbally and in writing. Their commentary for exploring revision is guided by some established craft jargon useful for helping students go beyond basic writing difficulties (157).

Though the organization of writing workshops varies from course to course, as well as within individual courses, the main element is that members of the group read and critique each other's writing (as opposed to published texts) not only to improve the text under consideration but also to learn about the ways that texts are composed. The class instructor may serve as the facilitator of discussion, but beyond that duty usually assumes the common role of a participant or allows the students to conduct the workshop on their own. If there is any center in the workshop it is usually the text under discussion and not

a person; in most workshops the author is asked to remain silent until the very end, sitting quietly and listening to the critique of his/her work.

Two very common arrangements are the whole class workshop—facilitated by the instructor—in which every student in the course reads and comments on *one* particular text in a large, collaborative discussion, and small group workshop in which students are broken into smaller groups to manage their own critiques and share their work. Whether they preferred using whole class or small group workshops, each of the eight instructor interviewees dedicated time throughout the semester for workshop.

The first major purpose of workshop put forth by interviewees has to do with cooperative learning among students and the development of a sense of community through workshop. It make sense that in a course consisting primarily of first-year students new to the university that instructors would emphasize the cooperative, social benefits of workshop: the writing course becomes a place for students to have their views acknowledged, respected, and responded to by their peers, and through this process students develop a sense of collegiality or perhaps even a sense of community. These feelings of respect and collegiality can be especially comforting for students who may be struggling to adjust to college life.

Sally is one of the interviewees to address how this can be important for students:

Sally:

> I think back to my college experience, and the friendships that I've developed that were safe enough that I could go to someone and say, "Can you read this?" And my hope, and I've shared this with them, is that they'll make some connections in this class that will last beyond the term, and that when they have a paper and they're struggling in the future, that they have someone to go to as a result of workshop with each other . . .
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> . . . there's a good feeling amongst them and a willingness to be open, and I hope that they take in that they're receiving a lot of good input from the reading of others. But then also giving a lot of good output so that they're learning to take criticism and give it at the same time, with the hope that they'll be able to generalize and do it on their own.

Sally's own collegiate experience of developing a network of potential readers proved useful to her, and she intends for workshop to help her students develop these same types

of relationships. Sally also notes the value of students "giving a lot of good output" based on their reading, and of "learning to take criticism" from readers of their work.

In her interview, Sharon also discusses the cooperative aspects of workshop:

Interviewer: What are you hoping that the workshop accomplishes?

Sharon: Well, I hope they learn from each other. That's my goal. I hope they're able to recognize where they can improve their own writing and just be sensitive to different ways of writing, different styles of writing.

Later in the interview she adds:

Sharon: There are some students who have learned from each other, because I had one student, she was like, "You know, after I saw what my peers wrote, I went back and totally revamped my essay."

Sharon's desire for students to learn from each other is predicated on the understanding that they will read each other's writing and *respond*—both in terms of providing feedback and in terms of their own writing—to what they noticed and reacted to while reading.

It is a hallmark of workshop that students learn from each other, not just from a teacher. Suzanne Wade and Elizabeth Moje write that "[s]tudies have demonstrated that encouraging students to generate and respond to one another's texts contributes to enhanced content learning and positive growth by helping students learn social skills necessary for communication, cooperation, and collaboration" (619). Richard Beach maintains that in workshop:

> [S]tudents can construct a shared stance that transcends each of their own individual perspectives. In doing so, they experience disagreements, misunderstandings, conflicts, resistances, and divergent understandings that create dialogic tensions between their own and others' stances . . . In anticipating potential reactions, they expand their responses. Knowing their partner might disagree with their position, they formulate a counter argument. Or they pose questions of their partner . . . they are learning how to respond socially to others' messages. They are learning whether or not to reply, what they will say, how they want to present themselves, and how they perceive their audience . . . They are learning to contextualize both literary texts and others' responses according to their own and others' social agendas (237-238).

Peter Elbow agrees that asking students to serve as readers for their peers has a positive impact: "[O]ften enough, readers play the crucially active role in the story of how writers get better. That is, the way writers learn to like their writing is by the grace of having a reader or two who likes it . . . Having at least a few appreciative readers is probably indispensable to getting better" ("Ranking" 200). Tawnya expresses this same idea during her interview:

Tawnya: I think, first of all, just the idea of reading your peer's work, it can both make you feel better in the sense that "Oh, they're having the same problems as me" but it can also make you kind of kick it up a notch. Like my first two students whose papers were workshopped are two of my really strong writers and they submitted some very good drafts that were a lot better than the first papers I read for a lot of the other students, so I sort of got the sense that the other students were reading these drafts going "Oh, this is really good. Like I need to kick it up," so I think there is that kind of saying, "Okay, here's what your peers can do. You can do this too."

Tawnya's description of what was occurring in her class as a response to workshop conveys a fundamental principal underlying writing workshop as it is used in collegiate writing classes: *the reading done for workshop is intended to help students improve their own writing.* This is the second major purpose of workshops discussed by instructor interviewees, and it too connects directly to the idea of workshop as an important strategy for student reading. Here is how Dianne expresses it during her interview when I asked her why she used workshops:

Dianne: I've actually found that when students are reading each other's work and having to read it critically that it helps them with their work.

Interviewer: Their writing?

Dianne: Yes, what they're writing . . . I find that having students do the peer reviews, the reading and getting other student's works and giving them written feedback and having other students read *their* work and giving them written feedback is strengthening the writing on both ends.

Sharon also mentions the benefits of students reading their classmates' work:

Interviewer: So before the workshop, you give the students this sort of list of questions to look for, things to address, in their peers' work. Do those questions and reading for those specific things - looking for those specific things - do you imagine that that helps their own writing?

Sharon: I would hope it helps their own writing only in that when they look back at their writing, they're able to see: Is my thesis clear? Is my evidence supporting my thesis? Do I have organizational issues with my writing?

Interviewer: It sounds like the idea is that they get this practice in reading their peers' writing, so that they can look at their own writing in that same way –

Sharon: Yes.

Interviewer: – and potentially address those same questions?

Sharon: Mm-hmm.

Mason makes a similar comment about the advantages of using workshop in first-year writing on the tail end of his comments about the need to teach students critical reading skills:

Mason: Then the hope is, that they will transfer those critical reading skills over to their own writing, and the bridge there, I think, is a little easier to see in my class, and I know a lot of other classes, the *workshop* is that bridge. So by critically reading other people's writing, they first of all see how other people handled the assignment and maybe can go back and look at their own piece with fresh eyes.

Workshop as it is being imagined and employed by these instructors allows students to see themselves as contributing members in a community of writers. While they read, respond, and discuss texts for class they are learning to examine and critique texts with a lens—essentially Reading Like a Writer—that can (and hopefully will) be turned upon their own writing. For example, the version of "critical reading" that Mason describes is similar in many ways to what is presented in the topography as Reading Like a Writer, and he contends that it is a combination of RLW and workshop that will help students improve their writing. The reading skills students develop to provide their classmates

with helpful comments and suggestions are intended help them recognize what is and isn't working in their own work.

Potential Drawbacks of Workshop

Despite the apparent advantages of workshop discussed by interviewees and scholars, some critics insist that workshop marginalizes certain groups of students. In exploring the idea of using workshop to teach reading in first-year writing it is important to attend to these criticisms. I argue here that reimagining the workshop as a strategy for teaching reading, and particularly as an opportunity for students to workshop published texts, may help alleviate some of these concerns.

In his article "Lionizing Lone Wolves," Mark Dressman writes of workshop that "this seemingly liberal approach . . . tends to reproduce the cultural capital of the dominant class, to which reading is intimately tied . . . in other words, the uneven levels of achievement between . . . mainstream and nonmainstream students" (248-249). He contends that mainstream and nonmainstream (which Dressman defines as lower income, largely minority) students have different ways of authoring and interpreting literate expression. Ultimately, according to Dressman, differences in the communicative styles of mainstream and nonmainstream students, and workshop instructors' failure to account for those differences, explain the latter group's lack of success in workshop.

Mainstream students have an advantage in workshop because "children who have acquired low-context communication styles would be more predisposed to develop independently . . . and with minimal coaching begin to develop, through their reading, a grasp of school discourse conventions" (250).[52] Dressman argues that nonmainstream students' problem in workshop is that they don't necessarily share agreed-upon linguistic conventions with mainstream students. For the nonmainstream students, quite often "writing was literally 'talk written down'; meaning was not embedded in the context of the text itself, but within the text as a cue for an oral performance" (250). As a result,

[52] Dressman defines "high-context" communicative styles as those in which "words contain only a portion of the intended meaning of any communication; the rest of the message is embedded in the total context in which it is delivered." In "low context" styles "a significantly larger portion of the meaning of any communication is contained in the words themselves" (249).

many nonmainstream students choose to encode or decode meaning differently from their mainstream counterparts, and as the literacy demands of the classroom become more and more decontextualized, they fall further and further behind their mainstream peers.[53]

Rosalie Morales Kearns—in her scathing critique of contemporary creative writing workshops—also suggests that workshop marginalizes certain students. Kearns explains that of all her concerns about workshop (concerns that serve as the foundation for her larger critique of graduate creative writing programs and their prescribed curriculum), it is the convention that the author must remain silent while the other participants discuss the text—the so called "gag rule"—that is "the most troubling aspect" (793). She explains that when she first encountered the gag rule as an MFA student it struck her "as a distinctly raced practice—specifically, a Euro-American practice," and also as rude, because "the expectations about spoken interaction" that she had "internalized as a woman of Puerto Rican descent" included "the understanding that staying silent or imposing silence is unacceptably rude" (794). She goes on to write that that "the faultfinding, gagged-author workshop model serves to marginalize those uncomfortable with its adversarial, authoritarian practices" (800).

In *The Program Era*, Mark McGurl discusses the similar sense of isolation that fiction writer Sandra Cisneros felt (and later wrote about) as one of the only women of color in her graduate MFA workshops at the University of Iowa. McGurl quotes Cisneros' explanation that in workshop she "was suddenly aware of feeling odd when I spoke, as if I were a foreigner . . . . I couldn't articulate what was happening, except I knew I felt ashamed when I spoke in class, so I chose not to speak" (334). In his assessment of this marginalization, McGurl finds it "ironic that an institution dedicated to the discovery and cultivation of the literary voice of apprentice writers was instead experienced by Cisneros as a literal silencing of the speaking voice in the classroom" (334).[54]

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[53] Dressman acknowledges that "it can still be argued that these difficulties are easily mitigated: that the opportunities for social interaction built into most workshop approaches could provide viable social context for meaning making that are similar to the sociocultural context of literacy in nonmainstream homes," but he rejects this position, claiming that the various social practices associated with workshop "bear little resemblance in purpose or participant structures to the practices of nonmainstream students' home communities" (256).

[54] Despite this loss of her literal voice in workshop, Cisneros attributes the workshop at Iowa with helping her to develop her literary voice. She writes: "It wasn't until Iowa and the Writer's Workshop that I began

Clearly some students seem to be (or at very least *feel*) marginalized in writing workshop. While Dressman believes that this marginalization is caused in part by differences in the ways that students read, he also suggests that reading—specifically having students read published texts—may be a way to combat this marginalization. He argues that if an instructor is "to meet the needs of not only her nonmainstream students but her mainstream students: she must actively reproduce communality in her classroom" (260). This means that, among other things, "everyone must take a share in the meaning making from the same communal texts. Either in whole class or in small group settings, students need to read the same trade books, essays, or other textual materials and, on occasion, either collaboratively or individually, write on the same topics" (260).[55] What Dressman leaves out of his solution is actual workshopping; he doesn't prompt students to read, discuss, and take apart the published texts in workshop in the same ways that they do student-produced texts.

Chris Green makes a similar recommendation that students read published work in class. Just as Dressman sees a problem with how nonmainstream students perform in workshop, Green sees a problem with the way that the writing students produce in workshop is received in their home communities. Green writes that "creative writing remains a text-centered approach that privileges an author/ity, that, no matter the good will of its intentions, effaces speech communities with an urgent stake in life beyond the construct of the workshop. The way students are taught to write is unintelligible to the community of experience about which they write" (160).[56]

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writing in the voice I write in now, and, perhaps if it hadn't been for Iowa I wouldn't have made the conscious decision to write in this way . . . I only knew that for the first time in my life I felt 'other'." (qtd. in McGurl 336). Mark McGurl explains the benefits of Cisneros feeling "other" during workshop in this way: "Only when confronted with other students, students with different bodies of experience to draw from in their writing, could Cisneros begin to compete with them on the ground that they and she shared . . . the literary field as it was made concrete in the university classroom" (337). While this insight about Cisneros' development as a writer does nothing to assuage the genuine discomfort that certain students may feel as a result of workshop, it does suggest that along with the discomfort might come some unexpected benefits.

[55] It's interesting to notice that Dressman's proposal that students read the *same* texts doesn't allude to the possibility of reading the same student-produced texts. Isn't reading the same texts exactly what students are doing when they come together in workshop to read and discuss the work of a classmate? A closer look at Dressman's argument, however, reveals that the kinds of texts he emphasizes—such as trade books or essays—are *published* texts and not writing produced by students themselves.

[56] While I'm sympathetic to the point that Green is making here, it's an exaggeration (and perhaps a bit condescending) to suggest that readers located outside of the university will find students' writing "unintelligible."

Green believes that it is crucial for workshops to adopt a "cultural studies" approach, and explains that in his workshops: "Once we attempt to construct the context of reading, we may begin to read poems as events rather than as texts, as something used rather than as something written and read" (168). Yet, the method for developing this notion of texts as "events" is hardly revolutionary: Green requires students to read published poems. Green suggests that a good way for students to "gain critical distance" is to "read poetry from past cultures to provide a background against which our ideological assumptions may stand out" (167). He provides the example of the class doing a comparative reading of an Elizabethan sonnet against a contemporary sonnet. Green admits that his class spends only about half their time in actual workshops (presumably reading student writing) and that the remaining time is dedicated to reading and discussing literature. Like in Dressman's course, the students don't actually workshop published texts.

Rosalie Morales Kearns also advocates "the close study of published work" and explains how this process operates in her undergraduate courses:

> I generate discussion by asking the student to identify something specific in the story, even if just a phrase or a sentence or some narrative choice the author made, that contributes to that larger effect (humor, vividness of characterization, etc.). Soon enough the students start to notice much more specific things, and in each case I follow up by asking, "And what's the effect of that?" . . . Eventually they don't need me to ask my perennial question, "What's the effect?" but simply include that analysis as part of their observations of technique (802-803).

What is so interesting is that although Dressman, Green, and Kearns all raise legitimate concerns about the ways that workshop may marginalize certain students—and all three advocate reading published texts for class—none of the three scholars make the connection that actually *workshopping* published texts might serve as a way to empower students who feel marginalized and silenced to assume a level of authority in the workshop and to begin to voice their ideas about texts that may otherwise seem beyond critique.

In his June 2009 *New Yorker* article on writing workshops, Louis Menand comments that creative writing programs and workshops are based on "the theory that students who have never published a poem can teach other students who have never published a poem how to write a publishable poem" (106). Menand's assertion (whether

he actually believes this or not) suggests that students in workshop—never having written a published pieced of writing themselves—have no position of authority from which to offer useful suggestions toward publication. Yet, as evidenced by the success of countless workshops, students *do* maintain authority in writing workshop: it is their extensive experience as readers of various kinds of texts that prepares them to comment usefully on writing. Whether they've ever had their writing published or not, college students have been reading, interpreting, and evaluating published texts for years. The authority they derive in the workshop is based on their skills as readers. It can be empowering for students to break apart the work of published authors because they are prompted to draw upon their expertise as readers to assess the work of established writers who may otherwise appear beyond critique. Workshopping published texts becomes an opportunity for marginalized and/or silenced students to raise their voice during workshop.

Workshopping Published Texts

I'm using "workshopping" as a verb to describe what is essentially a combination of using Reading Like a Writer within the workshop setting. In my conception of workshop and workshopping (discussed in depth throughout the rest of this chapter), readers use RLW to take apart both published and student-produced texts in an effort to understand how those texts were composed, what is successful in the writing, what could be improved upon, and what alternative choices might have been made—all with the ultimate goal of applying what has been learned to the reader's own writing.

Yet, despite repeated references throughout the data to workshopping student texts, only three instructors in either the surveys or interviews make any mention of workshopping published texts in first-year writing. Lorrie's approach will be discussed at the end of this section, but for now I present Mason and Sally's responses.

Mason: [F]or the first workshop, we typically do a model workshop . . . The first is a published essay, and we'll sort of mock up the way of responding to a piece . . .

> . . . I just have always begun with – with a published piece . . . I think it's valuable for students to be able to look at a published piece and think about the alternatives. I suppose the way to think about it is that a piece of writing isn't necessarily completed or isn't necessarily finished just because it's been published. It makes them think about their writing and the revisions process as sort of a work in progress.
>
> . . . I think the overarching goal for me in that initial workshop is more from a teaching standpoint in terms of this is *how* your workshop should function when you look at student work.

Though Mason's class workshops a published text, they only do so once at the beginning of the semester in order to learn how "workshop should function." Instead of serving as an opportunity to break down published texts through workshop and imagine potential improvements that could be made through revision, the published piece serves as a less risky or more inviting way to elicit student responses in order to teach the basic conventions of workshopping.

Sally also refers to workshopping published texts:

Interviewer: [D]o you ever have students workshop published texts?

Sally: Yeah, we did look at a couple texts that really pressed their buttons, but that's why I chose them . . .

Interviewer: And did you follow that standard workshop format that you used for the student papers?

Sally: No, but we probably should have . . .

Interviewer: Why? What would be an advantage of that?

Sally: Well, just because someone's published doesn't mean they're perfect, and writing is always a process.

Both Sally and Mason refer to the idea that workshopping published texts might teach students that no piece of writing is ever perfect or completely finished, and thus hold an advantage over solely workshopping student produced writing. Yet Mason reports operating the workshop of published texts for different reasons than when workshopping student-produced texts, and it's unclear whether Sally was actually workshopping at all.

In addition, they don't mention making any specific efforts to *teach* students that published texts remain potentially unfinished.

Along with Mason, Sally, and Lorrie, three surveyed instructors mention the idea of helping students to critique published work as way to imagine those works as unfinished, though none of the three specifically refer to workshop:

> No piece of writing is ever done and I'd like them to approach published text as work in progress.
>
> I do try to push my students to find areas that they disagree with in published essays, so that they can see how they would improve (or change) the essay if they had written it themselves.
>
> [F]or some published readings I try to devote a few minutes to student suggestions for the author. This tends to be couched as "what other choices might the writer have made?" Students often feel that if a piece is published, it's perfect. Approaching a text as a work that could withstand some critical commentary, that the writer's choices aren't all golden, and gets students thinking about their writing more as a process-oriented task rather than an end-result task.

These three instructors ask students to approach the published texts as unfinished and worthy of (at least theoretical) revision; the students of the second and third instructor are also asked to consider what it would take to improve the published pieces, a reading and thinking process that could look very similar to how students are asked to read and consider their classmates' writing during workshop.

Again, only three of the total 65 instructors surveyed and interviewed make any mention of workshopping published texts, while the idea of workshopping or workshopping student writing more generally was mentioned 33 times in the survey data alone.[57] In response to the survey question, *Are there any classroom activities or assignments that are better suited to use one type of text as opposed to the other--either published writing or student-produced writing?,* several instructors suggest that workshopping is more effective (or only effective) when used with student-produced writing. Here are several survey responses that attest to this point:

> Workshopping works better for student produced b/c it is in process.

[57] All eight of the interviewees discussed workshop because I asked them specific questions about it in response to the reoccurring mention of workshop in the survey data.

> [W]orkshops work better with the student-produced writing because they're usually quite engaged during workshops and more able/willing to apply the discussion to their writing.
>
> I would say just broadly that if we are doing a workshop where students will share formative feedback that will be used to revise their papers, then I think it makes sense to use student-produced writing, though I've also used published writing to help teach the conventions of writers' workshop.
>
> Student work is good for teaching students the revision process. And in this way the workshop method is still very successful and useful. First, by being asked to write a thoughtful, in-depth critique of someone else's work students will inadvertently begin seeing the weaknesses in their own work by noticing those same weaknesses in the work of others. Similarly, the process helps them develop a more objective eye. And perhaps most importantly, it will teach them that writing is a process that takes place in stages.
>
> I don't know what the point of workshopping a published piece of writing would be.

Only two instructors offer a counter perspective. One surveyed instructor writes that "workshop and close reading and discussion are equally valuable for both [published and student-produced texts]" and another that "there is no reason a student paper couldn't be 'taught' like published work, and no reason a published paper couldn't be workshopped." Though neither of these instructors makes it clear whether they workshop published texts in class, both seem open to the idea on a theoretical level.

As discussed in Chapter 1, debate over the proper kinds of texts to be read in first-year writing has generated a fair amount of attention in composition studies, and these conversations are relevant to the idea of workshopping published texts in class. The argument is sometimes made that dealing exclusively with student-produced texts places a priority on student writing and valorizes student work in way that is rare within the academy. In *Terms of Work for Composition* Bruce Horner writes: "[T]he institution's role in the production of student writing and the circumscriptions academic institutions typically impose on the circulation of student texts guarantee the low value of student writing in relation to other writing" (50). Using student texts during workshop helps reduce this devaluing of student writing by making such work the focus of serious classroom attention. By sharing their writing with a classroom of peers, students break out of the normal education cycle where their work is produced for, and read by, the instructor and no one else.

The argument can also be made that students learn more from workshopping each other's work because their writing is usually less polished than published writing; the types of mistakes located in student texts are more representative of the kinds of mistakes that student writers make. As one instructor wrote in a survey response: "Sample student papers are suited for helping students learn to critique each other's writing more than published texts. The kinds of writing issues they're looking for in peer papers are naturally more similar (i.e. elementary)." While I appreciate this instructor's point, implicit in this response is the idea that workshop is primarily an opportunity for students to diagnose what is *not* working in a text. As I discuss in just a few pages, many instructors at UM narrowly associate reading student-produced texts with a search for error.

Another instructor writes that student papers are "better than using a 'professional' piece of writing because the rhetorical moves are easier to see and the students feel more comfortable 'judging' this kind of work because it's something they can also do." This response states that most students are more comfortable critiquing and judging student writing than published texts. I would argue that if this is true, it is true at least in part because instructors aren't giving students the same opportunities to critique published texts or asking them to be as critical of published writing as they are of student writing. If workshop is one of the main strategies that instructors use to teach students to read and critique texts—and these workshops deal exclusively with student-produced texts—then it's only logical that over time students will be more comfortable critiquing student texts because they've had more instruction and practice.

The challenge for instructors is to facilitate the workshop of published texts in ways that help students feel confident in taking the texts apart to see how they are composed. In her 2006 book, *Reading Like a Writer*, novelist Francine Prose discusses her growing awareness that students don't know how to read published texts in ways that help improve their writing. Prose claims she was "struck by how little attention they had been taught to pay to language, to the actual words and sentences that a writer had used" (10). In response, Prose changed her pedagogy. Instead of "attempts to talk about how it *felt* to read Borges or Poe," she "organized classes around the more pedestrian, halting method of beginning at the beginning, lingering over every word, every phrase, every

image, considering how it enhanced and contributed to the story as a whole" (11, emphasis original). In making this change, Prose encouraged her graduate students to adopt a Reading Like a Writer approach because she believes that "[f]or any writer, the ability to look at a sentence and see what's superfluous, what can be altered, revised, expanded, or especially cut is essential" (2).

In *What Our Speech Disrupts*, Katharine Haake describes her own attempts to attend to the various ways that students read for workshop. Haake asks "that in their talk about a story, any story, students begin by describing the very assumptions that preceded and informed their reading" (106). By asking students to be reflexive about their reading practices and the assumptions that underlie those practices, Haake attempts to help students "gain some understanding of their own situatedness" just as Chris Green suggests. Haake's approach is more substantial than Green's move to assign published poetry, however, because she directly challenges students to interrogate the reading approaches they use in workshop.

Like Dressman, Green, and Kearns, Katherine Haake assigned students to read published work, but the published texts were selected by the students themselves. Haake writes that "[e]ach story submitted to the workshop was presented in a portfolio, a kind of 'sandwich,' with two of the writer's most beloved stories—one by a living author, and one by a dead author" (107). She hoped that by submitting published stories along with their own writing students would learn that writing "takes place in the highly particular context of all other writing, a conversation" (106). She explains that participants in the workshop "were not to make distinctions of value between the novice and the published work, but were instead to attempt to discover and articulate what held all three texts together" (107). This "sandwich" portfolio approach to workshop is admirable for several reasons.

First, it asks student writers to consider which authors have influenced them in order to assess how their own writing fits/doesn't fit into ongoing "conversations" initiated by those authors. It makes connections between their own reading and writing explicit.

Second, Haake emphasizes that the pairing of student-produced and published writing is not done to invite a comparison between the two types in terms of their relative value. The result of this non-judgmental pairing is that student writing and published writing are seen as deserving the same level of attention—of having the same value—so long as both types are workshopped and discussed in similar ways. Unfortunately, Haake provides no description of exactly how the class went about workshopping the sandwich portfolios. She states only that they "'workshopped' not only our own writing, but also other writers we selected" (107). It remains unclear whether they "workshopped" these published and student-produced texts in the same way. Were workshop participants asking the same questions and making the same sorts of comments regarding the two types of texts in each portfolio?[58]

Third, and perhaps most significantly, by allowing students to select the published texts to be read for workshop, those published texts appear more open to criticism than if Haake had selected them herself. One result of the traditional practice of instructors selecting the published texts to be read is that students know the texts have been selected for a reason, and drawing on all their previous school experiences, they know that texts are almost always selected because they are "good."[59] The texts discuss a particular topic in a compelling way or are exemplars of a certain style, genre, or technique that the instructor wants the students to read and learn from. They are often the work of famous authors the students may have heard of and are expected to revere. It's as if every text assigned by the instructor is perceived by students—at least to some degree—as a model text because students know that they are reading the texts because there is something good about them. Thus there is positive value applied to every text that an instructor selects based on that very act of selection. Assigning students to determine some of the

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[58] Haake reports that "midway through the semester, at my students' urging, we dropped the whole idea of the 'sandwich,' not as a failure, but as a way of giving in to the standard time constraints of a semester . . . [s]tudents wanted to work through more of their 'own' writing" (107). This reaction is unsurprising given that Haake was teaching a senior-level creative writing course. By that point in their academic careers most students have come to expect that advanced creative writing courses will consist entirely of workshopping student work. Each participant in Haake's workshop had submitted a sandwich portfolio and now the students wanted to spend more time discussing their own writing.

[59] It's also interesting to think of the selection process—or the *lack* of selection process—associated with reading student-produced texts for class. Students are usually assigned to read their classmates' work in preparation for workshop or at some appointed time in the semester, but rarely (if ever) are student-produced texts selected to be read based on the merit of the writing. In addition, student-produced texts are routinely assigned to be read without the instructor having previously read them him/herself.

texts to be read for workshop may free them to be more critical of the published writing. These are still published texts and sometimes the work of celebrated authors—attributes that undoubtedly carry a great deal of cache—but students don't have to worry about rejecting the instructor's choice of good writing and may be less likely to perceive the published work as inherently good.

In her article "Using Reading in the Writing Classroom," Donna Qualley discusses putting students into "reading groups" which work like "small writing groups" consisting of four or five students who meet every other week for the first two thirds of the semester to "workshop" the published texts they read for class (118). Qualley notes that these "[r]eading groups provide students with a shared experience, language, and frame of reference for talking about both reading and writing," and these conversations could surely be directed by an instructor to address writerly choice and technique (118). Similar to Haake, she also allows the group to select some of the texts they will read and discuss.

For instructors who—like Haake and Qualley—decide to give students a say in selecting some of the texts to be workshopped, this decision means they may be reading the texts for the very first time as they prepare to teach them or lead discussion, and this can cause some discomfort. Instructors won't know the texts well, and may not know exactly what they want to do with them in class. Yet, this may actually be an advantage because instructors are in the same position as most of the students who are reading the text for the first time; instructors' experience reading the text is more likely to be similar to students'. Instructors can determine what stands out to them as they read, and consider whether these are these likely to be the same things that students notice.

Freed from their familiarity with the assigned texts, instructors can pay attention to what is working well in the writing, but also note what is less effective and could be improved upon. Allowing students to select the texts to be read can not only begin to break the assumption on the part of students that the texts are automatically good, but it can also begin to break instructors' own habit—exhibited in so many of the survey responses—of discussing published texts solely in terms of what is effective. It may be that the instructor thinks the text selected by a student is poorly written, but such texts are suitable because the reading of *every* text should focus both on what is effective in the

writing and what isn't working in the writing. Surely some texts will be judged by the class as better or as worse than others, but the important thing is that this judgment is developed together as a class, and not implied by the instructor's selection.

Let me be clear: using student texts in first-year writing sends the important message of valorizing such writing, and I'm not questioning the advantages of using student-produced writing in workshop. What I *am* questioning is whether a sole focus on student-produced texts might have the unintended consequence of presenting published writing as static, fixed, and beyond student critique. It would only take a few workshops of published texts to begin changing students' perceptions of texts, to help them realize that published writing and student writing can be critiqued, revised, and improved.

One instructor I interviewed and observed takes this initial step by workshopping published texts in class. Lorrie describes one such workshop in her interview:

Lorrie: One of the first usage issues that I talked about was pronoun reference and making sure that your pronoun always has a clear antecedent and not putting your pronoun too far away from your antecedent and making sure that the antecedent is not ambiguous or generic. The exercise that we did as a class to sort of apply that was actually taking in a couple of paragraphs from one of the things that we had read that day and looking at all of the pronouns that they had used. There were several that the students thought didn't kind of obey the patterns that would have been most clear, so we rewrote that together, as a class. We rewrote the paragraphs.

Interviewer: Actually took the published writing and reformulated it.

Lorrie: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: Is that something that you have done more than once or was that sort of a one-time thing?

Lorrie: Yeah. We've done it a few times with different topics . . .

Interviewer: . . . [H]ow do you feel like that goes in the class, this sort of rewritings as a class?

Lorrie: I feel like it's *fun.* I mean, I think that they like it. It's nice because they can – someone can object to a change that someone else wants to make and they kind of have a space for negotiating what sounds best, which gives us a chance to talk about why. I

> don't know. I really like the idea of using things that are published and that seem to be static in talking about how we can make them into something different, which is what writing is all about.

In one of my observations, I had the opportunity to see Lorrie's first-year writing class work collaboratively to revise lines from one of the published readings they had been assigned. She used a laptop computer and pull-down screen to project the first page of one of the readings. She then asked the students to pick a sentence from the reading that could be revised, and opened up a new screen on the computer and moved that sentence into a word-processing program. Throughout the activity Lorrie would solicit suggested changes from students, make those changes in the word-processing document that was projected on the screen, and then the class would discuss whether the changes were an improvement or whether they made the sentence worse. Lorrie used these "workshops" of published texts at times throughout the semester, interchanging them with more conventional workshops of student writing.[60]

I noticed while observing the two sections of Lorrie's class that she was asking students to read published and student-produced texts in almost exactly the same ways. She prompted students to ask the same sorts of questions of each type of text, and their class discussion/workshop of each text focused on what was working well in the writing and what could be revised. What would happen if instructors asked students to read and engage with published texts in the same ways that they ask them to read and engage with student-produced texts, and vice versa? What if students were encouraged to ask the same kinds of questions of both types of texts?

Do Instructors Ask Students to Read in the Same Ways and Attend to the Same Types of Questions When Working With Published Texts as When Dealing With Student-Produced Texts?

Convincing instructors to teach students to read published and student-produced texts in the same ways may be a hard sell. Among interviewees, Sharon, Lorrie, Mason

[60] As I disucss later in this chapter, it woul have been ideal if the class workshopped the published texts in the exact same ways they do student writing—at least some of the time. Given what I observed in class and Lorrie's description of her pedagogy, I don't think it would take too much of a change to make this happen.

and Sally all say they ask students to read and question both kinds of texts in the same way, while Don, Dianne, Kath and Tawnya say they ask students to approach them differently. This even split among approaches is not found in the survey data, however. One survey question asked: *Are there any differences between the ways that you ask students to read the writing produced by their classmates and the ways you ask them to read published texts?* In their responses, 33 instructors said *yes* while only 17 said *no* (another 7 were unsure, or addressed related topics without providing a clear answer). This means that just under 2/3 of all the instructors who answered encourage students to read the two types of texts in different ways.

One of the most common reasons given for why these instructors ask students to read the two types of texts differently is because student-produced writing is explicitly unfinished and open to revision. Workshop is based on the premise that writing should be revised and that obtaining feedback from readers can help. Workshop participants enter into a tacit agreement that they will read and comment on each other's work, so long as that attention and effort is reciprocated.[61] Short of coming to the workshop in person, published authors have no way of holding up their end of this bargain. One instructor puts it quite succinctly: "When we critique published texts, the comments stay in the room and are never actualized. But, when we give feedback on student texts, we can see the changes that result from our comments/suggestions/readings."

This idea that students can revise their writing seemingly led one instructor to ask students to be more critical when reading their classmates' work:

> Sometimes when I ask students to read their classmates' work, I am asking them to provide feedback in a structured workshop, or to be an oral sounding board that allows a student to talk through ideas with a partner, or to just be an audience for expressive personal writing. In contrast, I don't usually have students provide feedback to published texts or, come to think of it, critique them too much.

Other instructors mention asking students to be more critical of student-produced texts when reading:

[61] In the workshops in which I've participated, I have always spent the most time and effort reading and commenting on the work of students who I knew would do the same for me, whether I liked their particular style of writing or not.

> For published essays, we dissect them paragraph by paragraph (and sometimes line by line) to understand the choices the author has made. Generally, we're talking about what's really effective in the piece and focused less on criticism.
>
> For published texts, we tend to focus on what's working well and spend less time with criticism.

These two responses are very representative of how many instructor participants describe asking students to look for what is working well in published texts while being more critical of student writing. Two other instructors seem hesitant in their responses, as if asking students to be extra critical of student-produced writing is a mistake:

> (I don't like to admit this). We are more critical of student writing, spending more time discussing what a student might do differently to improve their writing. We are more neutral (or even more positive) with respect to choices that other writers make.
>
> We're more critical of the student writing, which I'm not sure is a good thing. I take a workshop approach with student writing. Am less focused on the flaws of the published writing.

Throughout the survey data instructors repeatedly report asking students to attend to more basic sentence-level issues or search for error while reading student-produced writing. In contrast, they commonly ask students to read for ideas or writerly techniques they can try out in their own work when reading published texts. Here are excerpts from a couple of these responses:

> I ask them to read student work with an eye for syntax, grammar, precision, as well as strength of ideas and organization. I ask them to focus mainly on the ideas presented in the articles we read.
>
> Sentence level errors are best taught through student produced writing as well as common errors in argumentation.

Both of these responses reinforce the idea—found in so much of the instructor data—that students are encouraged to read published texts for larger ideas and what works well in writing, and read student-produced texts as an exercise in diagnosing error. Another instructor reiterates this idea:

> In reading published essays, I ask students to closely examine craft and what they can “steal” for their own essays. For their peers' work, we examine the essays on

> a more basic level: what is the argument? What's working in the essay? What's not working yet?

In this response the instructor encourages one of the two strategies discussed in the previous chapter—asking students to read for techniques they can steal and use in their own writing—but just like the instructors discussed in the previous chapter, he/she only associates this strategy with reading published texts. As students read the work of their peers they are examining these texts at "a more basic level."

Another instructor was very blunt in his/her explanation for why he/she asks students to read the two types of texts differently:

> There is so much wrong with [student] papers that I feel the conversations would have to be different to be honest. We focus on more basic things, generally--clarity of thought is a big focus.

Another surveyed instructor expressed doubts about the value of class-wide workshops using student-produced writing because he/she views such writing as inferior to published texts:

> [F]ull group workshops can be counterproductive: Instead of reading the work of writers who know what they're doing, who push the bounds of style and scholarship, students only read the work of their peers, which, no offense, ain't always at the highest level . . . How can you know what a dancer is capable of if you've never watched Baryshnikov on stage?

This instructor claims that workshopping student writing is "counterproductive" because that writing is of such low quality that students won't learn, or at least won't learn how to write well, from reading and discussing it. This instructor indicates that students don't "know what they're doing"—an obvious overgeneralization—and strongly implies that published and student writing are of such different level as to constitute two entirely different things.

During our interview Don also suggests that student-produced writing is fundamentally different from published writing:

Don: I feel that the conversations we had about professional text are not that useful in discussing the student papers, because we're – it is – it is a different species of thing. I used to think it would be sort of

> a fledgling version of this paper, but it's actually *different.* It has a different structure, has a different problems and it needs different food.

Don bases his explanation for asking students to read the two types of texts differently on his belief that student-produced writing is more error-prone than published texts:

Don: [T]he biggest difference is with the professional papers, we are observing what's *right,* and in the student papers, so little is right that we can't really do that. We are always like – looking to see what's wrong, and so they become different conversations. So I guess maybe some of the skills that they learned reading the professional papers don't transfer over because we're having a different conversation.

On one level, Don's assertion that published and student-produced writing are fundamentally different resonates with many instructors' experiences in the classroom. Student writers often struggle with sentence-level issues and make grammatical mistakes rarely found in published writing. Published texts often display structural techniques instructors could hardly imagine their most skilled student writers trying out. Student-produced texts come as bunches of stapled papers or as email attachments, whereas published writing arrives in glossy magazines, books, and on professionally-designed websites. Yet the perception of published and student writing as different also stems from their differing roles in the history of English studies.

As I explained in Chapter 1, the division between literary studies and composition studies is a relatively recent phenomenon, caused in part by increased specialization among professors within the new discipline of English. Once again, here is a quote from Nancy Nelson and Robert Calfee:

> As scholarship became more specialized, criticism was being attached to literature, and literary criticism was being established as a separate component of English. Even though some critical study was still included in composition courses, textual criticism was developing apart from any connection to students' own writing. Literature scholars were becoming responsible for the reading of texts, and those in composition were becoming responsible for the writing of texts (8).

It's worth noting that the process of textual criticism as it is practiced in most English departments developed almost entirely removed from any careful study of student

writing. Considering this exclusion, it's hardly surprising that many instructors today view published texts and student-produced texts as entirely different things, and that within the academy published texts are usually valorized over student writing. Most composition instructors have come through English departments that present published texts as the material of literary studies, and student texts as the product (or byproduct in courses dedicated to the writing process movement) of composition courses dedicated to writing.

Sometimes students learn to internalize the supposed differences between the two kinds of texts and read them differently as a result, a point raised by Lorrie during our interview:

Interviewer: Would you say that you are asking students to read in similar or different ways when they're reading the published text versus when they're reading the work of their peers?

Lorrie: I don't know that I'm asking them to read in similar or different ways . . . I think they certainly interpret it differently, just because they actually go through and edit their peer's papers too, so they not only give comments on the worksheet, but most of them actually go through and edit a hard copy or online. Obviously, they're not paying attention to that kind of detail when they're reading the published things.

Several instructors address this same issue in their survey responses:

> I don't think there are differences in the way I ask them to engage with both kinds of texts, but they of course end up reading their peers' texts more like editors.

> Students often see published writing as finished and the writing of their peers as in-progress. Because published writing is seen as more fixed and unchangeable, students read it differently, and they see their role as readers differently.

> I don't explicitly teach [the two kinds of texts] differently but I do assume that students will read their classmates' texts differently. The reason they're reading them is different—to help them write better papers. So they're looking for places where they're confused, for example, in order to give advice to the writer about clarity. With a published text they are sort of forced to adopt the role of learner, and assume that if they don't understand something the fault lies with them.

A student survey question asking whether students preferred to read published or student writing elicited the following responses:

> It is hard to compare the two. Our published readings are used for discussion while we proof our classmates' papers.
>
> I think that both are different. Published writing is more about analyzing and greatness while reading classmates' work helps me see what is wrong and how I can apply it to my paper.

Asking students to read published and student-produced texts in different ways and/or for different things reinforces the idea that they are different things, a view of difference that students are clearly picking up on.

Instead of seeing published and student-produced texts as entirely different entities, instructors might imagine them as writing at different *stages* in the writing process. Published texts have usually gone through a lengthy editing process through which many of the sentence-level and grammatical errors found in student writing are detected and corrected. In addition, plenty of students have developed their editing skills to the point where virtually no sentence-level or grammatical errors can be found in their writing. While there are undoubtedly writing characteristics (and yes, patterns of error) more commonly found in student-produced writing, there are always exceptions (the beautifully-written student essay or the impenetrably-dense published article) that reinforce the idea that published and student-produced texts are not actually different things, but are simply at different stages in the writing process. Perhaps these texts also appear to be different in part because instructors *perceive* them to be different, and these perceptions are reinforced when we use them differently in our courses.

The risk in always asking students to attend to different things when reading the two kinds of texts—especially to search for error in student-produced writing—is that it can send the message that published writing is more valuable: published texts are where students learn what to do in their writing, and student-produced texts are where they learn what *not* to do. Prompting students to focus so intently on error while reading also leads to an impoverished version of the workshop. Since students are primarily (if not exclusively) reading student-produced texts in workshop, and are encouraged to look for error in such texts, it means that reading in workshop automatically becomes an effort to diagnose what is wrong with a text—workshop is a place for "fixing" texts.

Instead, workshop should be a place for participants to read for, and discuss, both what needs to be improved *and* what is already succeeding in texts. It's a place to

identify choices that might have been made differently in texts. The fundamental goal of workshop is for students to learn to read in ways that improve their writing, and this means Reading Like a Writer. For workshop to reach its full potential as a strategy for teaching connections between reading and writing, students must be prompted to look at texts—both published and student-produced—not only in terms of what needs improvement, but also in terms of what is effective. This means instructors need to avoid teaching published texts as examples of successful writing and student-produced texts as example of what needs to be improved; both types of texts—and each *individual* text—should be examined for both its strengths and weaknesses. Reading in such a workshop—Reading Like a Writer—becomes a process of breaking apart texts to see where the problems are, but also to recognize and understand the successes. Students return to their own writing after such a workshop better prepared to diagnose what's not working in their writing as well to implement specific new strategies and techniques they identified while reading.

This new conception of workshop—in which both published and student-produced texts are approached in the same way—allows students have some say in the texts selected, and encourages students to read for what is both problematic and effective in the texts. This is a departure from the conventional workshop as it is currently practiced in both creative writing and composition courses, but this reconceived workshop provides a range of potential benefits that are hard to deny.

Concluding Thoughts

Two months ago at the annual MLA Convention in Philadelphia, I had the chance to talk about my dissertation with the director of writing from another Midwestern university and one of his faculty colleagues. As I told them about my research and about the need for instructors to attend to the ways they teach reading in first-year writing courses, the director began nodding his head.

"I'm persuaded," he said.

His colleague, who has taught first-year writing in their program for several years, looked over at me and asked, "Let's say we were going to bring you to campus and arrange for you to speak with all of our writing instructors. What would you tell them? What would you say that could help us improve the ways we teach reading?"

These two questions felt like an affirmation that all my hard work was starting to pay off. After two years of research and writing, I was someone to whom people were directing questions, someone people were ready to listen to. In a sense, these were the very questions I had set out to answer. I'd read thousands of pages of scholarship, collected data from instructors and students, and spent months analyzing and writing.

What would I say to instructors that might improve the way they teach reading?

There are several things I would say to a room full of writing instructors, and I hope to have such opportunities with increasing frequency in the future. On the surface some of my suggestions may seem pretty basic, but after speaking with instructors at the University of Michigan, my former colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh, and with audience members and fellow panelists at various professional conferences, it's clear that a number of these "basic" things routinely get overlooked.

- You need to talk with your students about *why* you're asking them to read, and explain to them *how* they should be reading. This initial step can help generate

motivation on the part of students to complete the assigned reading and increase the likelihood that they are reading in ways that you believe are beneficial.

- If you're asking students to read a text for anything more than content, you need to make this explicit. The primary reason that most people read is to gain information. Yes, they read for pleasure too, but this still means reading for content in most cases. In writing classes we are often expecting students to read in very different ways without telling them so. This means that quite often you'll need to *demonstrate* to students how you would like them to read. You'll need to *teach* them this new way of reading. This might mean showing students how you would read the text yourself, stopping to demonstrate the kinds of questions you ask as you read. This might mean reading through the text together as a class in the same way that you hope students will read on their own.

- There are a number of different reading approaches that you can teach students to adopt depending on why you are having them read the text. Think about what you want students to learn from reading, and then teach them to read the text using the specific approach (or combination of approaches) that best serves that purpose.

- Students seem to be more motivated to read assigned texts when they have a sense of how those assignments connect to the rest of the work of the course, especially to the writing assignments. If you design first-year writing courses in which the reading and writing are connected, and talk with students about those connections, it can help generate student motivation to complete assigned reading.

- Students don't necessarily recognize how reading something in a particular genre can help them write in that same genre. Assigning students to read model texts isn't enough; for the most part students don't know how to read for writerly techniques or for genre conventions on their own. You must teach students *how* to read model texts in ways that will inform the eventual writing that they will do.

- Ask yourself whether you're assigning students to read published texts and student-produced texts in the same ways, or in different ways. What are you encouraging students to look for as they read? What kinds of questions do you want them to be asking? Too often instructors assign published texts as examples of good writing and urge students to search for error in student-produced texts. These differences risk sending the messages that published texts are finished and beyond critique, and that student writing is of relatively low worth.

- Workshop is an opportunity to teach reading and writing as connected activities. Workshops can be done with either published or student-produced texts, and should focus both on what is working well and what could be improved in the writing. You should explain to students that the main idea behind workshop isn't to fix-up or improve a specific text but to train all of them to read in ways that can benefit their own writing.

The last thing I would tell instructors is that to spend time on reading in the first-year writing classroom is not to take time away from writing, not if the reading is discussed and taught in ways that emphasize important connections between these two processes. Teaching reading in terms of its connection to writing increases the likelihood that students find success in both activities.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

(original was submitted online)

1) How many semester of first-year writing have you taught, including this one?

One.

2) How many total writing courses have you taught, including this one?

One.

3) Do students arrive at UM prepared to read at the college level?

Based on the class I have this semester, I would say only half of them are prepared to read at the college level.

4) What kinds of reading do students do for your first-year writing course?

I start with short personal narratives by Scott Russell Sanders, Richard Ford, Amy Tan, and Raymond Carver. Then they read some short stories from a variety of authors like Anita Desai, Julio Cortazar, and Jamaica Kincaid. Finally, they read 2 scholarly essays by Edward Said.

5) Do you teach students to read visual images or non-written texts? If so, what do you do?

They will be watching 2 movies and looking at excerpts from a graphic novel.

6) What is the reading skill, or particular reading approach, that is most important or beneficial for students to learn in first-year writing?

Being able to focus on the text and identifying the function/effect of the text's different parts, rather than focusing on what they like/dislike. Being able to support their opinions about the text with textual evidence.

7) Do you teach students to do a particular kind of reading or adopt a particular reading approach?

I ask them to be alert about their own assumptions as they read and from their opinions on the text and also to watch out for the assumptions/generalizations the author is making.

8) Do you believe that reading and writing are connected activities?

Definitely.

9) How (if at all) do you teach a connection between reading and writing to students in first-year writing?

I ask students to pay attention to various techniques utilized by the authors and "steal" the ones they find helpful for their own writing. Also, I tell them that if they do close reading and come up with good discussion questions, identify the main themes of the text, etc., it will be easier for them to pick a good thesis.

10) Are there any differences between the ways that you ask students to read the writing produced by their classmates and the ways you ask them to read published texts? If so, what are the differences?

When they do peer editing, the list of questions I give them is much more specific, focusing on details rather than asking for broad answers that are supposed to initiate discussion.

11) Are there any classroom activities or assignments that are better suited to use one type of text as opposed to the other--either published writing or student-produced writing? Please explain your answer.

I think that broad questions such as "identify some of the central themes" are more helpful when students are reading fiction. These types of questions allow the students to approach the text in a way that will help initiate/develop class discussion. They begin to think about the text rather than about their own reaction to the text (I like/dislike it) without limiting their own creativity/intellectual freedom. I give much more specific questions for student-produced writing, such as "identify the thesis," "find 2 weaknesses and 2 strengths," because these questions produce more concrete answers, which in turn help the student-writers improve their work.

12) Please discuss a few of the factors that have most influenced your ideas about how to teach, or not to teach, reading in first-year writing.

So far, most of my ideas are influenced by how I learned/approached writing and reading as a student and by the training sessions offered by the Writing Program.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Thanks for doing the interview.

Don: No problem.

Interviewer: Can I confirm, you are currently a lecturer.

Don: Yes.

Interviewer: Currently teaching English 125.

Don: 3 sections.

Interviewer: And you have an MFA from Michigan in fiction writing?

Don: Yes.

Interviewer: And prose.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: Cool – the first question I'm going to ask you is – is sort of an intentionally open-ended question.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: So please interpret it however you want. And answer it however you think is best. But can you please tell me about the kind of reading that students are expected to do –

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: in your English 125 class, in your first-year writing course?

Don: Sure. Well we work mostly from this book called *The Writer's Presence* which has a variety of different essays, all of which are pretty amenable to a certain kind of analysis. So they're essentially all kind of argumentative in some way or another. In addition to that, I – one of the early papers is an analysis of a film. So I ask that they read a few different film analyses. That's something new that I've done. I haven't had them do like an

analysis of, you know, a work of like literature or film whatnot yet. That is proving to be a little bit difficult for them, so.

Interviewer: In what ways?

Don: They – I think they would need four months just to learn like how to analyze a given thing be it a book or a film. I devoted about a week and a half to it, and they – most of them still seem unclear on the difference between summary and analysis. So, I mean part of that may be my fault in a way. But yeah going into their papers, even though I've been telling them for the past three weeks, like I don't want plot summary. I want analysis just like we have in – we see in these model essays where there's very little plot summary, where the topic sentences and paragraphs are loyal to the argument with the thesis, not loyal to plot. They're still kind of writing plot based things. And it – and it has to do with I mean not ever having thought about how something is created. Whenever we read, we engage-.

Interviewer: The students?

Don: Students yeah. Like what decisions are being made. They seem to regard movies and books as things that just exist and not, not a series of deliberate choices that were made by a director, an author or – and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: I see.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: So when you say that you spend a week and a half on it.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: And that you're wondering now if maybe you should have spent more time. What kind of stuff did you do in that week and a half? I mean when you say you spent a week and a half on it, what did that entail?

Don: Oh okay. So we started off talking about photographs, right? We moved from photographs to advertising to film, because I thought it was kind of a natural segue. Photos don't have words. There's just a single picture. Advertisements – you've got a little bit of language as well, and then a movie is you know pictures and language, and you can use it kind of working together. So first I tried to get them – teach them how to write effectively about

something that was visual. Which means kind of showing me what you see rather than interpreting. Like this person is happy, you know being an interpretation. Now this person's eyebrows are arched and you start to teach –

Interviewer: Simply starting with more of sort of, closer to a summary.

Don: Right. Right. Right. Right. And then kind of working our way to – well no actually I mean with the photos, like I do want them looking at kind of every – I don't want them saying that the person is happy. I want them kind of breaking down the scene into all of its component parts; what the camera angle is, what the composition is, the colors and all that kind of stuff. And then in advertisement, we talk a little bit about – more about, the message and the intended audience and then with the film kind of a fusion of all those things. What's it going – I haven't done this one before in the one other time that I taught 125, and I will not do it again.

Interviewer: How come?

Don: Because it – they just – you would need like a half or three-quarters of the class to write just – to teach – to give them the tools necessary to write this one paper.

Interviewer: And when you say paper, this sort of type of analysis?

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what sort of things when you say that you're hoping that they will write an analysis – is it fair to say that you're hoping they are also reading for analysis? Is that what you would say too, that they read - ?

Don: Yeah. Right. Right.

Interviewer: What would that – what would that look like if you have the four months, or if they were all nailing exactly it like you hope they would. What would that sort of be, this type of reading – this reading for analysis that you're talking about?

Don: Right. Well I think we'd – we'd just spend a couple more weeks kind of going – talking about this rhetorical triangle.

Interviewer: Okay.

Don: I do a lot of work with that. I did 2 classes on that, whereas I feel that you needed like a month on that. Because it's – so I think we'd have like a month of like, readings, and then just kind of like, analyzing like the rhetoric involved in all of those readings, cause I think that most people will probably need a couple of weeks of that before they got the hang of it. I did like, a week and a half.

Interviewer: Okay so let me ask you something – I'm going to – I'm going to keep – keep with this for a second because I think it's really interesting.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: So let's say I'm a student in your class, and I have a text and film so on, and you mention analyzing the rhetoric for the triangle.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: So if I have a text, let's say it's an essay.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: >From our course packet or anthology. What types of things, specifically, are you hoping that I will be able to pick out from that text? Let's say by the end of the course.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: I mean what – what would you like me to be able to read for?

Don: Okay. Yeah so, just to see how the author goes about acquiring in the piece and maintaining his or her authority.

Interviewer: Okay.

Don Uh you know it's one thing to kind of gain it at the outset. It's another thing to kind of maintain it throughout the essay and not alienate or kind of put people off, or come across as you know biased in some way. So establishment and maintenance of authority. When emotional appeals are being used, you know being able to identify those and to – to be able to answer the question *why* an emotional appeal, why is that being used to make this particular point. And also the ability to kind of pick out logical fallacies, all throughout or places where . . . the logic breaks down. Again, we spent like a lesson and a half on logical fallacies, and it would take a couple of weeks of very kind of

elaborate reinforcement to do that. Yeah and I guess – I gave a lot of readings that I thought kind of clarified a lot. But of course not everybody really reads in order to learn. Like a lot of I think the students say, "Okay I've got to make sure my eyes pass over every word from page 84 to like 92," which is not really reading.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Or not reading maybe the way you want them.

Don: Right. Right. And I guess, cause I think a lot of instructors read in a very kind of particular way. It's not just making them kind of you know annotate and talk back to the paper in the margins. I really am not quite sure how to get them to actually read deeply.

Interviewer: So let me ask you something. Going along with this idea that students read in all different kinds of ways.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: How explicit would you say you are, either in that week and a half or throughout the course, about how you want the students to read?

Don: Uh huh. Not explicit enough, because I thought that if you kind of simply instructed the students to run – to read with a pen or a pencil – to read with a pen or a pencil in hand, that it would kind of *make* them into kind of more analytical readers, because they would be kind of parsing the text up into different parts. But instead it seems that – you know they take the pen or pencil, and they just kind of do the same sorts of reading with meaningless hieroglyphics on the side. So it's not like putting a pen into somebody's hand makes them into a critical reader.

Interviewer: Have you thought at all yet at this point about what – if you were teaching this section again, maybe in addition to spending more time, what you would do differently to be more explicit?

Don: Yeah I mean I think that – one thing that I tried to do this year was really try to break the class down into really small parts. Like, we're going to talk only about how to read in this one class. I was going to make fewer assumptions, and so I thought I had designed the class where I made kind of no assumptions about their level of – their reading levels and their ability to think critically. But I grossly over assumed their capacity. So essentially it's – it's not only like they are – I guess I was treating them like blank slates, and they're not. It's actually worse because they're doing things the wrong way. So I was prepared to assume a blank slate, and that all of my instructions would, you know, be imposed on this

kind of absence, or they would be the only thing there. I didn't quite anticipate correctly the degree to which I would have to dismantle a lot of their previous – I mean yeah I guess I would have spent the first two weeks more dismantling what I perceived to be kind of like their flawed ways of reading, and like and not really academically relevant ways of thinking. I didn't kind of break it down. I tried to break it down by like by grading kind of like intensely on the first paper. That was not the way to do it. So basically, yeah. I thought I was dealing with kind of a blank slate. I didn't kind of appreciate how much all their information would be there that I would have to kind of – kind of chop down – get rid of.

Interviewer: And so this is sort of another kind of open ended question.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Cause you're talking about doing it again – maybe ways you would do it, that kind of thing.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: And one of the things you said is to spend more time and so on. And I'm interested in sort of your take on how, well, how to phrase this, this is a writing course-

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: so what role does reading and the teaching of reading play in this course as you imagine it?

Don: Right.

Interviewer: And as you imagine working with students?

Don: Right. Yeah that's something that I'm coming to recognize – I'm doing in a way that's not beneficial to most students, because for me – for me problems in writing have mostly been solved by doing more reading. So when my students have –

Interviewer: Would that be reading on your own?

Don: Yeah. Yeah so –

Interviewer: Then what do you do? Would you go find a similar text? What do you mean by that? That's an interesting point.

Don: Yeah so I mean just – well I feel like I'm having problems with some portion of the novel I'm writing, I kind of solve that problem by reading a lot of things that I think either have similar kind of intention to prose, or organized in a similar way. And so with my students, they say, I'm not quite sure how to write this kind of paper. For me, the kind of answer is, "Well you need to read more in the genre. So okay you're having a problem understanding what an analytical essay is, because you've never read any." So here is a little bit of outside reading you could do, in addition to like the office hours where I explain things like do a little bit of this outside reading and this is – this is the species of the thing. And I don't think they do that. And maybe they do that, but it's not enough to kind of see models. So I guess one kind of big shift is that a professional essay, as a model for what I'm looking for – using those is kind of like a fundamental part of the course, has *not* been all that effective. So is it about reading even less? We're reading less this year than we have in the past.

Interviewer: When you've taught the class before?

Don: I think I might even rely – or maybe not read less, but rely less on reading, and then maybe do even more in-class writing than we have been doing, because you know, yes it seems like the way that they're learning form and how to put thoughts together is not the way it kind of would come naturally to me. Yes, so in a round about way, it can't be like whoa, look at these four models. Let's just do what they're doing. They can't really – can't really see what's happening in those pieces. I think they see an analytical essay and like – I use the word analytical essay because you know it is a kind of genre. You know but to them it's totally *not* a genre, and I think they're kind of blind to most of what is happening. And that, I feel that for that reason I would – you would need a couple of weeks to kind of get them past that – through that blindness, and I don't think you could spend that much time.

Interviewer: So would it be –

Don: Other people do it more effectively than I do, because this is like my first full time attempt.

Interviewer: So just tell me if this is a fair characterization and modify it in any way that you feel is appropriate.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: So it sounds like sort of the main thrust of what you're doing is giving sort of model texts in the hopes that the students will read those, analyze them and then be able to –

Don: Yeah we do analyze them together. So the reading model texts like – reading model texts, analyzing them and then doing what we just saw.

Interviewer: So when you say doing it – meaning they have an assignment – a writing assignment.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you're saying is that they're reading, they're doing these ideally in service of their writing.

Don: Right. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah oh *always*, yeah.

Interviewer: So say a little bit more about that. They're reading – it sounds like they're reading for a sense of genre.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: What else are you *hoping* that they'll be reading for? And again, it sort of goes back to your question I asked earlier.

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: But you know it's not necessarily the case that reading for analysis, or reading for rhetorical moves, is always about the idea that it will help their writing.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: It sounds like, from what you're saying, that you're hoping that the reading they do *does* assist them with their writing.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: So how would that operate if it were working well, do you think?

Don: Well, when they're writing their own essays and kind of like making their own arguments, they'd be just more aware of their options, and so they wouldn't be writing blindly. It would be kind of writing, deliberately, and I think in all of the drafts that I've seen so far, early in the term, they seem to be writing more or less

blindly. So if I ask them – because the analysis is – cause I want them to think about you know – the metaphor I use often in the class is looking under the hood of the car. Were not telling how the car moves, or if this car handles really well, we are opening up the hood, and we're seeing like how it functions the way it does. And ideally when they turn in the paper of their own, I like to point to a section and say, "Why did you do it this way?" And I want them to be aware that they made a decision to do it that way, and I want them to be making those decisions consciously rather than just kind of writing blindly.

Interviewer: Sort of that idea of writerly choices?

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: That type of thing?

Don: Right. Right. So now I'm going to make my point – and I'm using an anecdote - because anecdote might kind of be a little bit funny, and why am I using humor? Is humor the best thing to be using at this point?

Interviewer: Sounds like what you're describing is pretty sophisticated. It's not just that they will take the moves that they see in that model text-

Don: Right.

Interviewer: but that they will also gain an understanding of what effects that move might have.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: That – and they are able maybe judge between those.

Don: Right. It's sort of what's called what and why. You have a lot of what. You're telling me – you give me a lot of *what's* happening here. I want you to analyze *why* the author made this choice. Please relate it back to the text. Why did the – why is this very intensely emotional appeal being used to make this part of the argument? A lot of times, and I know that I need to recalibrate things, because my students would – not all of them, but some of them would be like looking at me with very perturbed faces. [A female lecturer at UM] teaches like a very similar class.

Interviewer: And she is a lecturer here?

Don: Yeah and so because my class this year, it's a little bit of [mentions a male lecturer], a little bit of [refers back to the female lecturer mentioned before] and a little bit of me. That's kind of how I did it, because I've only taught the class once before.

Interviewer: Can I ask you –

Don: Sure.

Interviewer: a question about that. How much have you talked to, or do you continue to talk to other instructors/mentors here about the ways you teach reading in the course, that kind of thing. Has that – you just sort of mentioned that. Is that an ongoing thing, or is that –

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: something you just did in preparation of the course?

Don: Uh huh. And that's – it was an ongoing thing until I was told that there's *no* chance I'll be teaching in the winter. So.

Interviewer: [Laughter] So I assume –

Don: Yeah, so as of last week, I was okay so, all right. But I hadn't been talking about how to teach reading, because again, I underestimated how much that would really have to be a big part of the class.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: I again just assumed that they knew – or they would be able to easily learn how to read in the way that I wanted them to read. But they really don't. I guess – one thing that I would not do again is, I let them bring a little bit too much of themselves into it. I wanted them – I thought that by allowing them to import stuff from their lives that it would kind of make them more engaged in the class. For example, on the first day, I asked them to bring in an example of what they considered to be good writing, and a lot of people brought stuff in that I would think would be hard to defend as good writing, and I – and as such would be kind of got off – whereas if I was more authoritative, I would have made clear in the writings that *I* brought in that there are certain things that we would consider, in an academic context, kind of bad writing or inefficient writing. Like their film analysis, I let them choose their movie, and you know in 75 percent of the cases, it's – you know *most* movies can be talked about in some kind of way. But then there

are a few movies that are just kind of so awful that it's difficult – they're so confused in themselves, that it's difficult to even find like a way to talk about them. It's a rare case, but I had two of those yesterday. It fascinates me how three classes can be so different when you're doing the same thing in all the classes.

Interviewer: And you're teaching three sections.

Don: 3 sections, you know everyday, and one of the classes is just – I feel like I still have to kind of digest – like a bird in the nest. I have to digest the worms and actually kind of like upchuck it into their mouths is the only way that they can learn. Whereas, the other classes are foraging for themselves and –yeah. Yeah. I really don't know how to account for that, having such a small sample size of classes.

Interviewer: Okay. So it sounds like so far, you've mostly talked about or exclusively talked about students reading published text.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have students read the work of their peers at all?

Don: Yeah in the workshops. But I think it would be – next time I'll definitely have sample essays from students, because I think part of that blindness, like the reason that they can't really see what's happening with professional text, is because it's such a big leap from what they're usually accustomed to reading. I think that *maybe* more sample student essays – I mean a really good-

Interviewer: They're still as a model but a model –

Don: Yeah I don't – I guess I don't – I don't know how to use text in any other way.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: Like what – yeah so if you're not using it as a model –

Interviewer: What are you doing with it?

Don: Right. What are you doing with it?

Interviewer: So is it – is it accurate that in the courses as you have them designed now, that you're working with student text *exclusively* in workshop?

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what do you do? Can you tell me a little bit about workshop? That's one of the things I'm interested in –

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: as part of the dissertation, is different ways that instructors both implement their workshop, and there may be a variety of ways, but also what are you trying to achieve with the workshop?

Don: Right. Well, basically what I'm trying to achieve – the workshop that I've set up is for each paper, there's 3 major papers. There's 2 large group workshops followed by a small 1 group workshop.

Interviewer: Okay.

Don: And the idea is –

Interviewer: And when you say large, is that class-wide?

Don: The whole class, yeah. And the idea there is that they will become more competent – kind of conversationalists. So, and I do a lot leading them, ideally the first day.

Interviewer: And when you say leading them, what kind of stuff. What does that entail?

Don: Leading them? Asking questions that are going to lead them to talk about the things that I want them to talk about.

Interviewer: And so asking questions of the text?

Don: Yeah right, right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Don: And then the second day, I try to let the conversation kind of begin more organically and see if they can start moving in that direction. So it's kind of like slightly less control over the class. Then with the small group, it's completely autonomous. By that point, hopefully they've sat through about 3 hours of large group conversation. I want them to be able to kind of take that and can do it themselves in smaller groups.

Interviewer: Do the students read their peer's work before the workshop?

Don: Yeah and they – everything is handed in you know in the class period before.

Interviewer: And do you – do you give them any specific instruction in how you want them to read that? Or any questions that they should attend to as to reading that *before* they come to workshop? Or is it more the case where it's read this by this date.

Don: It's read this by this date. But I do feel that giving them a more specific set of questions would be more helpful. Maybe for the first paper and then see how – because ideally I want them to – because you know in all the classes they're going to have to be kind of reading things on their own, and I want them to be able to talk about things constructively on their own.

Interviewer: So you said one of the goals for the workshop would be, and correct me if I'm wrong-

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Their ability to have conversation about these texts and so on.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: And the social dynamic in workshops.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: Are there other goals that you would identify for working in workshop and that kind of thing?

Don: Other goals?

Interviewer: Or other reason why you do workshops. So one thing is that you're hoping students will build conversation skills.

Don: Oh right.

Interviewer: Are there other things that you hope?

Don: Oh absolutely, yeah, cause I know that if you don't kind of vary the class dynamics and break it up, people just kind of like you know kind of die of monotony.

Interviewer: So it changes the pace of the course?

Don: Yeah, so you know we have a large group, large group, small group, the paper is due. Now we can go back to reading model essays for the next paper, and it seems – I mean there's a lot of variety in what's happening in the class each day. I remember, you know, after a couple of weeks of just reading text and discussing them, they kind of get turned off to the idea. Yeah so it's there to kind of – cause I know some people don't do the like large group workshops, but I –

Interviewer: And I know for a fact that some instructors don't do workshops at all.

Don: Right. What the hell would you do with the whole semester?

Interviewer: It's a fair question.

Don: It's also nice for me – I mean just to be honest – a small group workshop like today, whew, finally I just kind of like you know sit back and kind of just like micromanage things. But I welcome that break.

Interviewer: So you've got sort of them developing the ability to converse with each other about text and –

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: change of pace in the course. Would you see any other goals, or are those sort of the 2 main ones?

Don: Those are the 2 main ones.

Interviewer: Okay. And you said that – and we're getting to the end here-

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: you said that you – at least with the initial workshops that you pose certain questions from the students.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: Or that you ask them to attend to certain things maybe in the text.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: And this is maybe a big question, but I'm wondering – would you say that you ask students to attend to the same types of things, and for them to ask the same types of questions of the published text that you read as the work with their peers? Does that question make sense?

Don: Uh yeah that does make sense. And actually, that was my original intention coming into the class. But I remember kind of the way I answered it yesterday –

Interviewer: And when you say yesterday – you mean in the survey [for my dissertation]?

Don: Yeah in the survey. And it had to be, I think it *has* to be a little different, because I don't – I feel in a published – and that's why I feel that maybe the published text shouldn't be the only model, because in the published texts – well first, – things are clear, right?

Interviewer: When you say clear, how so?

Don: The intention of the author is clear, and the argument is identifiable. And so that all kind of being taken care of, we can talk more about how thoughts are being developed in relation to the argument. Where with student's papers, we've yet to encounter a paper where the argument itself is kind of like discernable, and where the paper is clearer than it is unclear. So then I feel that the conversations we had about professional text are not that useful in discussing the student papers, because we're – it is – it is a different species of thing. I used to think it would be sort of a fledgling version of this paper, but it's actually *different.* It has a different structure, has a different problems and it needs different food.

Interviewer: So how do those questions then differ? So in your mind, you were going to have them have the same questions.

Don: Right. Well in a workshop, the questions tend to be more like when – I mean what the hell is happening here? Whereas, we don't ask that question, you know in – when we talk about the professional pieces. So in that sense, maybe using professional pieces as models is not all that good. Because with the student papers, we will take a paragraph and instead of – so again I guess the biggest difference is with the professional papers, we are observing what's *right,* and in the student papers, so little is right

that we can't really do that. We are always like – looking to see what's wrong, and so they become different conversations. So I guess maybe some of the skills that they learned reading the professional papers don't transfer over because we're having a different conversation. It's kind of like, somebody – it's kind of like - if this were like medical school, we're kind of – we're walking past incredible Olympic athletes and kind of noting of body structures, and then I bring somebody in on a stretcher who has been horribly mangled in a car accident, and it's a different thing, right? They're like, "I don't know is that an *arm*? I mean I know where an arm is supposed to go, but I don't know if that's an arm or not." I do mostly fiction writing, so it's this kind of thing. Or like, yeah like, "Is this even a person? Is this *two* people?" Right like yeah, so in that sense, I guess maybe it would help to kind of introduce them to more – I don't know how to do that. This is how it's supposed to look. This is a great athlete. This is four people who have been like, all riding mechanical bulls at the same time.

Interviewer: It's interesting. You say, "You don't really know how to do that type of thing."

Don: Right.

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier *your* method of reading.

Don: Right.

Interviewer: Which was probably developed what, as a student? On your own?

Don: Yeah, definitely, on my own. I mean that's just the way that I learned. And every year I – I come – I realize there's another thing, another aspect of the way that I learned that is not applicable to class.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: So for me –

Interviewer: Have you ever had any actual training in how to teach reading in these courses?

Don: *Oh* no. So essentially there's – I just – there's how I've read, and I also recognize that – as a student like I really hated being in classrooms.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: And so – with the exception of a few classes, I vastly preferred kind of reading on my own as a way of kind of understanding what was happening, rather than being in a class. But I recognized that totally, and I recognized before I designed this course that that was not the way to teach people who are there to learn. Yeah, but I guess the – the most important – the thing that I *will* have to do before I teach this again is learn how to teach reading, because I will admit that I don't know how to.

Interviewer: And you haven't had training. Have you received training in how to teach writing?

Don: Uh, well you know not really – I mean just – just the, you know, the 2 day-

Interviewer: So there was the 2 day training–

Don: 3 years ago.

Interviewer: referring to do the 2 day training workshop.

Don: So the workshop 3 years ago, yeah.

Interviewer: And that dealt with writing, but not with how to teach reading.

Don: Right, yeah. And even in the – you know cause I did read quite a few pedagogical books over the summer, because I really wanted to design a whipper-snapper course that was going to make, you know, life easy for the students and easy for me, and like everything was going to click perfectly. So, yeah, none of them really addressed how to teach reading, which is obviously really kind of an important thing. So I will be looking –

Interviewer: I hope so. It's the main argument of my dissertation–

Don: Okay, well –

Interviewer: Or one of the main arguments.

Don: Thank God, yes cause – yeah. Yeah it's such – I mean it's such a fundamental thing, but it's also like the thing that I – you kind of forget about. But you can't forget about it, because it's so very important.

Interviewer: So the last question I'll ask you actually jumps back-

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: as you were just saying, so between the reading the students do for the model essays, the reading of the published essays, and then the reading they do in workshop of students, would you say that you're – you want them and that you're asking them – and those may be different. But you want them *and/or* you're asking them to read in different ways?

Don: Uh huh.

Interviewer: To read published texts different than the way they read student texts?

Don: I haven't made a distinction yet. Yeah I haven't even thought about – until I actually answered that question yesterday [on my survey], and I didn't really think about how they require like you know different systems of reading.

Interviewer: But do you believe now that they should?

Don: Yes. Right, they should. And again, like more than one – I mean, systems of reading, like I couldn't tell you more than one way how to read. Like it just it's very kind of – I mean intuitive and therefore mysterious to me.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: But I think that would be a really – I'd love to read something in like different ways of teaching reading, because the way I've been doing it is not the most useful, I believe.

Interviewer: And when you say useful, you mean useful for them?

Don: Useful for them, yeah. Yeah they don't seem to be – they're not where I thought they would be at this point in time, and they still seem to be, like – again like I – when I started the reading, I discovered their eyes kind of passing over words. But that's what I feel like, they're more doing in – you know there may be actually getting to or engaging 20 percent or 30 percent of what's there.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: And a lot of it is just not visible to them. So how do you make all the words visible to them, and then like how do you make a structure kind of visible to them, and I use visible and invisible as a way of understanding getting myself – it seems like they're still looking at kind of invisible texts, so.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much.

Don: Yeah.

Interviewer: I appreciate it.

Don: Right. Yeah well you know and this was all – also helpful for me, because it forced me to kind of think more about and articulate some of those issues that we are now encountering, you know now getting to the halfway point of the term, so. But I'm really looking forward to having like their first major paper is due Monday.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Don: And it will be kind of the clean slate as we move into the next set of readings and writings, and I look forward to improving on you know whatever we did in the first third of the term.

[End of Audio]

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEYS
(originals were handwritten)

Sample Student Survey #1

1) Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing? Why or why not?

The readings are helpful because it usually coincides with the topic we are writing on.

2) Do you have a preference between reading published writing or the writing produced by your classmates? Please explain your answer.

Published work is informative and helpful but writing produced by my classmates helps me learn more (through editing and just seeing how my peers think)

3) Are you motivated to read for this course? Why or why not?

Yes, the material we are reading is very interesting

4) Have you learned about possible connection(s) between reading and writing in this course? If yes, what have you learned?

Yes – reading helps you write better!

Sample Student Survey #2

1) Do you find the reading that you do for this course helpful in improving your writing? Why or why not?

Most of the reading we do is helpful because they apply to the style of writing we are using.

2) Do you have a preference between reading published writing or the writing produced by your classmates? Please explain your answer.

I prefer published writing because we are still learning a lot about writing and its just more interesting to read professional writing

3) Are you motivated to read for this course? Why or why not?

No because I'm not a big fan of reading. I'm only motivated about reading when I get to choose when and what to read

4) Have you learned about possible connection(s) between reading and writing in this course? If yes, what have you learned?

The more I read the better I write

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