APPENDIX

“The Composing Process: Mode of Analysis” and “Implications for Teaching”

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Chapter 3
The Composing Process:
Mode of Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate dimensions of the composing process among secondary school students, against which case studies of twelfth-grade writers can be analyzed. As with some of the accounts of the creative process in chapter 1, the premise of this chapter is that there are elements, moments, and stages within the composing process which can be distinguished and characterized in some detail.

This delineation is presented in two forms: as an outline and as a narrative. The use of an outline, which is of course linear and single layered, to describe a process, which is laminated and recursive, may seem a paradoxical procedure; but its purpose is to give a category system against which the eight case studies can be examined. The narrative portion, in contrast, is an attempt to convey the actual density and “blendedness” of the process.

Although this category system is set forth before the analysis of the data, it was derived from an extensive analysis of the eight case studies. The procedure for analyzing the data was inductive; the presentation is deductive.

Commentary:

Students of all ages have been shown to have elements, moments, and stages within the composing process. The idiosyncratic characteristics are developmental to each grade level.

Consider the visual of placing all of these models in a three-dimensional fractal, capable of being dynamic and static at the same time. Possibility, it is akin to the quantum dot—capable of existing as a particle and wave simultaneously or separately at any given time. The quantum dot is to the silicon chip, what the microwave oven is to the campfire—highly complex.
Dimension of the Composing Process among Twelfth-Grade Writers: An Outline

1. Context of Composing
   Community, Family, School

2. Nature of Stimulus
   Registers:
   Field of Discourse—encounter with natural environment; encounter with induced environment or artifacts; human relationships; self.
   Mode of Discourse—expressive-reflexive; expressive-extensive.
   Tenor of Discourse
   Self-Encountered Stimulus
   Other-Initiated Stimulus:
   Assignment by Teacher—external features (student’s relation to teacher; relation to peers in classroom; relation to general curriculum and to syllabus in English; relation to other work in composition); internal features or specification of assignment (registers, linguistic formulation, length, purpose, audience, deadline, amenities, treatment of written outcome, other).
   Reception of Assignment by Student—nature of task, comprehension of task, ability to enact task, motivation to enact task.

3. Prewriting
   Self-Sponsored Writing:
   Length of Period
   Nature of Musing and Elements Contemplated—field of discourse; mode of written discourse; tenor or formulating of discourse.
   Interveners and Interventions—self, adults (parents, teachers, other), peers (sibling, classmate, friend); type of intervention (verbal, non-verbal), time of intervention, reason for intervention (inferred), effect of intervention on writing, if any.
   Teacher-Initiated (or School-Sponsored) Writing:
   (Same categories as above)

These modes of discourse strike teachers as much more workable than those of other rhetoricians, such as James L. Kinneavy in Theory of Discourse. Could it be what strikes these teachers is the fact that Emig’s classifications come inductively from student work, whereas Kinneavy’s has been deductively imposed onto students’ work?

Current state competency testing seems to ignore all or most of these elements. They place students, writing, and curricula in jeopardy with hidden agendas. Students spend hours trying to guess, “What do they want?” and “How do they want it?” Little attention is being paid to what students have to say.

It is important note that even in self-sponsored writing, peers and others still play a role in the contemplation of writing.
4. Planning

Self-Sponsored Writing:

*Initial Planning*—length of planning; mode of planning (oral; written: jotting, informal list of words/phrases, topic outline, sentence outline); scope; interveners and interventions.

*Later Planning*—length of planning; mode; scope; time of occurrence; reason; interveners and intervention.

Teacher-Initiated Writing:

(Same categories as above)

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Self-Sponsored Writing:

*Initial Planning*—length of planning; mode of planning (oral; written: jotting, informal list of words/phrases, topic outline, sentence outline); scope; interveners and interventions.

*Later Planning*—length of planning; mode; scope; time of occurrence; reason; interveners and intervention.

Teacher-Initiated Writing:

(Same categories as above)

5. Starting

Self-sponsored Writing:

*Seeming Ease or Difficulty of Decision*

*Element Treated First Discursively*— seeming reason for initial selection of that element; eventual placement in completed piece.

*Context and Conditions under Which Writing Began*

*Interveners and Interventions*

Teacher-Initiated Writing:

(Same categories as above)

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*Context and Conditions under Which Writing Began*

*Interveners and Interventions*

Teacher-Initiated Writing:

(Same categories as above)

6. Composing Aloud: A Characterization

Selecting and Ordering Components:

*Anticipation/Abeyance*—what components projected; when first noted orally; when used in written piece.

*Kinds of Transformational Operations*— addition (right-branching, left-branching); deletions; reordering or substitution; embedding

*Style*—preferred transformations, if any; “program” of style behind preferred transformations (source: self, teacher, parent, established writer, peer); (effect on handling of other components—lexical, rhetorical, imagaic).

Other Observed Behaviors:

*Silence*—physical writing; silent reading; “unfilled” pauses.

*Vocalized Hesitation Phenomena*—filler sounds (selected phonemes; morphemes of semantically-low content; phrases and clauses of semantically-low content); critical comments (lexis, syntax; rhetoric); expressions of feelings

Many of these phenomena are what inept evaluators of writing classroom characterize as poor learning environments or lack of teacher direction. As teachers move to understanding the composing processes of their students, administrators will need to move toward understanding the teaching processes of teaching writing. Mindless activity in place of real thinking cannot be allowed to flourish in classrooms.

Although the starting of self-sponsored and school sponsored types of writing are the same, the results are radically different. The ownership is different. Students care far more about their own writing than they do for the writing forced upon them in schools. They keep and maintain their own writing; they seem to tolerate the school sponsored attempts.

Here Emig refers to types of planning. Clearly, the implications for the classroom point to the use of more prewriting opportunities and the use of heuristics.
and attitudes (statements, expressions of emotion—pleasure/pain) toward self as writer to reader; digressions (ego-enhancing; discourse-related).

**Tempo of Composing:**
*Combinations of Composing and Hesitational Behaviors*
Relevance of Certain Theoretical Statements concerning Spontaneous Speech

7. **Reformulation**
**Type of Task:**
Correcting; Revising; Rewriting

**Transforming Operations:**
Addition—kind of element; stated or inferred reason for addition.
Deletion—kind of element; stated or inferred reason for deletion.
Reordering or Substitution—kind of element; stated or inferred reason.
Embedding—kind of element; stated or inferred reason.

8. **Stopping**
**Formulation:**
Seeming Ease or Difficulty of Decision
Element Treated Last—seeming reason for treating last; placement of that element in piece.
Context and Conditions under Which Writing Stopped
Interveners and Interventions
Seeming Effect of Parameters and Variables—established by others; set by self.
Reformulation:
(Same categories as above)

9. **Contemplation of Product**
**Length of Contemplation**
Unit Contemplated
Effect of Product upon Self
Anticipated Effect upon Reader

10. **Seeming Teacher Influence on Piece**
**Elements of Product Affected:**
Register—field of discourse; mode of written discourse; tenor of discourse.
Formulation of Title or Topic; Length;

Again, the capriciousness of competency tests comes to mind. Requiring students to complete a draft of writing that shows evidence of elaboration that normally doesn’t occur immediately in the writing process strikes many as unfair and as poor test construction. Performance testing appears to be the only way that an accurate assessment could be made of an impromptu situation. Portfolios show a more accurate picture of students’ processes.

In many classrooms the reason for stopping a piece of writing is because of the due date. In writing/reading classrooms, teachers and students are moving away from the “due date” to a “due window.” Like a space shot, there are only certain days available for launching. Certain days are given for the assignment to be turned in for evaluation. The rigid “it is due today, before the end of the period” strikes teachers and students who are involved in their own processes as antiquated.
Dimensions of the Composing Process Among Twelfth-Grade Writers: A Narrative

The first dimension of the composing process to note is the nature of the stimulus that activates the process or keeps it going. For students, as for any other writers, stimuli are either self encountered or other initiated. Either the student writes from stimuli with which he has privately interacted or from stimuli presented by others—the most common species of the second being, of course, the assignment given by the teacher. Both kinds of stimuli can be nonverbal or verbal, although it is an extremely rare and sophisticated teacher who can give a nonverbal writing assignment.

All areas of experience, or fields of discourse, can provide the stimuli for writing. It is useful to pause here to present the schema of registers devised by the British linguists Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens because of the applicability of their category-system to this inquiry.

Registers these linguists define as the varieties of language from which the user of that language makes his oral and written choices. Registers are divided into the following three categories: (1) the field of discourse, or the area of experience dealt with; (2) the mode of discourse, whether the discourse is oral or written; and (3) the tenor of discourse, the degree of formality of treatment.

Although, to the investigator’s knowledge, the three linguists do not attempt to specify the various fields of discourse, it seems a refinement helpful for a closer analysis of the composing process. In his essay on poetic creativity, the psychologist R.N. Wilson divides experiences tapped by writers into four categories: (1) encounters with the natural (nonhuman) environment; (2) human interrelations; (3) symbol systems; and (4) self. For the analysis of student writing in this inquiry, “symbol systems” becomes “encounters with induced environments or artifacts.”

Linda Waitkus revealed in her study (“The Effect of Poetic Writing on Transactional Writing: A Case Study Investigating the Writing of Three High School Seniors,” Ed.D. diss. [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1982]) that students who learned skills, mechanics, and grammar while engaged in writing reflexively retained this knowledge, while the information conveyed during extensive writings were not retained. Often she found students regressed in their manipulations of such skills.

Here we are reminded of Halliday’s uses of language (“The Uses of Language,” Language Arts 54, no. 6 [September 1977]: 638–644):

1. instrumental—I want—language used for getting things done, for satisfying material needs
2. regulatory—Do as I tell you—language used for controlling the behavior, feelings, attitude of others
3. interactional—Me and you; me against you—language used for getting along with others, for establishing status
4. personal—Here I come—language used to express individuality or awareness of self
5. heuristic—Tell me why—language used to seek and test knowledge
6. imaginative—Let’s pretend—language used to create new worlds
7. representational—I’ve got something to tell you—language used to communicate
8. divertive—Enjoy this—language used to have fun

Another useful refinement of the system of registers is to divide the category “the written mode of discourse: into species. In their speculations on modes of student writing, Britton, Rosen, and Martin of the University of London have devised the following schema:

![Fig. J.1. Modes of Student Writing.]

They regard all writing as primarily expressive—that is, expressing the thoughts and feelings of the writer in relation to some field of discourse. But beyond sheer expressiveness, writing evolves toward, or becomes, one of two major modes; poetic, in which the student observes some field of discourse, behaving as a spectator; or communicative, in which the student somehow participates through his writing in the business of the world. The many exemplars of writing Britton, Rosen, and Martin regard as mid-mode they have called transitional writings. (One longs to give the two kinds of transitional writing exponents, as with Hayakawa’s cow\(^1\) and cow\(^2\).)

To this investigator, the notion that all student writings emanate from an expressive impulse and that they then bifurcate into two major modes is useful and accurate. Less satisfactory are the terms assigned to these modes and the implications of these terms about the relation to the writing self to the field of discourse. The terms are at once too familiar and too ultimate. Both poetic and communicative are freighted with connotations that intrude. Poetic, for example, sets up in most minds a contrast with prose, or prosaic, although in this schema the poetic mode includes certain kinds of prose, such as the personal fictional narrative. Second, they are too absolute: rather than describing two general kinds of relations between the writer

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and his world, they specify absolute states—either passivity or participation.

The following schema seems at once looser and more accurate:

**Fig. J.2. Modes of Student Writing.**

Modes of Student Writing

- **Expressive**
- **Reflexive**
- **Extensive**

The terms reflexive and extensive have the virtue of relative unfamiliarity in discussions of modes of discourse. Second, they suggest two general kinds of relations between the writing self and the field of discourse—the reflexive, a basically contemplative role: “What does this experience mean?”; the extensive, a basically active role: “How, because of this experience, do I interact with my environment?” Note that neither mode suggests ultimate states of passivity or participation. Note too that the mid-modes or transitional writings have been eliminated from this schema as a needless complexity—at this time.

Subcategories can be established as well for the register, “tenor of discourse,” which concerns the distance observed between the writing self and field of discourse, expressed by the degree of formality observed in the writing itself. Formality or decorum in written discourse can be established by one or more of the following means: lexical choices, syntactic choices, rhetorical choices. Obviously, the most formal discourse would employ all three means. The next question, of course, is what constitutes decorum for these three means.

Most past and current composition guides have been predicated upon the belief that there are established and widely accepted indices of written decorum and that student writers of all ages can learn and employ them. Levels of diction really refer to corpora of lexical items that are consigned some place on a formality continuum. Syntactically, certain orderings of words are regarded as more formal than others: the

*It is this loose and accurate terminology that makes reflexive and extensive so applicable to the classroom. In contrast, Kinneavey uses narrative, descriptive, and classificatory as his modes of writing. To these he added purposes: expressive, persuasive, and informative. Finding real writing that adheres to a strict definition for the modes and purposes is difficult, if not impossible. Real writers overlap, weave in and out of Kinneavey’s divisions. Worse yet is trying to produce a piece of writing that sticks to a single mode. Emig’s terms are more fluid. They come from the real writing of real students, so to find examples is easy—to produce is natural. Kinneavey’s discourse is old paradigm—either/or. It arises from Aristotelian rhetoric. Emig’s discourse is new paradigm—both/all. It reflects newer philosophies of Bakhtin, Richards, Langer, Derrida, and Pierce. It is a kind of abduction; it allows for the mind to range over all possibilities.*

*Because of the fractuality (fractual is motion) of these lexical items, their changes are varied and sometimes hurried. Teaching these to student writers can become frustrating. Because texts are often three years old before adoption; because they stay in adoption for up to ten years, the*
changes can come and go before some even have the opportunity to dismiss them as “new.” So the need for teachers to maintain their own reading and writing becomes a most important task of teaching.

“balanced” sentence, for example, as against the “loose” sentence. Rhetorically, certain arrangements of sentences and the kinds of signals that precede and connect them are also regarded as more formal than others; for example, the use of explicit “lead sentence” and explicit transitional devices such as nevertheless and however.

The teacher-initiated assignment as stimulus has specifiable dimensions. It occurs within a context that may affect it in certain ways. Included in this context are relationships the student writer may have with his peers or, more importantly—given the teacher-centered nature of very many American classrooms—with his teacher; the general curriculum in English being enacted, and the specific activities in composition of which the assignment is a part; and the other stimuli that have immediately accompanied the assignment, with the sequence and mode of these probably very important. As an example of the last: if a teacher shows a film as stimulus for writing, do her words precede the film, or follow it, or both? Here, as with the other dimensions specified, no research of any consequence has been undertaken.

Internal aspects of the assignment that may bear upon the student’s writing process, and product, include the following specifications: (1) registers—the field of discourse, the written mode, and the tenor; (2) the linguistic formulation of the assignment; (3) the length; (4) the purpose; (5) the audience; (6) the deadline; (7) the amenities, such as punctuation and spelling; and (8) the treatment of written outcome—that is, if the teacher plans to evaluate the product, how—by grade? comment? conference? peer response? or by some combination of these?

The reception of the assignment by the student is affected by the following: (1) the general nature of the task, particularly the registers specified; (2) the linguistic formulation of the assignment; (3) the student’s comprehension of the task; (4) his ability to enact the task; and (5) his motivation to enact the task. There is now some empirical evidence that not all students can write with equal ease and skill in all modes.²

writer is to present “dispassionately” more than one side, or aspect, of a case. Consequently, if a teacher gives an assignment requiring writing in this sub-mode, certain students may be unable to complete adequately, or even to begin, such an assignment. Along with being intellectually unable to perform the assignment, the student may also be unmotivated or psychically unable to perform the assignment. Such “block” may emanate from strikingly different sources: the student may find the task too boring, or he may find the task too threatening. He may not want to write, again, about his summer vacation or the function of Banquo’s ghost; or about family life, if his father has just lost his job or if his mother has just threatened divorce.

Next, there are two possible preludes to the act of writing: prewriting and planning. Prewriting is that part of the composing process that extends from the time a writer begins to perceive selectively certain features of his inner and/or outer environment with a view to writing about them—usually at the instigation of a stimulus—to the time when he first puts words or phrases on paper elucidating that perception.

Planning refers to any oral and written establishment of elements and parameters before or during a discursive formulation. Prewriting occurs but once in a writing process; planning can occur many times.

Whether or not a piece of writing is self- or other-initiated affects both prewriting and planning. If the piece is teacher-initiated and if the assignment is highly specific, particularly as to a fairly immediate deadline, it is likely that the prewriting period will be brief—or that the paper will be late. Planning is intricately affected by the nature of the assignment as well. One way of regarding an assignment is as the part the teacher takes in the planning of a piece of writing. If the teacher’s part is extensive—as in specifying registers, length, purpose, audience—it is obvious that the part a student plays in his own planning is diminished. There seems to be some evidence that a delicate balance, if not a paradox, exists in the giving of assignments. If the teacher sets too many of the variables for a piece of writing (we need to know far more about how many are too many, and which vari-

Faulkner’s career illuminates this dichotomy between what the writer wants to write and what the writer is told to write. While Faulkner’s novels propel readers headlong into intellectual discovery, his films sent the viewer out for popcorn. He could not write under a Hollywood system, though he could write what he wanted to write.

At first glance, the response to “Prewriting occurs but once,” might be “I don’t think so.” But upon reflection, a new prewriting starts a new process. Prewriting signals another start.

Schools are still full of teachers who say, “I give my students choices.” Which is translated into, “Select one of the following topics for your paper.” Sure the student has a choice—he/she gets to pick from one of the teacher’s topics. And teachers wonder why students have malaise about writing.
Secondary teachers are finding that honors, gifted, and Advanced Placement students resist with fervor ambiguity or freedom. These students have learned to play a certain academic game and balk when they feel the rules have changed. Examining their writing reveals they have mastered the formula. They know what gets the A. They are not too eager to take risks in their writing for fear of a lower GPA. Curricula cannot be governed by the pressures these students and their parents can place upon them. Thinking and discovery should govern the curriculum, not the ranking of a student average.

Because of the clearly profound, and opaque, nature of this moment, the kinds of elements that can be accurately specified, that exhibit themselves in behavior, are contextual—and, usually, trivial. Examples here are where, physically...
cally, the writer is when he begins and what habits or rituals he observes. Perhaps the most significant feature of starting that can be readily observed is what element the writer first places on paper, and where in the finished piece that element occurs, if at all.

For the purposes of this inquiry, eight twelfth graders attempt to compose aloud. The assumption here is that composing aloud, a writer’s effort to externalize his process of composing, somehow reflects, if not parallels, his actual inner process.

At least three interesting questions can be asked about this particular, and peculiar, form of verbal behavior. First, are there recurring characteristics as one or more persons compose aloud? Second, if so, can a category-system be devised by which these behaviors can be usefully classified? Three, can provocative hypotheses be generated to account for these behaviors?

Composing aloud can be characterized as the alternation of composing behaviors that directly pertain to the selection and ordering of components for a piece of written discourse, and those which do not.

Anticipating is different from planning in the following three ways: Planning involves the projection of a total piece of discourse; anticipating, the projection of a portion of discourse. Planning does not occur in the language of the piece; anticipating often employs the exact lexicon and syntax that will appear in the finished piece of discourse.

Finally, anticipating, as Jerome Bruner notes, shuttles between the present and the future; planning does not:

The speaker or writer rides ahead of rather than behind the edge of his utterance. He is organizing ahead, marshaling thoughts and words and transforming them into utterances, anticipating what requires saying. If the listener is trafficking back and forth between the present and the immediate past, the speaker is principally shuttling between the present and the future . . . The tonic effect of speaking is that one thrusts the edge of the present toward the future. In one

Composing aloud is uniquely different from speech. Early childhood educators can attest to children “languaging” differently when they are “reading” from scribbles, than when they are talking. In writing institutes we have noted a few participants who due to their writing anorexia would compose aloud in grouping or sharing sessions. These compositions always resemble writing more than talk.

Nancy Willard describes it this way:

The game was simple. It required two people: the teller and the listener. The teller’s task was to describe a place as vividly as possible. The object of the game was to convince the listener she was there. The teller had to carry on the description until the listener said, “Stop, I’m there.” . . . At the height of my telling, something unforeseen happened. My sister burst into tears.
“Stop!” she cried. “I’m there!”

I looked at her in astonishment . . .

But to cry at a place pieced together out of our common experience and our common language, a place that would vanish the minute I stopped talking! That passed beyond the bound of the game altogether . . .

The joy of being the teller stayed with me, however, and when people asked me, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I answered, “I want to tell stories” (153–154).


The kind of self-censoring due to lack of knowledge or interest should be acceptable, valid reasons to eliminate options, but when self-censoring occurs due to environment, prejudices, or teacher bias, then students have an obligation to resist this type of censorship.

Another excellent way to see this breakdown is in William L. Stull’s Combining and Creating: Sentence Combining and Generative Rhetoric. Two hundred and thirty-seven professional writers such as Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Faulkner, as well as essayists such as Joan Didion, Lewis Thomas, and Walter Lippmann make up 90 percent of the sentence combining exercises. Examination of their style becomes a natural extension to the sentence combining.

case anticipation is forced into abeyance.

In the other it dominates the activity.6

Student writers frequently demonstrate the phenomenon of anticipation in their writing as they compose aloud. They anticipate the use of a theme or of an element, then return to the present portion of discourse, to fill out the intervening matter. There are clear signs of efficiently divided attention, as they focus upon the here-and-now while at the same time considering where the future element will eventually, and best, appear.

There are other strategies a writer follows in dealing with the elements or components of discourse: he can accept, and immediately employ, an element; he can accept, then immediately abandon or delete his choice (if too much time intervenes, the action becomes reformulation or revision); or he can combine the element in some way with other elements in the discourse. (Author’s note: The kind of self-censoring that eliminates an option before it is uttered is outside the purview of this inquiry.)

When dealing with syntactic components—and one must note at once that there are also lexical, rhetorical, and imagaic components—these actions correspond to the basic transforming operations—addition; deletion; reordering or substitution; and combination, especially embedding.7

In his article, “Generative Grammars and the Concept of Literary Style,” Richard Ohmann gives the following definition of style: “Style is in part a characteristic way of deploying the transformational apparatus of a language.”8 As illustrations, he breaks down passages from Faulkner (“The Bear”), Hemingway (“Soldier’s Home”), James (“The Bench of Desolation”), and Lawrence (Studies in Classic American Literature) into kernel sentences and notes that, for each, a different cluster of optional transformations is favored. The special “style” of Faulkner, for example, seems partially dependent upon his favoring three transformations: the relative, or wh, [who, where, etc.], transformation, the conjunctive transformation, and the comparative transformation.9
There is no reason to believe that nonprofessional writers do not also have their characteristic ways “of deploying the transformational apparatus of a language,” although these ways may be less striking, with less reliance on “a very small amount of grammatical apparatus.”

(Query: when teachers or critics say that a writer has “no style,” is what they mean that the writer in question has no strongly favored ways of transforming?)

The next question, of course, becomes why one favors a given cluster of transforms. One explanation seems to be that a writer is following some sort of “program” of style, a series of principles, implied or explicit, of what constitutes “good” writing. For example, he might break the concept “coherence” into a set of behavioral objectives, such as “Be clear about referents” and “Repeat necessary lexical elements.”

Composing aloud does not occur in a solid series of composing behaviors. Rather, many kinds of hesitation behaviors intervene. The most common of these are making filler sounds; making critical comments; expressing feelings and attitudes, toward the self as writer, to the reader; engaging in digressions, either ego-enhancing or discourse-related; and repeating elements. Even the student writer’s silence can be categorized: the silence can be filled with physical writing (sheer scribal activity); with reading; or the silence can be seemingly “unfilled”—“seemingly” because the writer may at these times be engaged in very important nonexternalized thinking and composing.

The alternation of composing behaviors and of hesitation phenomena gives composing aloud a certain rhythm or tempo. It is interesting to speculate that a writer may have a characteristic tempo of composing, just as he may use a characteristic cluster of transforms.

Composing aloud captures the behaviors of planning and of writing. Partly because of the very definition of reformulation, and partly because of the attitudes of the twelfth graders toward this portion of the composing process, it does not capture reformulating.

Writing and reformulating differ in significant ways. One is in the role memory is asked...
rocking the cradle—encouraged rhythmical expressions. Robert Graves believes that our most vigorous rhythms originated in the ringing of hammers on the anvil and the pulling of oars through the sea.”

Writing takes on important implications to reading instruction. When the student writes, the student is engaged in the act of reading and rereading. Writing demands both writing and reading. Reading alone does not demand as rigorous a commitment to the mind as writing.

Many teachers mistake grading for the act of correcting. Grading means to determine the quality of, or evaluate. These same teachers spend eons of their time correcting papers. They spend very little time grading. And detrimental to students, they bestow grades based on the correcting.

to play. Another is in the nature and number of interferences in the two portions of the composing process. In writing, the memory is seldom asked to recall more than the words and the structures in the given unit of discourse upon which the writer is working and, possibly, in the unit immediately preceding. In reformulating, the memory is asked to recall larger units of discourse for longer periods of time, again the “noise” of all intervening experiences. (In writing itself, the major form of “noise” seems to be the physical act of writing, the scribal activity.)

A third way they differ is in the relative roles of encoding and decoding in the two portions of the process. In writing, encoding—the production of discourse—is clearly dominant. Decoding during the act of writing for the most part consists of rereading one’s own recently formulated, and remembered, words in short, retrospective scannings. In reformulation, decoding plays a larger role because of the intervention of a longer period of time and the consequent forgetting that has occurred. One becomes more truly the reader, rather than the writer, of a given piece of discourse—that is, he views his writing from the point of view of a reader who needs all possible grammatical and rhetorical aids for his own comprehension.

Reformulation can be of three sorts: correcting, revising, and rewriting. The size of the task involved differs among the three: correcting is a small, and usually trivial, affair that consists of eliminating discrete “mechanical errors” and stylistic infelicities. Another-imposed task, correcting is synonymous with composing in the minds of many secondary and elementary school teachers of composition. Revising is a larger task involving the reformulation of larger segments of discourse and in more major and organic ways—a shift of point of view toward the material in a piece; major reorganizations and restructurings. While others may recommend correcting, the writer himself must accede to the value of the task of revising. Rewriting is the largest of the three, often involving total reformulation of a piece in all its aspects; or the scrapping of a given piece, and the writing of a fresh one.

Stopping represents a specifiable moment—
rather, moments—in the writing process because, of course, a writer stops more than once although the final stopping, like the first starting—the first placement of words on a page—has special, or exaggerated, characteristics. One stops at the ends of drafts or versions of a piece of writing; he stops when he thinks the piece is finished—when he feels he has worked through or worked out the possibilities, contentive and formal, that interest him in the piece; he also stops for the purpose of presenting a piece in a given state for the reading—and, usually, evaluation—of one or more others.

These moments and motives for stopping do not necessarily coincide. Again, whether or not a piece of writing is assigned affects stopping as it affects almost every other phase in the writing process. If an imposed deadline forces the writer to submit a piece of writing for reading and evaluation before he is content with his formulation, before he experiences closure, states of tension develop that make the act of stopping painful, if not impossible. Hypothesis: Stopping occurs most “easily” when one’s personal sense of closure occurs at the same time as a deadline imposed by oneself or by others.

The next moment to be noted is the contemplation of product—the moment in the process when one feels most godlike. One looks upon part, or all, of his creative and finds it—good? uneven! poor? If he has not steadily, or even erratically, kept his reader in mind during the process, the writer may think of him now and wonder about the reception the piece will experience in the world.

The final category concerns the seeming influence by a teacher or by a group of teachers upon the piece of student writing. There are five sources of information about this elusive matter of influences: student statement; student practice; teachers’ written evaluations of former pieces, if available; student descriptions of composition teaching experienced; and, the most difficult information to obtain, what those composition teachers actually do in the classroom as they “teach” composition.

This chapter represents a theoretical sketch of one of the most complex processes man engages in. Although it is roughly taxonomic, it does not

Maybe writing is never finished; maybe it is just abandoned.

How can teachers structure classrooms where the closure and the deadline are “easy” for the writer?

Portfolio assessment will allow for teachers and students to analyze and hypothesize about these influences of writing.
of course purport to be exhaustive. Nonetheless, almost every sentence contains or implies hypotheses upon which one could spend a lifetime in empirical research. Perhaps investigators other than the writer will find here materials for provocative questions and generative hypotheses about the composing process, particularly of students.

Chapter 7
Implications for Teaching
(excerpt)

This inquiry strongly suggests that, for a number of reasons, school-sponsored writing experienced by older American secondary students is a limited, and limiting, experience. The teaching of composition at this level is essentially unimodal, with only extensive writing given sanction in many schools. Almost by definition, this mode is other-directed—in fact it is other-centered. The concern is with sending a message, a communication out into the world for the edification, the enlightenment, and ultimately the evaluation of another. Too often, the other is a teacher, interested chiefly in a product he can criticize rather than is a process he can help initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support.

A species of extensive writing that recurs so frequently in student accounts that it deserves special mention is the five-paragraph theme, consisting of one paragraph of introduction (“tell what you are going to say”), three of expansion and example (“say it”), and one of conclusion (“tell what you have said”). This mode is so indigenously American that it might be called the Fifty-Star Theme. In fact, the reader might imagine behind this and the next three paragraphs Kate Smith singing “God Bless America” or the piccolo obligato from “The Stars and Stripes Forever.”

Why is the Fifty-Star Theme so tightly lodged in the American composition curriculum? The reason teachers often give is that this essentially redundant form, devoid, or duplication, of content in a least two of its five parts,
exists outside their classrooms, and in very high places—notable, freshman English classes; "business"; and in the "best practices" of the "best writer"—that, in other words, this theme somehow fulfills requirements somewhere in the real world.

This fantasy is easy to disprove. If one takes a constellation of writers who current critical judgment would agree are among the best American writers of the sixties—Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow; and their juniors, Gloria Steinem and Tom Wolfe—where, even in their earliest extensive writings, can one find a single example of any variation of the Fifty-Star Theme?

As to freshman English classes, the assumption is that freshman English is a monolith, rather than a hydra-headed monster with perhaps as many curricula and syllabi as there are harassed section men and graduate assistants. In "business," where can one write the Fifty-Star Theme except as a letter to an unheeding computer or as a Pentagon memorandum?

The absence of match between what is being taught secondary—and, undoubtedly, elementary—students and the practices of the best current writers is partially attributable to teacher illiteracy: how many of the teachers described in this inquiry, would one guess, have read one or more of the writers mentioned above? Yet without such reading of wholly contemporary writers, teachers have no viable sources of criteria for teaching writing in the seventies, even in the single mode they purport to teach. No wonder that many of the students who are better- and newer-read reject models that are as old as exemplars in the secretary guides of the late eighteenth century and as divorced from the best literature of their time. (This is not to say that the only models should be works of the late twentieth century; great works from all centuries are given the opportunity to reveal what they knew about the last twenty years of Pulitzer Prize–winning poets. Out of 150 teachers, middle school and high school, only 7 knew of or recognized more than seven of the twenty poets. Over 90 percent of the teachers admitted to never reading any of these poets. They all recognized every

help teachers and students use the format in a more interesting, interactive way."

Also, the online tool is simply a graphic organizer to help students map out (or organize) their information/thoughts before writing. As such, it could be used as an optional resource to support various forms of writing for those teachers who feel it will benefits (sic) the needs of their students (Bridget Hilferty, Project Manager, ReadWriteThink.org, International Reading Association).

“For better or worse”? In light of Emig's research, this so called “tool” is neither useful nor does it promote reading, writing or thinking. It is formula pure and simple and cannot be guised otherwise.

Gabriele Lusser Rico, in October 1988 issue of English Journal, wrote, “Against Formulaic Writing.” In that article, she states, “Indeed, the five-paragraph essay rewards formulaic writing, and formulaic writing is more often than not dull and lifeless . . . The human mind is not a straight thinker. It takes deep pleasure in shaping wholes meaningful to the writing self; for writing is first and foremost an act of self-definition, and the shape it takes is part of that self-defining process. If we superimpose a formula on this indeterminate process, we will hobble this innate mental capability and block diversity of expression” (57).

We were working with a group of English teachers in one of the largest cities in the United States, in one of the most progressive school districts in the city. They were given the opportunity to reveal what they knew about the last twenty years of Pulitzer Prize–winning poets. Out of 150 teachers, middle school and high school, only 7 knew of or recognized more than seven of the twenty poets. Over 90 percent of the teachers admitted to never reading any of these poets. They all recognized every
States very few teacher-training institutions which have intensive and frequent composing as an organic part of the curriculum for young and for experienced teachers of English. In England, such programs seem more common, as do experiences in allied arts through creative arts workshops. When, if ever, have our secondary school teachers painted, sung, or sculpted under any academic auspices? Partially because they have no direct experience of composing, English err in important ways. They underconceptualize and oversimplify the process of composing. Planning degenerates into outlining; reformulating becomes the correction of minor infelicities. They truncate the process of composing. From the accounts of the twelfth-grade writers in this sample one can see that in self-sponsored writing, students engage in prewriting activities that last as long as two years. In most American high schools, there are no sponsored pre-writing activities: there is no time provided, and no place where a student can ever be alone, although all accounts of writers tell us a condition of solitude is requisite for certain kinds of encounters with words and concepts. (If teachers assume that the student will find elsewhere the solitude the school does not provide, let them visit the houses and apartments in which their students live.)

At the other end of the process, revision is lost, not only because it is too narrowly defined but because, again, no time is provided for any major reformulation or reconceptualization. Despite the introduction of modular scheduling in a few schools, a Carnegie-unit set toward writing, and the other arts, still prevails.

Much of the teaching of composition in American high schools is probably too abstract for the average and below-average students. This inquiry has shown that some able students can translate an abstract directive such as “Be concise” into a set of behaviors involving the selection of lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical options. But there is no indication they were taught how to make such a translation in schools. There is also no indication that less able students can do such translating on their own—at
least, without constant and specific guidance by their teachers.

Much of the teaching of composition in American high schools is essentially a neurotic activity. There is little evidence, for example, that the persistent pointing out of specific errors in student themes leads to the elimination of these errors, yet teachers expend much of their energy in this futile and unrewarding exercise. Another index of neurosis is the systematic confusion of accidents and essences (one wonders, at times, if this confusion does not characterize American high schools in general). Even the student who, because of the health of his private writing life, stays somewhat whole is enervated by worries over peripherals—spelling, punctuation, length. In *The Secret Places*, as elsewhere in his writing, David Holbrook describes these emphases:

Children become terrified of putting down a word misspelt, particularly an unfamiliar word, that they don’t put down any words. I have seen it happen to a child of 8, who wrote long marvelous stories. After a year with a teacher who wrote ‘Please be more tidy,’ ‘Your spelling is awful,’ ‘Sloppy’—and never a good word, she stopped altogether. She wrote little lies, a sentence at a time, in a ‘diary.’ ‘Coming to school today I saw an elephant.’ It wasn’t true. But that was all she was damn-well going to write—neat, complete, grammatical, well-spelt, short, and essentially illiterate lies. For her the word had been divorced from experience. The deeper effect is to make the learning process one separated from sympathy, and a creative collaborative interest in exploring the wonder of being.4

What is needed for the reversal of the current situation? Assuredly, frequent, inescapable opportunities for composing for all teachers of writing especially in reflexive writing, such as diaries and journals.

For teachers at all levels, given the mysterious nature of learning and teaching, surely some value will adhere to having their own experi-

One teacher evaluator came into the room while the teacher and students were involved in the act of writing, he said, “I’ll come back when you are teaching.”

One teacher told us that spelling tests were a part of the culture of the school and community, and the culture could not be changed.

Change is happening. Once a teacher understands and teaches according to learning, reading, and writing processes, they cannot go back to the skill and drill approach.

ences shaped into words for pondering, perhaps into meaning and illumination.

Perhaps their students will gain benefits as well, as the result of such teacher training. Perhaps teachers will abandon the unimodal approach to writing and show far greater generosity in the width of writing invitations they extend to all students. One wonders at times if the shying away from reflexive writing is not an unconscious effort to keep the “average” and “less able” students from the kind of writing he can do best and, often, far better than the “able,” since there is so marvelous a democracy in the distribution of feeling and of imagination.

Finally, a shift may consequently come in who evaluates whom, and to what end. In this inquiry we have seen that the most significant others in the private, and often the school-sponsored, writing of twelfth graders are peers, despite the overwhelming opportunity for domination teachers hold through their governance of all formal evaluation. American high schools and college must seriously and immediately consider that the teacher-centered presentation of composition, like the teacher-centered presentation of almost every other segment of a curriculum, is pedagogically, developmentally, and politically an anachronism.

There is too much at stake for teachers not to make this change. Failure to do so threatens the very fabric of our society. The change reflects a geo-political shift as well as the educational one. Threatened paradigms that refuses to change are ultimately destroyed within. Already evidence of a newer paradigm can be seen. Adherence to a dying paradigm is not productive. Emig’s words speak truth—the world has little tolerance for anachronistic practices.

Chapter 3

3. Harold Rosen, Lecture, NDEA Institute in English Composition, University of Chicago, July 1968.
7. For an interesting discussion of the ordering of elements, see Francis Christensen’s “A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence,” Notes Toward a New Rhetoric, pp. 1–22.
9. Ibid., p. 433.
10. Ibid.
11. The terminology employed in this section is, for the most part, borrowed from the studies of hesitation phenomena, particularly from “Hesitation Phenomena in Spontaneous English Speech” by Howard Maclay and Charles E. Osgood, Readings in the Psychology of Language, pp. 305–24.
Chapter 7 (excerpt)

1. See the accounts, for example, in Sybil Marshall, *An Experiment in Education*; and David Holbrook, *The Secret Places: Essays on Imaginative Work in English Teaching and on the Culture of the Child*.

2. From *The Secret Places* by David Holbrook, p. 69. Copyright © by David Holbrook. Used by permission of the University of Alabama Press.