

To the Instructor

The Reading-Writing Workshop: Strategies for the College Classroom is an integrated reading, writing, and critical-thinking skills text intended for college-bound ESL students at the intermediate to high-intermediate level. It was designed to be used in tandem with a solid grammar instruction component. The underpinnings of the text are derived from research, teaching experience, and convictions. These underpinnings have guided the design and organization of the text.

The Underpinnings

- *Students learn to read by reading and learn to write by writing.* Instructors and materials should immerse students in reading and writing experiences.
- *Reading and writing are related.* Students learn about writing by reading; students learn about reading by writing. Greater familiarity with language structure improves reading and writing. This connection should be reflected in instruction and materials.
- *Good writing is a product of engagement with ideas.* Students have plenty to say in their writing when given provocative starting points and opportunities to engage with serious ideas.
- *The paragraph is the foundation of college writing.* Premature introduction of the essay is a disservice to students. Extensive paragraph writing experience enables students to move easily to essay writing.
- *Writing and reading are both recursive activities.* Instruction in reading and writing should allow for the recursive nature of reading and writing.
- *Fluency in writing and grammatical correctness are not the same.* Initially, writing should focus on students' needs to write their thoughts and ideas. Organization and modification of content are parts of the revision process. Grammar correction is part of the editing process.
- *Vocabulary is a key component of reading ability.* Students want and need explicit vocabulary instruction and practice.

- *Dictionary use is an appropriate tool for vocabulary learning, particularly as a confirming technique.* Despite context clues being heralded as the preferred strategy by many ESL professionals and dictionary use being disparaged, second language learners have always, and will always, use dictionaries. As Keith S. Folse points out in *Vocabulary Myths* (2004), students carry their dictionaries with them, not their grammar books.¹ Students should be given the opportunity to learn about and use dictionaries along with context clues to improve reading.
- *Adult students can and should be put in the “driver’s seat.”* Students should examine their learning metacognitively and make decisions about what works best for them.

Reading Content

The reading selections represent various genres including journalism, poetry, fiction, and academic prose. Many are authentic; others have been adapted in order to place challenging subjects within reach of intermediate ESL students. The selections have been carefully chosen with several choices made as a result of student input. Sentence structure and the degree of embedding, not length of a reading selection, were the guiding factors for selecting at this level. The topics are serious and provocative so as to elicit critical thinking in both discussion and writing. Some themes—such as religion versus science or the season of spring—may initially seem less apt, but these topics have proven most successful in producing critical thinking. Student writing responses for these topics in particular have been among the best produced at this level—products of genuine engagement with ideas and the desire to be heard.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary study is both text-driven and student-driven. As a text-driven vocabulary program, vocabulary work targets the Academic Word List (AWL), the words most commonly found in academic texts (Coxhead 2000).² As a student-driven vocabulary program, vocabulary work requires each student to select additional unfamiliar words for study. This dual vocabulary identification process permits individualization of vocabulary work while better ensuring the study of words students will encounter in future college courses. Vocabulary work is prompted after the first quick reading of each selection in which students identify unfamiliar words and note the underlined AWL words. This timing provides students with the needed vocabulary

¹ Keith S. Folse, *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

² Averil Coxhead, “A New Academic Word List,” *TESOL Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2000): 213–38.

knowledge for their more careful second reading and is similar to the common recursive strategy many second language readers use as they go back and forth between reading and checking vocabulary to confirm meaning. Furthermore, students annotate AWL and other unfamiliar words in the space provided, reinforcing new vocabulary and making it readily available during the second more careful reading. Students are taught to maintain a vocabulary journal. The two most common strategies used by college students, use of context clues and use of the dictionary, are taught in Appendix A of the text. Students are asked to think about their vocabulary learning and make their own decisions about strategies for their vocabulary study and vocabulary journal work. After completing the text, students will have worked with 149 of the 352 AWL words found in the text plus many self-selected words.

Reading

Reading exercises target skills that are characteristic of successful college students. The skills practiced in this text include *activation of schema prior to reading*, *extracting main ideas*, *literal comprehension*, *margin notation*, *logical inference*, *application of information*, and *critical thinking*. The layout of the text permits annotation, a common learning aid used by college students and a means of encouraging active reading. After careful reading and annotating, students progress from literal to inferential, to critical and interpretative comprehension activities. Because these skill exercises are repeated for each reading selection in each chapter, students receive adequate practice to gain proficiency. In addition to skill development, reading as a recursive activity is highlighted as students return to the reading selection to revise their understanding and to further their engagement with the writer's ideas. The reader's engagement with the writer is a prelude to writing in two ways. First, as readers observe what others say about a topic, reading becomes a source for thinking and writing because it provides topics, ideas, information and, most significant, reactions from which to write. Second, noticing how others write serves as a model for student writers and as an excellent starting point for writing instruction.

Writing

As an integral part of each reading selection, writing is treated as a way for students to interact with texts and ideas, both as writers and readers. Writing is both a prelude and conclusion to each reading selection. Students keep a writing journal in which they write their responses to a question related to the reading selection before reading it. They review and add to their responses after a pre-reading discussion and again after completing the reading and accompanying exercises. This collection of ideas, based on pre-reading knowledge and new ideas gleaned from reading, becomes the basis of a paragraph written at the conclusion of each chapter.

In addition to highlighting the reader-writer connection, writing is also treated as a polished product. Because beginning students usually deal with sentence-level writing, this is likely to be the intermediate student's first encounter with paragraph work. Assuming this starting point, writing instruction focuses only on the paragraph. *The goal is a thorough understanding of the academic paragraph, which will form the foundation for essay writing beyond the intermediate level.* In each chapter, writing instruction focuses on an element of the paragraph. These elements include appearance, organization, development, unity, and coherence. The writing instruction includes explanations, references to the reading selections as models, and practice activities. Following writing instruction, a paragraph is developed from ideas collected in writing journals. Peer editing guidance emphasizes revision in tune with the writing focus of the chapter. Editing for mechanics is left up to the instructor, permitting the instructor to coordinate this work with concurrent grammar lessons.

The Format

The Reading-Writing Workshop: Strategies for the College Classroom is organized into eight thematic chapters. **Chapter 1, To the Student: What's Important?** leads students through the format of the text, provides instructions for the activities, and asks students to think about their learning. Chapters are organized to include

- Opening activities
- Reading selections with vocabulary and comprehension activities
- Writing instruction and writing assignments

Opening Activities

Chapters open with a picture, a quote, and several questions for discussion related to the theme of the chapter. The purpose is to activate students' thinking about the theme.

Reading Selections

Each reading selection includes:

- *In Your Writing Journal*
- *Before You Read...*
- *Step 1: Read for the Main Idea*
- *Step 2: Read for New Words*
- *Step 3: Read for Answers*
- *Step 4: Read between the Lines*
- *Step 5: Respond to the Reading*
- *Return to Your Writing Journal*

In Your Writing Journal

Before each reading, students write their response to a question related to the topic of the reading selection. They are encouraged to write as much as possible based on their own knowledge and experience.

Before You Read

In the first part of Before You Read, students discuss questions related to the topic of the reading selection. Questions promote students to share their knowledge, opinions, and experience related to the topic. The second part includes background information about the reading selection. Students then add new ideas to their writing journal response.

Step 1: Read for the Main Idea

Students read quickly and without stopping to discover a writer's main idea. Completion of a short outline asking for the main idea and a few supporting details follows. During this reading students mark unfamiliar words to work on in Step 2.

Step 2: Read for New Words

Students study AWL and self-selected unfamiliar words they will need for a more careful reading. Students interact with vocabulary in an ongoing vocabulary journal. In this step, glosses, which are simply vocabulary annotations, are added to the reading selection in the extra-wide margin, further reinforcing vocabulary learning. This is an important step because the more students do with new vocabulary, the more likely they will retain it.

Step 3: Read for Answers

Students do a more careful reading of the selection and answer literal comprehension questions. Annotations are added to the reading, again in the extra-wide margin. This is a way for the reader to interact with the writer, thus increasing comprehension.

Step 4: Read between the Lines

Students answer questions requiring them to understand implied meaning and understand the writer's attitudes.

Step 5: Respond to the Reading

Students are asked to think critically and respond to questions that require them to move beyond the reading selection.

Return to Your Writing Journal

Students review their response to the opening question and add their new ideas based on the reading selection.

Writing Instruction

Chapters conclude with a **Writing Workshop**. A paragraph-writing skill is presented, clarified with examples from the reading selections, and practiced using a variety of activities. Students then select ideas from their writing journal responses to develop as a polished paragraph. After writing a first draft, students work with a partner to revise their paragraphs. A list of questions provides a format for students to help each other. Student writers consider their partner's input and make final revisions before submitting their final copy.

Internet Activities

There are many appropriate websites complementing the reading topics. For example, students could go to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to read about hand-washing techniques while working on Chapter 2. Because Internet addresses change frequently, they have not been included. Teachers and students are encouraged to take advantage of Internet resources.