



Introduction

The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute has always emphasized the “process” of writing. That is why the preparation of curriculum units moves through carefully paced stages of planning, organization, drafts, revision, and editing—with opportunities at several points for responses from both the leader and the Fellows. In this seminar we took a closer look at this process as it might be engaged by both students and teachers.

We familiarized ourselves with various approaches that have emerged over the past twenty years. We looked at empirical research, personal testimony, essays in the theory of composition, and practical suggestions for classroom or individual work. Our common texts included David Holbrook’s *English for the Rejected* , Ken Macrorie’s *Telling Writing* , Kenneth Koch’s *Wishes , Lies , and Dreams* , Janet Emig’s *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* , Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations* , Linda Flower’s *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing* , and Peter Elbow’s *Writing with Power* . Supplementary group reading included J. L. Dillard’s *Black English : Its History and Usage in the United States* and William Labov’s *Language in the Inner City : Studies in the Black English Vernacular* .

On the assumption that a teacher of writing should be an active writer, we wrote brief position papers on selected aspects of these texts and used them as a partial basis for discussion. Week by week we also worked through Gabriele Lusser Rico’s *Writing the Natural Way* , doing the clustering, modeling, and writing of vignettes and poems that she suggests—and sharing some of the results with our colleagues in the seminar.

Because of our shared emphasis on pedagogical strategies, the curriculum units may seem less obviously diverse in detail than are those in the usual Teachers Institute volume. Many of us were delighted with Rico’s approach and incorporated certain of its elements. Throughout the volume there is repeated stress on certain pre-writing techniques (journals, free writing, clustering, brainstorming), on ways of diagnosis and analysis of errors, on procedures for teaching modes of exposition, narrative, and poetry, and on methods of revising, obtaining peer-response, and editing. Each unit, however, integrates such elements into a quite distinctive curricular setting. They range from settings in which a sequential curriculum is expected to those in which the teacher must provide short-term and individualized work for transient students. They range in levels of ability from special or remedial education in the middle school to college-preparatory English for high-school seniors. And they range in subject-matter or topical emphasis from home economics to journalism, from business education to Black and Hispanic poetry, from graphology to values clarification—with an array of more traditional composition courses in between:

A reader of this volume may therefore engage it in two quite different ways. She or he may select individual units for perusal or may look through the entire volume to spot interesting variations upon, or applications of, a given pedagogical procedure. In any event, we hope that readers will find this a profitable repertory of

approaches to a subject of importance to us all.

Thomas R. Whitaker

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