AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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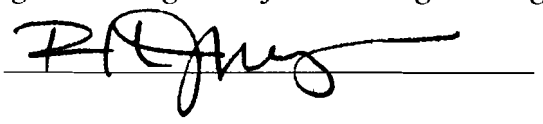
Abstract approved: 

"Critical" and "contributive" reading are two levels of reading more engaged than the "informational" reading most college freshmen do. Critical reading interrogates the text, analyzing it and investigating its origins and purposes. Contributive reading goes a step farther, consciously integrating the text at hand into the total fabric of the reader's knowledge on the subject, synergistically connecting the text to previous readings.

Those who bemoan freshmen's lack of reading ability and interest fail to consider that students are never taught critical and contributive reading. In an increasingly oral culture that values informational reading, students in fact receive no formal reading instruction after sixth grade. Among the data demonstrating the results is my own survey of Emporia State University's Fall 1998 freshman composition students.

Teaching reading in freshman composition involves making students conscious of their reading by carefully modeling and studying the behaviors of critical and contributive readers. After limited explicit instruction, reading can remain a background issue, occasionally foregrounded to reemphasize its importance.

Despite a pedagogical paradigm that for the last 30 years has insisted otherwise, freshman composition is the best place for reading instruction. Composition and reading instruction both seek to equip students to join academic conversations and contribute to their fields. Both fields study texts *as texts*. English departments, too, would benefit from taking charge of college reading instruction. Lastly, teaching reading in freshman

composition works when it's tried.

Most objections to such a strategy arise from expressivist pedagogy (e.g., students should "produce" texts, not "consume" them) and concerns about abuses of reading in the composition course (e.g., the composition course could become a literature course). But while further research will help determine the best strategies for integrating reading and writing, the need to boost freshmen reading ability demands that we begin that integration now.

RETHINKING DOGMA:

AN ARGUMENT FOR TEACHING READING IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Division of English

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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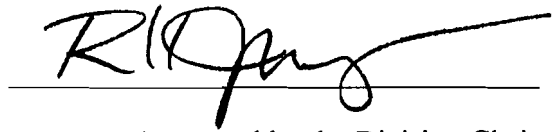
by

Douglas Downs

May 1999



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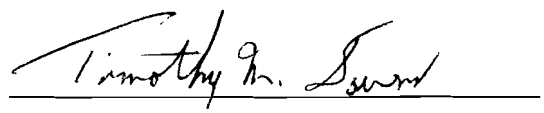

Approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

Preface

Nothing frustrates me more than having theory forced on me when it is obviously out of step with reality. This thesis began as a lashing out against dogmatic theory: the insistence that freshmen read better than they write; the insistence that writing is production and reading merely consumption; the insistence that good writing can somehow exist apart from good reading. I'm (occasionally) a practical person: I do what works, rather than what should work. I don't always know what to do, but I can pretty quickly figure out what *not* to do. Well, we've tried ignoring reading, and it hasn't worked—*that's* what not to do. Although more and more compositionists realize what I have realized, most still assume reading and writing just won't splice. I owe thanks to many people, therefore, for their belief in me and for allowing and helping me to grind this axe.

My greatest thanks goes to Russ Meyer, who agreed to chair my thesis even if he was skeptical of its thrust. His ideas, questions, and support have been tremendous. My original ideas for the scope of this study were fairly simple and self-contained: a short rant about the need to solve a problem. Russ would not allow me to take that road. He pushed me to conduct my own research on this issue and to identify solutions, not just problems.

My readers, Bill Cogswell and Ed Hansen, have done probably more than their duties in helping me strengthen my writing and my research, respectively. In addition, all the faculty and students who let me interrupt their composition courses to administer my survey deserve acknowledgment. My composition director, Rachelle Smith, has earned my thanks for raising my interest in this issue, and for introducing me to the politics that fuel (if not consume) our field.

In a project as large as this one has become, one quickly finds an inner core of scholars from whose work the project seems to take life. Though most of these people will

never know I exist, I will credit them anyway. In the realm of reading/writing theory, the work of Rick Evans, Nancy Spivey, and Robert Tierney and David Pearson has been invaluable. In the area of reading as it applies to composition pedagogy, Christina Haas, Margaret Kantz, and Lynn Quitman Troyka have been guiding lights. And, for tying everything in the reading/writing area together in a manner both useful for information and instructive to a guy writing his first extensive work, I have to thank Doug Brent. His book is tremendous.

Every completed project is the result of a lot more minds and talent than those that are directly involved. Julia Musha, Aaron Bremyer, Cindy Turner, and, yes, Mom and Dad have been my sounding boards, whipping posts, and agents provocateur for the last 15 months. Their suggestions, observations, and willingness to listen and commiserate often kept this thing going.

The same goes double for my wife Beth. Thanks, Hon, for never forgetting to remind me to eat. Can I have another Lego set now?

Finally, thanks to God for bringing me here and bringing all these good people (and Watson Library) into my life. This study might need a little more divine aid, but there's a lot here already.

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Introduction

It is human nature that makes us question ideas, carefully analyze them, and then discard the ones that don't work. It is human silliness that drives us never again to return to the discarded ideas to see if they might work any better than they used to. This study is an act of returning to a decision regarding composition rendered long ago: that the freshman composition course is first and only a venue for student writing; reading does not belong there. One result was the banning of imaginative literature from those courses. (Even if many composition teachers didn't, such was certainly the prevailing discourse from composition researchers and publishing teachers at the time.) Another was the banning of reading altogether. Reading, it was generally held, is the consumption of ideas; writing is the production of ideas; the purpose of the freshman composition course is to train freshman in the production of ideas; therefore, freshman composition students should not spend their time consuming other people's texts.

But circumstances change over 30 years. College teachers now stress not just recitative writing, but original and contributive writing. They used to rely on students' strong high-school reading skills; today students don't have those skills. Reading skills and interest among entering freshmen have declined since reading was kicked out of freshman composition, without a compensating increase of post-elementary reading instruction. Even if such skills had held steady, though, students would still need instruction in a kind of reading new to them, one which corresponds with their new freedom in thinking creatively and contributively and originally.

Entering college students are moderately good at informational reading. Unfortunately, college demands critical reading skills—the ability to break a text down, to

treat it as a dialogue with the author, to question and interrogate the text and create one's own reading of it. College also requires contributive reading, the ability to read one text using the whole of one's prior knowledge on a topic, including texts on the topic that have already been read—the ability to integrate one author's ideas into an existing (or developing) constellation of ideas on that subject. Students never receive instruction in this kind of reading (they really don't receive formal instruction in reading at all after sixth grade), and college teachers seem to assume that their students know how to do it already. It seems counterproductive to assume that students should, as college teachers did during graduate study, simply absorb this reading ability.

One of the biggest impediments to my own students' learning is their inability or refusal to perform college-level reading. My freshmen (and I will claim *most* freshmen) simply cannot or will not do it. Even if they have any interest in reading, they lack the training and practice to know how to critically engage a text, to construct it, to contribute to it. This problem affects few disciplines more than that of composition, the teaching of college-level expository writing. As important as reading is (or should be) to college students in their classes in general, it is even more important in the writing class, for here the focus is specifically on the creation and refinement of texts. Freshman composition courses also focus on integrating others' texts into texts of one's own creation, primarily in research projects and papers. Students *do* this in other courses, but in composition courses they *study* and *practice* that process. In composition, the text is central.

What seems to have gone largely unnoticed by the composition community, however, is that there is more than one way to compose a text. Certainly composition courses focus on the physical creation of texts by writers; but readers, too, create a text as they read, this one a mental or "virtual" text. In composition courses more than any others,

students must read and read closely and read accurately if they wish to succeed. Sadly, however, as students' reading skills have declined, and as their interest in reading has dropped to historic lows, only isolated peeps have been heard about the effect of poor reading skills not just on students' research tasks but on their own texts. Everybody knows, after all, that composition courses must privilege student texts and writing skills, not professional texts and reading skills.

It is this apparent lack of concern that has spurred me to pursue this issue. One composition instructor of my acquaintance is fond of defending the practice of peer response by insisting that "our students are much better readers than writers." There's just one problem: in my limited experience, and in the experience of some others, students are *not* better readers than writers. Sure, most of them do fine at basic word comprehension, and often even general comprehension—but most of my students write just "fine," too. Perhaps one third of my students enter my writing classes capable of solid college-level writing; perhaps a half of them (to be brutally honesty) *leave* my class able to earn A's and B's on papers in other classes. But only two or three students in each class enter at what I consider a level of reading ability that would make them successful at thinking critically and connectively, able to synthesize new knowledge from old. And, in composition courses as I have been trained to teach them, no one else leaves with that level of reading ability. The students I see, and those I read about, are *not* better readers than writers.

But college teachers try to pretend that, since we aren't supposed to be affected by this problem, we aren't; that since we aren't supposed to have to fix this problem (isn't that high-school stuff?), we *don't* have to fix this problem. And when we find that merely pretending the problem doesn't exist will not work, we downgrade our curricula and our syllabi. We add more white-space to our textbooks to satisfy our students'

television/entertainment cravings. We cut the information offered in the textbooks to the bone and put in pretty headings, outlines, and summaries by the armload. When students won't even read *that*, we shorten or altogether cut out reading assignments. And students, who have escaped high school without a sense of the value of reading, and without the ability to critically evaluate texts, now graduate from college without that ability as well.

The bald fact is that freshman composition students are being hurt by their refusal or inability to read critically and constructively. I can propose only one solution: give them the reading skills that they need. But where? Not in science, history, math, or literature courses: those are content courses. Besides, students in those courses write perhaps one or two research papers at most. Yet, no one wants to add a course, and a dedicated reading course would be a nightmare for teachers and students.

I will argue that the freshman composition course should incorporate instruction in critical and contributive reading. It is freshman composition students who need these skills the most, and they who will become *everyone* else's students. Freshman composition will be the most useful place for, and the place to benefit the most from, reading instruction for its students. Teaching reading in freshman composition will improve the teaching, the writing, the reading, and the course itself.

This study attempts to persuade in two stages of three chapters each. Part One—with chapters that define "critical and contributive reading," demonstrate the need for this level of reading in college, and show why students currently are unable to do such reading—defines the problem. Part Two offers a solution by detailing how reading could be taught in freshman composition, showing why freshman composition is the preferable venue for college reading instruction, and addressing predictable objections.

Chapter 1

Critical and Contributive Reading

> *Texts are nothing but black marks on paper. They cannot act, and anything they "do" is actually being done by the reader.*
> *Doug Brent (29)*

One of the most common reactions I get when discussing the teaching of reading in the freshman composition course is a question along the lines of, "What do you mean by 'teaching reading'?" Before any fruitful discourse can occur on the issue of teaching reading in composition classrooms, participants would do well to know exactly what kind of reading is under discussion, and have at least some background on how people actually read. This chapter explains exactly the kind of reading on which this thesis focuses. We begin by examining various available levels of reading development, and then focus on describing the topmost levels, critical and contributive reading. How those levels translate into actual reading behavior forms the second part of the chapter, which describes the particular reading strategies critical and contributive readers use. By chapter's end, readers should have a firm grasp on what I mean when I use the terms "critical" and "contributive" reading.

There are many levels, or kinds, of reading, of course, and the kind of reading done by a reader depends on her level of development and her purpose. The kind of reading one does when reading the side of a cereal box can be much different from the kind of reading involved in reading a newspaper editorial, or closed captions on a television show, or instructions for a VCR. And, obviously, a first-grader's reading of these media will differ

from a college student's reading of them. Out of these different kinds of reading, we must define specifically the sort of reading that is the focus of this study. In doing so we have the help of many reading researchers who have built their own descriptions of kinds of reading.

While indefensible jargon is never far from the field of reading education, Chall wins my award for unjustifiable syllabification with his "developmental conceptualization model" of reading, which in translation is an ideas-about-development model. Chall's reader goes through six stages of reading development, which Chall links to grade levels (representative of when readers first develop these skills) (Carter-Wells 46). Because colleges have remediation programs to deal with students who read only at grade-school levels, this study largely ignores that problem. The stages we care about are the last three: Reading for Learning (4th-8th grade), Multiple Viewpoints (high school), and Construction and Reconstruction (18 and older) (Carter-Wells 46).

Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, originally in the 1940s and since updated, use terms more closely synonymous with mine (informational, critical, and contributive) than are Chall's. They divide reading into *inspectional*, *analytical*, and *syntopical* levels (v-viii). Christina Haas uses the terms *content*, *function/feature*, and *rhetorical* to suggest the same levels from the standpoint of depth of involvement with a text (26-27). In addition, several writers speak specifically about the critical and contributive stages. Richard Altick and Andrea Lunsford seem to use the word *critical* to apply to both (2). David Pearson and Robert Tierney use the concepts of *literal*, *critical*, and *thoughtful* readers (144), and Doug Brent calls the highest level of reading *efferent* (35).

I use the terms *informational*, *critical*, and *contributive* to represent the three levels. I offer my own names mostly out of dissatisfaction with the existing ones, each of which seems to focus on one *feature* of a given level, rather than offering a simple, descriptive

name for the level itself. My terms, therefore, work to describe the overall outcome or *product* of the reading at each level: information, critical thought, and contribution to the ongoing conversation. My terms, then, should summarize, pulling together other names for a particular reading level. Comparatively common words should also "de-jargon" this study.

Still, these multiple names are useful. Each name that refers to a particular level of reading sheds light on various features of that reading. Adler and Van Doren's name for informational reading (inspectional) shows *how* it is done, Haas's term (content) shows *what* is inspected, Chall's term (reading-for-learning) shows *purpose*, Pearson and Tierney's term (literal) shows the *approach* taken to interpretation of the text, and Brent's term (casual) reveals the *attitude* of the reader. Together the terms comprise *informational* reading, reading done simply to pull words off a page and read either for one's own information needs or for the author's general intent. My task for the remainder of this chapter is to examine particularly the critical and contributive levels of reading.

Reading Levels / Kinds of Reading

Downs	Informational	Critical	Contributive
Adler and Van Doren	Inspectional	Analytical	Syntopical
Altick and Lunsford	Uncritical	Critical	Critical
Brent	Casual	Efferent	Efferent
Chall	Reading-for-Learning	Multiple Viewpoints	Constructive
Haas	Content	Function/Features	Rhetorical
Pearson and Tierney	Literal	Critical	Thoughtful
Other Adjectives	Consumptive	Analytic	Synthetic

Defining levels of reading is difficult because some operations are common to more

than one level, and often it becomes difficult to see two distinct kinds of reading instead of a simple continuum. (Note that neither Brent nor Altick and Lunsford truly make a distinction between the two.) However, it is the few clear differences between the levels that make their conceptual differentiation important. One way to classify reading hearkens back to Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive educational objections, noting the direction of a reader's focus: a *critical* reader (working at Bloom's analytical level) considers primarily the text at hand, the particular text that she is at this moment reading. A *contributive* reader (working at Bloom's synthetic level) builds the text at hand into an existing web of ideas or other texts. The critical reader's focus, in other words, is on making sense of a particular text by itself, while a contributive reader's focus turns outward, using the text at hand to make sense of a wider context. In terms of purpose, no value distinction exists between these sorts of reading. In terms of development, however, contributive reading is a higher-level skill than critical reading—it requires critical reading skills, but moves beyond them.

Both kinds of reading are easily separated from lower reading skills. In *Teaching College Students to Read Analytically*, Cooper, Evans, and Robinson define critical reading by opposing it to informational reading. To them, critical reading "transcends . . . mere vocabulary recognition or text recall," going beyond high speed or clear comprehension in reading (2-3). Altick and Lunsford, too, describe critical reading as a higher level—the difference is one of "reading an essay for immediate, literal meaning and reading it for suggested meaning" (2). Taking a more literary approach, Robert Scholes insists that a critical reading cannot leave a text alone—it "must indeed get somewhere, must open some new perspective on the text read, and not simply double or repeat the text respectfully" (78). It must be, after a fashion, "disrespectful" (78). In the table above, I offer the adjective *consumptive* to describe informational reading: the wholesale and undiscriminating

consumption of a text. We consume texts when we read quick and dirty, for raw information or to get the gist of a text quickly.

Critical reading, and contributive reading after it, are not mere consumerism. Critical readers "know when words are used fairly" and are sensitive to shades of meaning (Altick and Lunsford 18, 30). The task of a critical reader is analytical and evaluative: to see how a text is put together, and to form an opinion about how its construction matches what is known of the author's purposes. Critical reading seeks first an *accurate* reading of the text—by which I mean simply seeing and reading the text as it actually appears. This can be as simple as not reading "experiment" when the text says "experience," or as difficult as picking out the path of a dense and complex sentence, rather than stopping after the first main clause and assuming one has the general idea. After accurately reading the text, the critical reader goes in the opposite direction, stepping *away* from the text to make the inferences required for moving from literal meaning to Altick and Lunsford's "suggested" meaning. One example might be recognition and interpretation of irony. Careful analysis, breaking down the text into parts, can be an aid to forming such inferences. All these steps contribute to some evaluation of the text, which is in effect the reader positioning herself in some relation to the text. At the end of this critical reading task, the reader has added, consciously and carefully, her own ideas to the existing text, creating a new imaginary or "virtual" text, the one in her mind, which blends her own ideas with the author's.

A contributive reader, along with these steps, takes another. She turns the text outward to compare its fit within a framework of previously read texts and currently held ideas, molding this text and others into a new array of meaning, a synthesis, a *contribution*. Unlike critical reading, which generally serves at most as a conversation between a reader and a particular author, contributive reading allows the reader to view a text as one voice in

an ongoing conversation, a voice which, along with various others, the reader can adapt. By reorganizing or completely remaking others' ideas, the reader develops original contributions to whatever discussion she has joined.

Although the distinction between critical and contributive reading is admittedly fine, other reading teachers and theorists have noted it as well. Bloom defined analysis as detecting organization and relationships among parts in order to better understand them (144). He defined synthesis as "working with elements, parts, etc., and combining them in such a way as to constitute a pattern or structure not clearly there before," suggesting that it "most clearly provides for creative behavior" (162). Brent links the conversational element of reading to persuasion: "The question 'when should I change my mind' . . . is synthetic rather than analytic," requiring the reader not to break down just one argument, but instead to take a group of claims representing different perspectives "and actively construct a single view satisfactory to herself" (13). Adler and Van Doren devote a chapter of *How to Read a Book* to "syntopical" reading, the joining together of multiple texts after having analyzed, or taken apart, individual texts (309-36). Even Chall, whose model has high-school readers handling multiple texts, reserves a higher level of "reconstruction," actually putting those texts together again in a new and personally useful way (Carter-Wells 46).

Again, I want to stress that contributive reading is of higher value than critical reading only in terms of the reader's development. In terms of purpose, the two are of equal value. Particularly in literary or aesthetic reading, a reader may often wish to focus only on the particular text at hand, insofar as it does not in itself draw her attention to other texts. Other texts, particularly communicative or persuasive ones, demand a contributive reading to be most useful. The purpose of the reading should dictate the approach. It is important to note, though, that only contributive readers can make the choice in the first

place about which reading level to apply.

Having discussed critical and contributive reading in these general forms, we should also look at what behaviors and strategies mark them. In doing so, I will first examine the cognitive operations behind any sort of reading, and then offer a particular model to show which strategies happen during the critical or contributive reading process.

When discussing reading operations, some caveats apply. The first is that most of the activities relating to the reading process occur unbidden and unconsciously in the minds of "fluent" readers. Each has been internalized during the struggle of learning to read, and they need never enter a reader's mind after that. However, each can be, and often is, performed *consciously* by active, engaged readers. This distinction is crucial to understanding the reading process and different levels of reading. The second caveat is that each operation applies at varying distances from the text. "Distance" is a qualifier Lynn Quitman Troyka uses to differentiate between operations involving letters or words and those with a more global focus ("Closeness" 194). For example, schemata are used close to the text, to make words from letters, and farther from the text, to make meaning of sentences, and still farther away, to make sense of the entire work.

Reading theorists have for at least 25 years held that reading is an act of constructing meaning through a combination of the blueprint offered by the text and information developed through the reader's prior knowledge, schemata, and predictions. Attempts to construct meaning are shepherded by predictable problem-solving strategies.

The question of how much meaning inheres in the text itself is as problematic for general reading theorists as it has been for literary critics of the past 60 years. The question is complicated by the fact that reading theorists usually deal with texts that are expository or persuasive rather than literary. While it is easy to conclude that the reader is completely in

control of the meaning of a Wallace Stevens poem, it perhaps is somewhat more difficult to conclude that the text of, say, the *MLA Handbook* has no inherent meaning. One particularly sane and lucid voice on this issue is Brent. His stance unabashedly communicative and rhetorical, Brent nonetheless provides reasonable solutions to the quandary of to what degree a reader should seek a text's inherent meaning, or the author's intended meaning. He rejects the view that language is completely indeterminate, as such a reality would "make rhetoric impossible by denying its most fundamental postulate: that we can deliberately and predictably influence each other through language" (19). He does, however, conclude that "meaning does not reside exclusively in the text" (22).

Rand Spiro clarifies the issue: "What language provides is a skeleton, a blueprint for the creation of meaning. Such skeletal representations must then be enriched and embellished" to match the reader's situation and needs (245). One operation in this process is *instantiation*, whereby imprecise, ambiguous, and muddily-defined terms are infused with a reader's particular meaning. As most language fulfills that function (Altick and Lunsford 268), instantiation occurs almost constantly. Anderson and Shifrin define "instantiation" as narrowing or focusing a word's meaning (338). For example, if 10 readers encounter the word *dog* in a text, they do not think of precisely the same creature. Instead, they create a unique mental picture from experience or imagination. Anderson and Shifrin suggest that such a process happens on a large scale with reading. Text provides a much "leaner" context than life does (342).

Instantiation is only one operation affected by the use of *schemata*, sets of concepts that can be activated by any concept within the set. David Rumelhart uses the example of the word *buy*. When a reader encounters that word, the schema which holds the entire context of a buying situation is activated. That context includes other concepts, such as

sell, *market*, *bargain*, *money*, *goods*, *product*, *spend*, etc. (42). This is an example of a schema influencing the use of prior knowledge. Schemata also affect the operations of predicting and problem solving.

The work of literary critic Wolfgang Iser is useful for explaining prediction, or hypothesis, in reading. He calls the reading process one of "anticipation and retrospection," where the reader advances a hypothesis about what is coming next and then compares that hypothesis to the text (1229). From this Iser derives his theory of reading "horizons," where the vista opened by one sentence is modified by later sentences (1222).

Several researchers have shown how prior knowledge, predictions, and schemata combine to form the reading act. Rumelhart suggests that when we hypothesize or predict, we do so on the basis of activated schemata. These schemata may have been activated by something in the text, or by something in our minds. In any event, the worth of the schemata are then shown by what the text does next. A "double-take" is usually the result of a previously accepted schema suddenly proven wrong (42). Schemata are fueled by established knowledge. Troyka explains how prior knowledge, or *redundancy*, affects prediction. Without it, she says, reading slows to a crawl. Readers use prior knowledge to predict the next few words, the next idea, or the direction of a whole text. The "anticipation and estimating" of what will come next allows us to read fluently ("Closeness" 191).

Farther from the text, this combination of prior knowledge, prediction, and schemata influences our interpretation of meaning. One good demonstration is the following text:

> Every Saturday night, four good friends got together. When Jerry, Mike, and Pat arrived, Karen was sitting in her living room writing some notes. She quickly gathered the cards and stood up to greet her friends at the door. They followed her into the living room but as usual they couldn't agree on

> exactly what to play. Jerry eventually took a stand and set things up. Finally, they began to play. Karen's recorder filled the room with soft and pleasant music. Early in the evening, Mike noticed Pat's hand and its many diamonds. As the night progressed the tempo of play increased. Finally, a lull in the activities occurred. Taking advantage of this, Jerry pondered the arrangement in front of him. Mike interrupted Jerry's reverie and said, "Let's hear the score." They listened carefully and commented on their performance. When the comments were all heard, exhausted but happy, Karen's friends went home. (Anderson 372)

Anderson found that people who enjoyed cards and games interpreted this event as a card game, cuing on words like "cards," "play," "hand," "diamonds," "score," and "performance." People with musical backgrounds, on the other hand, read the piece as an account of a musicians' jam session, cuing on words like "notes," "stand," "recorder," "music," "tempo," "arrangement," "score," and "performance." This text was carefully constructed to be as ambiguous as possible, but it provides good evidence for the operation of schemata even in less ambiguous texts.

Reading, then, involves a huge amount of inference. Even a "literal" reading of the text will involve some inferential work on the reader's part. Often, in fact, people cannot differentiate between what a text actually said and the information they added to the text as readers (Spivey 277). Sometimes, of course, the process fails or grinds to a halt. Normally, according to Ann Brown, fluent readers work on something of an "autopilot," doing a lot of skimming even when they're reading closely for accuracy. But when a reader develops an intolerable lack of understanding, she switches from skimming to "debugging" strategies (454-55). Jill Olshavsky found that these strategies may include personal identification, use

of context, substitution of synonyms, rereading, inference, hypothesizing, and addition of outside information (664)—all of which seem fairly standard and hardly mysterious.

This theoretical talk of construction and schemata does have correlates in the real-world realm of getting a text read. One of the most popular areas for reading research seems to be in strategies readers use to make meaning out of ink marks, and quite a list has accumulated. Such research is useful to us in examining the actual behaviors of critical and contributive readers. The simplest way to examine these behaviors is to follow a model of reading as composing, proposed by Tierney and Pearson. Their model shows how the basic operations of predicting and problem-solving are actually incorporated into a reading process. Incorporating the steps of *planning*, *aligning*, *drafting*, *revising*, and *monitoring*, the model is attractive in that it is adequately but not overly complex, and in that it plausibly correlates the activities involved in reading with those in writing. It is, of course, virtually a cliché that reading processes are non-linear and recursive. The conventions of persuasive, academic prose demand that I describe this process in a linear fashion, but please bear in mind that there are no such easy distinctions during the actual manifestation of these acts.

By *planning*, Tierney and Pearson mean "goal-setting and knowledge mobilization" (263). Goal-setting is analogous to recognizing purpose, the reason a particular text is read by a particular reader. "Knowledge mobilization" corresponds to Troyka's "redundancy," or prior knowledge ("Writer" 310). The planning activities of fluent readers include the use of cognitive skills and practical strategies. The reader makes predictions on various levels—even something as simple as reading a title forces the reader to make a prediction (Campbell 9). A critical or contributive reader will plan her reading, and better readers will make more plans (Kennedy 443) and more elaborate plans (Spivey and King 22). In setting these plans, the reader will rely on strategies such as overviewing, skimming, or pre-reading,

and may set predictions by a comparison of the pre-read text with prior knowledge or past experience (Kennedy 439, 445). Pearson and Tierney emphasize the fact that a critical or contributive reader is likely to view the text as a blueprint for making meaning, rather than as containing that meaning in itself (150).

In Tierney and Pearson's model, *alignment* actually follows *drafting*, because those writers think of alignment as the stance a reader takes toward a text and its author after a first reading, or the roles a reader plays as she reads (265). However, I place it between planning and drafting because some conscious aligning activity happens during pre-reading (in this sense, alignment is a special form of planning)—learning about the writer, or getting a feel for the slant of a piece and the reader's slant toward that slant. The other end of alignment happens during drafting and revision. Here readers will get a sense of themselves as *audience* (Kennedy 437), particularly in relation to where they stand and where the author expects them to stand. They will review their predictions about alignment, and possibly change that alignment, or make new predictions. In doing so, they will compare or synthesize the text at hand with previous texts, and perhaps modify their purpose or task (Spivey and King 21-22).

A reader is *drafting*, according to Tierney and Pearson, when she deals directly with text on the page (264). Scholars and teachers are perhaps most familiar with and conscious of the activities that take place during drafting, the actual reading of the text—thus, few of these activities or strategies will come as a surprise. The strategies include marking the passage (underlining or marginal notations), taking notes, adjusting time spent or reading speed to one's needs and the difficulty of the material, using the context to interpret or overlook unfamiliar words, and interpreting the text on the spot. Mary Kennedy found that better readers predictably do these activities more often and better than "less-fluent"

readers. Another angle on drafting strategies is inference. Cherry Campbell notes that proficient readers use inference to produce meaning (9); Nancy Spivey found that they infer structure or organization, and even supply organization to disorganized texts (263-64). Better readers also keep a more global focus; they keep the whole text in mind instead of becoming focused on individual (word-level) difficulties (Campbell 11). In sum, "more accomplished" readers simply expend more effort than "less accomplished" readers (Spivey and King 22).

The same difference in effort seems to carry over to *revision* effort in reading. Tierney and Pearson are well-justified in calling the first meeting of text and mind a "draft." Brent refers to what the reader produces as a "virtual work" (24). Even Peter Elbow, not exactly a sympathist to reading theory, acknowledges that reading is every bit as much a drafting process as writing is (15). The term *drafting*, of course, is highly suggestive of this need for re-reading and re-thinking a reading (Tierney and Pearson 270). According to Campbell, proficient readers are frequently backtracking to check and correct readings of sentences or even sections (9). Revision is usually quick and subliminal, happening throughout the reading process (Elbow 15). Kennedy's study notes that fluent readers are more likely to reread texts and to change their emphasis or point of view on what they read (443, 445). Dan Memring points out that a "thoughtful" approach to a text involves slow, careful reading and revision of that reading that involving "deliberate weighing of concepts and evidence and reflection upon implications" (225). Richard Beach and Lillian Bridwell state that revision prepares readers for future reading, acting as a "retrospective summary" that lets readers "review previous material in order to comprehend new material" (129).

Revision activities begin to blend into *monitoring* strategies, which readers use to check for comprehension and to evaluate their treatment of the text. Although Tierney and

Pearson put monitoring—the evaluation of a particular reading (270)—at the end of the reading process, it should be clear by now that none of the other stages could happen without monitoring. It is the function that determines when any of the other functions need to be started, modified, or stopped. (In fact, there is a case to be made that many of these functions happen simultaneously—not just close together in time, but literally concurrently. Schemata make that possible.) Proficient and fluent readers are constantly working for coherence (Egan 15, Spivey and King 21). They do so by bringing their reading process "under conscious metacognitive control, to make it a true act of decision making" (Haas 22). Activities related to this stage include evaluating, commenting on their own comprehension, and self-questioning (Kennedy 439, 445). Memring says the process is one of getting "detailed comprehension of the full chain of reasoning—not just the main idea" (225). This monitoring, which occurs during drafting and during revision, often manifests itself in a formalized post-reading stage, when the reader makes and adjusts outlines or notes of the text, checks which questions have been answered, and connects and organizes the content of what she's just read (Kennedy 439, Spivey and King 22).

Let me take a few lines to summarize all these strategies and activities. The various studies on reading strategies use a number of different adjectives to describe the reader (fluent, proficient, accomplished, thoughtful, etc.), but clearly they're all describing either an unusually involved informational reader or else a critical and contributive reader, because many of these operations come into use only in those high stages of reading development. A critical and contributive reader, then, uses all the standard "advanced" reading strategies such as underlining and taking notes and reading a piece more than once. She reads with purpose and interest—a critical or contributive reader may be bored, but she cannot be disengaged. The critical or contributive reader brings everything she's got to the table:

personal experience, prior reading, imagination, comprehension aids, and the text itself. The reader will consciously adjust her reading speed, depth, and strategies for the material she reads and the context in which she reads it. And when she sees the need, she is quick to revise her reading process or the virtual text she's produced. Reading in this fashion leaves the reader tired and drained—it is difficult, and takes effort and energy.

Critical and contributive reading are not merely comprehensive or analytical readings, they are not done with speed in mind, and they are not designed to soak up the greatest amount of information in the shortest amount of time. A critical or contributive reader will have the skills to read for speed, information, and basic meaning should the reading situation call for them, but she will not do these things automatically. These styles of reading are not meant to be memory aids. Ernest Goetz and Bonnie Armbruster found that when people read in this fashion, they remember less well what was specifically said and remember better its overall meaning (205).

This, then, is critical and contributive reading—as clearly defined and differentiated from other kinds of reading as possible. Really, there is nothing particularly special about this type of reading; it is the kind of reading that scholars and professors do all the time. In the next chapter I will explain why their students also need to read critically and contributively.

Chapter 2

College Students as Critical and Contributive Readers

> *If students are not taught the skills of creating new statements through evaluating, assimilating, and responding to the prior statements of a written conversation, we offer them the meager choice of being parrots of authority or raconteurs stocked with anecdotes for every occasion.*
>
> *Charles Bazerman (661)*

Bound up in the claim that reading should be taught in freshman composition courses is the claim that college students should be able to read critically and contributively. Without support for that assertion, there is no sense in making the larger argument. Is critical and contributive reading appropriate or necessary for college students in general, and freshman composition students in particular? When, and why, should they be able to do it?

College students in general should be able to read critically and contributively for a number of reasons. First, by coming to college students join a community that values texts much more than do most of our culture's institutions. This argument is the well-trod "academic discourse" line of reasoning: students need to be fluent in the modes of discourse in the academy, and the primary mode remains textual, and will for the immediate future. In addition, our goals should match those adopted some time ago by NCTE: "The overarching goal of education is to develop informed, thinking citizens capable of participating in both domestic and world affairs" (Purves 11). Becoming a critical and contributive reader, it seems to me, is one step along that path. In teaching this sort of reading, we would basically be pushing our students to become academics—they would, after all, be mimicking the behavior of their teachers. One way to combat the rampant careerism that makes students more interested in the degree than in the knowledge and thinking behind it would be to *give* them a career during their four years with us. In other words, perhaps if we

treated our students as academics, they would feel constrained to act as academics.

Our students should be critical and contributive readers (not merely informational readers) not only because of the character of the institution in which they have elected to participate, but also because they are, in fact, joining conversations, and they should be conversant. As I will document farther on, "reading" to most students is skimming the greatest possible amount of information from the page in the least possible amount of time. While such an approach may work well for reading textbooks, as David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky admit in their book on teaching reading in a writing class, we should be asking ourselves whether we want our college students to read only textbooks (284). If not, then reading beyond an informational style will be required.

When we ask our students to write research papers, for instance, we ask them to enter a scholarly conversation (Greene 34). Lorraine Higgins writes that "college students are expected not to transmit previously known ideas but to transform the ideas" (74). That generalization may be too sweeping; it is true that in many courses and even majors, the main task is to compile and relay information, rather than contribute to it. Contributive reading may not be necessary in an introductory biology course, or any course that demands mostly the understanding and memorization of a content area. But just as certainly, students will at some time be called on to analyze and synthesize multiple, often conflicting sources into a coherent whole that expresses their idea on the topic. Margaret Kantz states this reality less theoretically: students "may need to learn to think of the paper, not as a rehash of the available material, but as an opportunity to teach someone, to solve someone's problem, or to answer someone's question" (83). Even when such papers are not a part of a curriculum, most courses, particularly liberal arts courses and advanced courses in most fields, will ask students to connect and synthesize from different voices—to read

contributively. On a yet broader horizon, contributive readers will be able to synthesize information and concepts from radically different fields—to make connections between their history course and their business course, for example. Merely informational readers are likely to leave disparate concepts in the neat, discrete boxes by which universities are wont to dole them out.

Along with the points that college students have joined a text-driven institution and are in fact being asked to join conversations in their fields, students face a simple reality that favors the critical and contributive reader. Without a doubt, those who do not read in this fashion are poorer students than those who do. This fact surely stems from the reality that the university is a place of texts and is staffed by people who value their production and consumption. Regardless of the reason, however, study after study, including my own survey for this project, affirms that people who use critical and contributive reading strategies tend to be better students, sometimes even in objective terms such as GPA (Cooper, Evans, and Robertson 7, 37; Haas 27; McGinley 228; Olshavsky 668). This is not to suggest that the reading *makes* one a better student; in fact, that seems unlikely. Instead, while better reading *enables* one to earn higher grades, the real connection probably is one of dedication and engagement (Olshavsky 668). A good student's critical and contributive reading habits are merely one set in a constellation of habits that are characteristic of good students. If a student is serious enough to read critically, he or she is probably serious enough to do all the work that earning high grades normally demands.

My own survey of students in Emporia State University's freshman composition courses supports this conclusion (see Appendix 1 for survey form). The habits of critical and contributive readers—such as underlining, notetaking, rereading, and time spent—correlate not only with higher GPAs, but with the importance placed on reading to

begin with (Appendix 3, Tables A and B). Those with higher grades use behaviors of good readers and care more about their reading. One unexpected finding of the survey was that students' perceptions of the amount of assigned reading actually fluctuate in correlation with GPA and importance placed on reading (Appendix 3, Tables C and D). Better readers and better students, on the whole, think there is more reading to do than do poorer students. While it may be impossible to determine whether critical and contributive reading *make* one a better student, it is accurate to claim that those readers usually *are* the better students.

As important as critical and contributive reading are for college students in general, they are of much greater importance to those college students enrolled in composition courses, because such courses are less about the content of texts than they are about texts for their own sake. In other words, composition courses focus on texts less for what they say than for how whatever they say is actually said. Unique in the constellation of college courses, the subject of the composition course is the text as text.

Not even literature classes have such a single-minded focus. No matter what stance a class takes toward a literary text (deconstructionist, formalist, historicist, etc.), they are still examining it as an aesthetic artifact that happens to be a print text. Their intention, in most cases, is less to figure out how a text creates a particular impression than it is to argue over what impression the text creates. This is a tricky distinction: I would not claim that literature classes *never* examine the text as text; formalist readings are in fact likely to do so. But I would claim that literature classes do not spend the majority of their time at that level, that such examination is not their main purpose. It takes little time to decide that Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a very strong text; most literature classes will move beyond that to focus on the myriad effects such a strong text creates. In short, the purpose of literature courses is most often to learn how to appreciate a text; the purpose

of a composition course is to figure out how to build a text. The result of this narrow focus on texts as text is that participants in a composition course are *primarily* readers. Of all the courses a college student might take, none presents a greater demand for critical and contributive reading than does the composition course.

First, composition students must be able to read their own work critically. With the adoption of "process"-based composition curricula, revision has leapt to the forefront of the composition classroom. How does a student revise his writing if he is unable to read it critically? Poorly, at best. In fact, a study conducted by Richard Beach and Sarah Eaton made clear that how students read affects their revisions (165). We might also cast the question in terms of audience: if a writer must think of his audience when he writes, and the audience is a *reading* audience, then that writer must think like a reader. The key to such thought, of course, is for the writer to realize the difference between the ideas in his head and the ideas in the audience's heads—the perennial problem of the writer reading what he *thinks* he has said rather than what he has actually said. That is why accurate, critical reading is so important to the writing and revising process. Other compositionists who have testified to the fact that improved reading skills can be turned back on a writer's own text include Mina Shaughnessy (233) and Thomas Newkirk ("Anatomy" 139-40).

Not only does the reigning process philosophy demand good critical reading skills of writers themselves, it also demands those skills of peer readers or responders—the writer's classmates. Since so many composition courses now depend on a writer's "peers" to guide the writer in revising his paper, the writer places his welfare in those readers' hands. We place on composition students the responsibility of becoming the audience for other writers, specifically for the purpose of evaluating that writing—not a task for the weak, undedicated, or informational reader. When students read poorly in these situations, or when they read

only informationally, they penalize the writer—not, of course, intentionally, but just as surely as if it were intentional. A critical reader brings to the text an ability to read closely and accurately, analyze the text, and suggest ways of strengthening it that an informational reader simply misses. A contributive reader goes a step beyond even that help by using her connectivity and synthesizing skills to show the writer content issues he may not have noticed. In addition, in the controlled context composition courses provide, ideally the writer deserves a sensitive and competent reader who is, essentially, "worthy" of that writer. Should a writer go to the trouble of constructing a contributive, connective, and allusive text, he ought to be provided with a reader who will appreciate that trouble. In the real world, of course, writers are often not so lucky, but in the sheltered and constructed context of the writing classroom, it really should not be so much to ask. In short, an informational reader is simply not reading at the level that peer response, as used in today's composition courses, demands.

Composition students also use reading in the course of writing instruction. For instance, they may be called upon to read models or their instructor's comments, and both demand levels of reading higher than informational. Although whether or not, or how much, models are useful in guiding writers is still an open question, enough composition curricula and instructors make use of models to make addressing them worthwhile. In a seminal study of the effect of models on writing instruction, Peter Smagorinsky found that, to be most effective, models must be used by careful, close, critical readers. "While a mindful reader . . . might learn procedures for good writing through the diligent study of the masters, most novices need more direct instruction in composing strategies," he concludes (174). Erika Lindemann, whose opposition to the use of literary texts in the composition course is legendary, confirms the need for models, but insists they be used only for analysis

of form, *not* for interpretation of content (122-23). If such a division of form and content is possible in the first place, it will once again require a very capable reader who can alter her reading strategies with purpose. Certainly there are approaches other than modeling available to teach writing, but the student's inability to read creatively and critically negates the power of a valuable pedagogical tool.

Perhaps the ultimate challenge to a student's critical and contributive reading ability is the act of reading the instructor's comments on papers. A critical reading might lead the student into conflict with the most direct authority figure in the situation—hence the extraordinary impetus against that critical reading. Most students probably would not even consider criticizing an instructor's comment. If the instructor is commenting as a reader (rather than a grader), however, the comments may be highly analogous to comments an editor makes on a professional text—so it is not unreasonable to assume that students should be taught (and allowed) to weigh the instructor's comments in a critical fashion. In addition, the instructor's comments create a great demand for contributive reading, since the student must "dovetail" two texts: his own, and the instructor's. As a result, figuring out the instructor's comments often requires great inferential ability on the student's part. Nina Ziv studied students' use of instructor's comments and found that the less explicit comments are, the less students are able to use them (378). We should perhaps not skip the most obvious of realities regarding instructor's comments: non-invested or disengaged readers will not read them to begin with. Few readers who do not read creatively or contributively will even bother, I suspect, with the comments in the first place.

Critical readings of one's own text, critical readings of peers' texts, working with models, and reading instructors's comments all deal with the text *as text*. We should not forget, however, that reading skills can affect *content* in a text as well. Perhaps the best

example of this is reading used as an invention technique. Especially in second-level composition courses, the focus of the class turns to making students producers of knowledge. This social-epistemological approach to writing heightens students' awareness of the dialogical nature of texts—the idea that other writers' thoughts can help the writer generate his own ideas on a topic, that a reader can enter into a conversation with a writer before (or while) turning to writing herself. One can't read informationally, or even analytically, and expect to experience the conversational, dialogical flavor contributive reading brings. That reading ability also helps writers *organize* their content; according to Spivey, "better readers produced texts with tighter structures" (267).

In this sense, too, the need for contributive reading has increased dramatically in the last 30 years of composition instruction. Prior to the late sixties, composition courses were almost exclusively dedicated to the reading of other texts followed by analytical commentary on them. Charles Bazerman calls it the "traditional/apprentice" approach. "The way to good writing was to mold oneself into the contours of greatness," a method that works in content-oriented courses because students must master old content before creating new (656-57). Now, however, we value the student's expression and content, even in expository matters. We want students to make their own contribution to the subject on which they are speaking. Bazerman says that we have learned "to offer sympathetic advice on *how to* rather than *what not to*" (657). Contributive writing, of course, demands contributive reading—as I mentioned earlier, if we are going to invite students to join the conversation, we must improve their "listening" ability as well as their "speaking" ability. Scholarship is not (or at least, should not be) a monologue.

In sum, it seems eminently reasonable to expect college students to apply critical and

contributive reading skills to their studies. Like of the previous chapter, this conclusion may come as no surprise. *Of course* college students need to be able to analyze a text and synthesize multiple texts in order to offer a contribution to the ongoing conversation in a particular field. To delineate the reasons was almost a waste of space. Nonetheless, we know where we are: we've identified a kind of reading, and many reasons for students to do that kind of reading. The next question is, how much of that reading do students do?

Chapter 3

The State of Critical and Contributive Reading in High School and College

> *As readers and writers within a school context, [students] gradually lose [their] sense of enjoyment.*
> *Rick Evans (338)*

> *Most students view reading competency as the ability to read rapidly a single text once with maximum recall.*
> *David Pearson and Robert Tierney (270)*

> *It is in their comparative lack of familiarity with processes of reading . . . that students are found wanting now.*
> *John Heyda (145)*

Critical and contributive reading among college students is a nice ideal, but unfortunately that's all it is. The reality is something instructors with a semester under their belts know about: obstacles to college-level thinking and learning, layered like an onion. Many students, instructors learn, won't even do assigned reading. Of those who will, many won't comprehend even the basic point of the text. Of the ones who can, most are unable to do any further thinking with the text. Those few who go beyond simple comprehension almost all stop at critical reading. These are the verbal-minded students who actually got something out of high school literature classes. Peel off all these layers of the onion, and what remains is a tiny core of students who read contributively. The idea of conversing with an author or many authors is alien to most college students. The evidence that follows is overwhelming: most of our students cannot or will not read creatively or contributively.

While societal issues do come into play (television doesn't *help* matters, certainly), most of the blame for this situation rests squarely on the shoulders of "educators." With that term I indict every teacher and every administrator in grade school, high school, and

college, who follow the lead of the culture at large. Sweeping, I know. But this chapter explicates the chain of events that comprises a student's education.

Before I begin laying out evidence, let me offer a scenario to summarize students' reading experiences throughout their education. Reading instruction begins in kindergarten. Until about sixth grade, kids can't get their hands on enough books. About that time, reading education stops. At the same time, the purpose of reading changes: instead of reading for pleasure or for answers to self-initiated questions, students read to assimilate information for tests. This purpose consumes them. At the end of a day filled with school reading, most students refuse to read anymore. At the same time, the only available reading classes are literary. But students receive little training in true literary reading (a kind of critical reading). By graduation, only a small group of verbally blessed students reads for anything other than tests or quick information.

When they enter college, students encounter new purposes for reading. They still have plenty of informational reading to do for tests. But unlike high school, which largely emphasizes feedback, college often requires students to consider and modify the information somehow. Hence the demand for critical and contributive reading. Met with this demand, students find their informational, memorizational reading strategies unhelpful. Students who have for 12 years simply told "what the story is about" now face questions like "Why did you call this article a story?" and "Why would someone write an article like this?" Most college students receive no instruction in this new reading. In fact, most self-help reading texts focus on the greater *amount* of reading, and its more complex vocabulary, and teach students to skim and speed-read. Only three types of students survive in this new reading environment: the verbally blessed who are experienced with texts; the mentally strong who gut it out by sheer determination; and the many students gifted with (or condemned by)

professors who have decreased or eliminated reading assignments. All the while instructors and administrators believe it is the lower schools' fault that students can't read.

To support the preceding scenario, this chapter includes evidence from teachers' accounts, studies, surveys, and even test scores. Because college faculty and administrators, whether openly or tacitly, rightly or wrongly, feel that lower schools are responsible for solving their own problems, pre-college reading instruction deserves our attention first.

There are five trends in pre-college reading education—four causal, one resultant. The "resultant" trend is that students read informationally rather than critically or contributively. More on that in a while. The first causal trend is the abrupt disappearance of reading instruction by sixth grade, a trend since at least the 1930s. In a 1939 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Prof. James Mursell of the Columbia University Teachers College criticized reading instruction not for what it does, but for when it stops. "To all intents and purposes [the average student] remains a sixth-grade reader until well into college" (qtd. in Adler and Van Doren xi). In the mid-seventies, Virgie Granger made the same complaint. If a student misses (or "doesn't get") reading instruction the first time, there is no second chance, she protested: "There is no sensible reason why reading could not be taught as a legitimate subject through 12th grade and on into college" (4-5). In the mid-eighties, Pearson and Tierney once again highlighted the problem. "Secondary reading programs are necessary for even the best of readers," they argue, because reading is developmental and there is much to learn about reading that sixth graders simply can't cognitively handle (170). Haas, in the mid-nineties, still levels the charge: we forget about reading after elementary school (19-20).

"Surely," one might think, "these students take literature classes in high school. They'll learn to read more there. This 'lack of reading education' is being exaggerated." Unfortunately, such is not the case. Literature classes prove to be not a solution to the

problem, but instead the second causal trend. High school literature classes deal almost exclusively with imaginative texts read for their "correct" interpretation. These classes devalue nonfiction reading. Why are these problems? According to Applebee, most American high schools demand expository writing (qtd. in Newkirk "Students" 297). We know, further, that *other* high-school reading is for learning information and preparing for tests (Greene 37). Lastly, the focus placed on the literature itself is informational: What is the story about? What does it "mean"? Thus, literature classes appear to be singularly useless in relation to *any* reading education purpose. Reading expository texts critically would be excellent. But literary texts, even if they *are* read critically, have little connection to readers' other needs. Abrahamson and Carter suggest that "since nonfiction has traditionally been ignored in the literature classroom, it's highly likely that young adults may not know how to respond honestly to informational books" (55). Actually, if they're reading for a test on the informational book, they'll respond competently, as long as the test asks only for the information itself. One common complaint on tests is that the answer to a particular question "wasn't in the book." The teacher expected the student to extrapolate the answer by combining information from more than one place.

The approach many teachers take toward literature is a sign of the third causal trend, the "sit down, shut up" effect: high school teaches students to silently absorb texts, not to converse with them. Apparently, children *are* to be seen and not heard. Resnick and Resnick have suggested that teaching all students to read informationally has been this century's educational challenge (200)—any kind of reading beats none at all. But Peter Elbow, failing to separate informational and contributive reading, lambasts schools for privileging reading over writing. Their emphasis on reading, he says, "locked schools into sending a pervasive, deep-level message: don't speak until spoken to; don't write your own

ideas till you prove that you can reproduce correctly the ideas and information of others; . . . as a student you should be a consumer of knowledge, not a producer" (17).

Consumers reading for test preparation use a number of strategies. They read quickly, searching out key ideas. They do not necessarily read for comprehension, particularly with textbooks, which generally offer the finding aids of bold print and outlines, making a text's organization and main points obvious. Strategies are also dictated by subject matter. Science texts, for instance, can quickly be processed with the above strategies. History texts, however, are often narrative—and since students have so much experience with narrative, they handle these texts well. But if the test asks *when* World War II happened, there's little sense in learning *why* it happened, even if the text is sufficiently complex to offer that information. Even if the test asked why the war happened, would students looking anywhere but at the brief textbook explanation for the answer? Students do the reading they have to do, and with enough practice they do it well. Since school is a "cramming" project, students learn "cramming" reading.

The best way to read textbooks for test information is by skimming, moving quickly, skipping untestable detail. Such texts are specifically designed to have information picked off the surface. Interestingly, standardized tests reward the same reading behavior. Students encounter difficult vocabulary and tough comprehension questions. But neither would be so difficult if the test didn't also privilege speed; the comprehension sections are difficult not because the answers are hard to find but because they're hard to find in a hurry.

Even informational reading, however, is often too taxing for students who hate reading, won't do it unless they have to, and then do as little as possible—the fourth trend leading to informational reading. Much of the responsibility lies at the feet of an education system that consistently saps the joy and pleasure from learning, reading being no exception.

Studying family reading and writing habits, Deborah Brandt found that "in general, . . . there was a reverence expressed for books and their value and sometimes a connection between reading and refinement or good breeding"—reading, she says, is "a deeply sanctioned activity in the culture" (464). But in a study of "literate life histories," Evans discovered that while most college students remembered with pleasure their reading and writing experiences before and during grade school, most also reported a sharp change in attitude toward reading around junior high. "They become," he says, "nonreaders and nonwriters who avoid reading and writing and, in fact, must be forced to read and write" (338-39).

There are, of course, people who for some reason keep reading and writing anyway, but they are decidedly (and increasingly) odd. Some people, it seems, are simply hardwired to enjoy and excel at experiencing and manipulating language. Nothing a school can do will keep those people away from reading and writing, any more than a bad chorus class could keep a singer from singing. But these students are *so* rare. In 1981, the National Assessment of Education Progress found that teens did little pleasure reading, would not read for extended periods of time, and preferred movies to books. Older students were less committed to reading than younger ones (Purves 2). After more than 15 years, the situation has not improved. NAEP figures for 1996 show that 54 percent of 9-year-olds read for fun, but only 32 percent of 13-year-olds do, and by the time they turn 17, only 23 percent of students read daily for fun (United States 116).

However, schools are not solely to blame for students' skill in and attitudes toward reading. Reading, especially critical and contributive reading, is *hard* work. It takes time. It is not visually stimulating. It requires concentration. And the less skilled the reader, the harder it is to do it. Because of these attributes, reading is simply not an activity that fits American culture in general. We the people (especially the younger people) dislike spending

too much time on any one thing. We don't much like concentrating. Attention spans are now more accurately measured in seconds than minutes. I'm not interested in valuating these changes—it doesn't matter whether shorter attention spans and a growing need for visual stimulation are good or bad; they simply *are*. Even the resurgence of text in electronic formats is a hyperspeed spectacle that rewards the wandering eye rather than the penetrating eye. (There's much to wander and little to penetrate.)

Nor is concern about the effects of this growing electronic orality on individuals unjustified. In an excellent study on teaching grammar, Rei Noguchi collects hard evidence for the effects on writing and reading of ours having become a more oral society. The study he cites compared writing in the fifties and seventies, but today's reader will be instantly familiar with the examples. During that time, the use of oral "diffusives" (such as *thing*, *interesting*, *great*, *amazing*, etc.) increased dramatically in freshman writing. So did signs of unfamiliarity with the use of common words in print: run-together words (*a lot*, *noone*), confusion of similar-sounding words (*to/too*, *their/there*), and misspellings. He attributes these less to poorer education than to decreasing exposure to print texts. Noguchi also cites increasing comma errors (4 times as many), use of *you*, and fragments (3 times as many). While these changes are not necessarily solely the result of oral influences, together they "suggest an increased and probably pervasive influence of today's oral culture on writing," Noguchi concludes (86). Less reading, he insists throughout the book, has a direct effect on people's familiarity with the conventions of print and grammar.

Our culture provides only one incentive for reading: a genuine love of language and text. Stacked against that are these many disincentives. What's in it for the reader? How can the non-reader be convinced? The problem is exacerbated by a spiraling cycle: lessened reading experience makes reading more difficult and less rewarding, which in turn lowers

interest in reading and hence degrades reading experience even further. While schools have a great deal to do with making reading less rewarding, proponents of literacy are not aided by a society that makes reading mostly unnecessary and emphasizes its drawbacks. Are you tired already? You've still got, like, sixty-four pages to go. So do I.

This, then, is the educational and experiential background of the typical college freshman. How does it translate into actual reading practices and skills? Much information is anecdotal, but it is supported by a scattering of studies and surveys, and corroborated by most test data. Together, they build a convincing picture of student reading behavior.

Perhaps the most noticeable behavior is that of not reading at all. Mary Daane says that she and other faculty see a "general disdain" for reading among freshman composition students (184). According to Cynthia Horgan, another composition instructor, "always only a handful of students would read the essays sufficiently to discuss them," a problem her colleagues see too (44). Daane, Horgan, and all the other teachers disappointed in their students' lack of reading are not imagining things. According to national norms published yearly by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), students who report doing no free reading at all vary from 15 percent at highly selective private colleges to almost 32 percent at open-admission public institutions, a slight increase from the year before. In addition, the number of students who read more than one hour per week declined in every category (gender and ownership and selectivity of institution) (Sax et al. 79). NAEP figures back this up: the number of 17-year-olds who never read jumped from nine percent in 1984 to 16 percent in 1996 (United States 116). In my survey of ESU students, nearly 50 percent reported free-reading only twice per week or less (for at least 10 minutes), and more than 15 percent reported reading fewer than 10 pages per week (see Appendix 2). Apparently, many students won't pick up a text if they're not forced to.

Perhaps as interesting is *what* the freshmen in my survey reported reading. Almost 88 percent of respondents said they read magazines or newspapers. Of the 35 percent who read only one type of text (magazine, nonfiction book, fiction, or electronica), three-quarters opted for magazines. Only 25 percent of students read nonfiction books. I suspect attention span drives this reading choice: the short, to-the-point articles and picture-laden pages of most magazines are a much closer fit to the culture in which we live than are the dry, text-filled pages of a purely factual book.

My readers might question the relationship between free reading and schoolwork. Aside from the common-sense, intuitive links among amount of reading, skill with handling text, and resultant willingness to read, hard evidence suggests that the behaviors do dovetail. First, review the HERI numbers; recall that students at highly selective institutions (public or private) do more free reading than students at less selective schools. Since HERI determines "selectivity" by SAT scores—the higher the average SAT score of its students, the more selective the school—these numbers actually show that free reading varies *with SAT average*. There are two plausible reasons. First, recall that reading tracks closely with how "good" a student one is. NAEP tests in fact show that reading proficiency decreases as free reading decreases—a 30-point (out of 500) difference in 1997 (United States 116). Second, practice is important to reading, and we can suspect that much of what the SAT tests in terms of reading is general rather than solely academic skills.

Evidence from my survey supports the connection between free and school reading. The trend is most noticeable at the extremes, but present throughout: students who do more free reading are more likely to complete all or most of their assigned reading than those who do less free reading. Those who do the least free reading are most likely to complete the least assigned reading—less than 10 percent (see Appendix 3, Table E).

My survey requested information not only on free reading but also on the amount of homework reading students perceive they are assigned, how much of that they complete, and how much time they spend doing it (see Appendix 2). Some numbers are revealing. About 40 percent of students estimate they're assigned between 10 and 45 pages of homework reading per week. Another 36 percent estimate they see between 45 and 100 pages per week. For our purposes, the most interesting numbers are at the extremes. Only 13 percent of those surveyed reported reading all or almost all (more than 90 percent) of their homework. About 15 percent reported reading none or almost none (less than 10 percent) of it. The greatest number of respondents (45 percent) spend one to three hours a week reading homework. Nearly 30 percent spend less than one hour per week, and only 6 percent reported spending more than 6 hours a week on reading. There were no anomalies in a comparison of amount of reading assigned, amount read, and time spent reading: the more assigned reading actually completed, the longer it took, without obvious exceptions.

These raw numbers have little impact without context. Most of these students carry 12 to 18 hours—four to six classes meeting two or three times per week. By the old standard of "two hours of homework for every hour in class" (which no sane person uses anymore because it would problematize college) we arrive at figures of 24 to 36 hours of study time every week. Perhaps this clarifies the impact of three-quarters of ESU's students spending three hours or fewer reading schoolwork each week. Granted, spending even 24 hours per week on college homework might seem excessive to today's students. But *three*? Of course, the fact that roughly only one in ten students completes all her assigned reading might explain why so many students seem not to have read the assignment.

One to three hours a week obviously leaves little time for critical or contributive reading. When college students *do* read, they quite predictably apply the strategies that got

them to college in the first place: they're most likely to read informationally, in a search not for truth that must be dug and scraped out of multiple texts, but for the revealed truth that comes in religious texts and on silver platters. William Perry, in his seminal study of "intellectual and ethical" development in college students, suggested that they move from a right/wrong dualism through total relativism to the realization that they must make their own non-relativistic "commitments" (58). The work of most cognitivists since then has reflected this theory. Haas has found that freshman readers focus on facts and information while more mature students such as Ph.D. candidates use a much fuller range of strategies to come to terms with a text (27). Some of those "strategies" include considering the author's identity and agenda, responses from other audience members, and how the work fits with other texts of varying perspectives on the issue—in other words, a rhetorical analysis (24). Kantz similarly concludes, "Students expect factual texts to tell 'the truth' because they have learned to see texts statically, as descriptions of truths, instead of arguments" (79).

History textbooks are a particularly good example of Kantz's claim. Students, even college students, perceive descriptions of history as factual, clear, and accurate. Admit there might be more than one perspective on Columbus coming to America? Then we won't know what the Truth is! Behind this attitude lies sad reality: it is easier to memorize than to think. Secondary education isn't totally to blame for the fact that students would really rather not have to think for themselves. Quality thought is tiring and dangerous, and even people who have not experienced this know it instinctively. Regardless of the cause of the problem, however, the fact remains that most college students see texts as repositories either of information or at most opinions no more valuable than their own (Perry's dualist and relativist positions). They do not see texts as arguments or conversations, the products of living, breathing human minds.

Few students have systemic comprehension problems when reading informationally. Bartholomae and Petrosky found that even their lowest-testing basic writing students still had literal comprehension. Their problem was not in processing sentences (291). However, given that the vocabulary and syntax encountered in college texts can be much more complex than anything students have seen before, comprehension problems do arise. Brown found that even college readers may not realize when they don't understand something (458). In my survey, students were asked how well they usually understood assigned readings; possible answers included *completely*, *very well*, *somewhat well*, *not very well*, and *hardly at all*. Of 560 respondents, *none* selected the "hardly at all" option (see Appendix 2). Usually, at least three or four students in my own classes appear to understand their reading "hardly at all"; it's curious that no students thought so. Another comprehension problem Brown noted was structural: she finds that many students read texts as narratives whether they're narratives or not (466). This finding aligns with Newkirk's observations that his students often refer to essays as "stories" ("Students" 297), and with mine and colleagues' experience that our students, too, refer to essays and articles as stories. Newkirk also suggests that students may see repetition in a text as a comprehension aid, rather than "padding," as teachers are likely to interpret it ("Students" 291).

I hope it is becoming clear that students are not wholly to blame for their reading performance. Certainly we should expect them to complete all their reading, especially if most are assigned fewer than 100 pages per week across all their classes. But I might not spend more than 3 hours reading 100 pages at an informational level either. And I wouldn't spend extra time and effort reading critically or contributively if such reading were not demanded of me. Students would be slightly daft if they did so. Tierney and Pearson reiterate that "most students view reading competency as the ability to read rapidly a single

text once with maximum recall" (270). Bartholomae and Petrosky found that students believe "difficulty in reading is a sign of a problem, either theirs or the book's, and not a sign that there is some work for a reader to do" (287). Think about that for a moment: students who read a text only one time, finishing it as quickly as they can while remembering as much of it as they can, *think they are doing what we want.* They believe work means failure. We in higher education appear to have something of a marketing problem in terms of reading.

Of course, our problem might be that reading is barely researched or taught at the college level. Reading instruction largely ends, as we have seen, by sixth grade. High school students practice informational reading, and they are rewarded for high skill in such reading by good test scores and admission to the best colleges and universities. Despite the need for critical and contributive reading as demonstrated earlier in this study, reading simply becomes invisible as students enter our domain.

We have examined students' pre-college reading training. Let us now shift our attention to their reading training in college, particularly in relation to writing courses. (The slight shift in focus to reading/writing is necessary because there's simply nothing available on pure reading at the college level. Carter-Wells notes that reading disappears in college because it is lumped, along with speech and writing, under "communication skills" [52].)

The first difficulty in studying college reading is a dearth of research. Russell Durst, analyzing articles in *Research in the Teaching of English*, found that since 1984, 62 percent of articles have focused on composition and nine percent have focused on literature, but none "specifically dealt with reading or reading processes" (quoted in Haas 19-20). Other journals, such as *College Composition and Communication* or *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, may have given the subject somewhat better coverage. But Durst's study fits a trend observed by nearly all of the few scholars who *do* study college reading.

This shortage of research particularly characterized the field before the mid-1980s. Kennedy found in 1984 that "research on study-type reading for writing tasks is scant" (437). Judith Irwin studied reading/writing research from 1900 to 1984 and saw an increase in the study of college reading during the seventies and eighties. Prior to the seventies, she found, most studies were conducted in education departments and thus carried a K-12 focus. During the seventies (the "psycholinguistic" period), the bulk of research was done by psychologists, linguists, and literature specialists. Unlike the education studies, these often used true experimental designs (275). From 1982-84, most of the research was performed by rhetoric and composition specialists. Much of the theoretical work in reading/writing connections is being undertaken from the reading side of the fence; the practical, pedagogical research comes largely from the composition side.

It would be fitting, as well, to review how college has historically taught reading. One study of reading texts through the decades found that little has changed in the way reading is taught in the few cases where it *is* taught. Norman Stahl, Michelle Simpson, and William Brozo divided texts into five categories: study skills, reading skills, speed-reading, vocabulary development, and college survival (17). The researchers concluded that

> (a) a consensus across texts as to what constituted effective study methods did not exist, (b) research evidence for most of the advocated techniques was missing, (c) adequate instruction and practice for presented skills and subskills were limited in scope and validity, (d) transfer value of many practice activities to actual postsecondary reading and study tasks was in question, and (e) reliance on impressionistic evidence rather than research and statistical evidence was the norm. (31)

They found that, while new ideas occasionally surface in texts, "traditional factors, even of

questionable worth, are maintained" (31). In other words, "the sheer power of tradition in college reading is of such force that content and instructional presentation remains static through the succeeding generation of texts" (31-32).

Stahl, Simpson, and Brozo's findings parallel the content of several books I examined (Adler and Van Doren, Altick and Lunsford, Taylor). Along with the standard advice on underlining and rereading, most seem to focus on comprehension, with some advice for critical reading. Taylor and Altick's books especially fit this description. Adler and Van Doren's reading text does offer a chapter at the end on "syntopical" reading. If such reading textbooks and self-help books from the seventies and eighties are any indicator of reading instruction, what little instruction there was would seem to have focused on speed, vocabulary, comprehension, and some critical reading. It seems, then, that today's reading instruction has been around since at least before the G.I. Bill.

Such "instruction" begins with a basic assumption, on the part of faculty, that students already read critically. Mature reading is just something that college students, by virtue of being college students, should know. Brent unwittingly makes this case when he writes, "Students will internalize rhetorical reading in the same way as [professional scholars] have presumably internalized it: by doing it" (115). Sure—if they make it to graduate school, where most students are finally forced to read at that level (although, once again, without any explicit instruction). Certainly most freshman composition texts include a chapter or two of reading instruction. But as noted above, these at best show students some basic strategies for critical reading. The text aside, however, how many instructors take even a class period to walk their students through the sort of reading they expect? Why should they?—college students, after all, already know how to read.

Thus, it is not only possible but likely that students can march through

undergraduate studies blithely ignorant of the reading that faculty would, in an ideal world, like them to do. Do faculty assume that students will read a piece twice if they don't understand it? Do they *tell* students of that expectation? It seems just as likely that many faculty are ignorant of students' actual reading practices: many, perhaps, are so happy to see the reading done that they don't question *how* it was done. They may also assume students read texts the same way faculty do. Besides, if the student scores well enough on tests, why would either the student or her instructor really care how she read the assignment?

New college teachers quickly learn that students won't do much reading. In my experience (personal and anecdotal), it takes only a few weeks for a teacher to be staggered by his or her students' resistance to reading assignments. It may take as much as a semester to discover how poorly students read the assignments they *do* complete. This realization, when it hits, connects and explains many problems: Why so many common-sense facts get garbled in papers. Why peer reading does so little good for so many students. Why students blow off teachers' marginal comments that say, "To get an A on this paper you should. . . ." Why statements about a text start off with, "This story was about. . . ." Why so much inaccurate quoting and flat-out plagiarism keeps happening even after repeated attention. If poor reading is not the *only* cause of these problems, it is definitely *a* cause.

The college teacher's first reacion seems to be blame and denial. *Why don't high schools teach kids to read? It's certainly not my job!* By correctly pointing out that, really, students should have been reading critically by 11th or 12th grade, higher education somehow resolves, or at least absolves itself of, the problem. Although certainly some isolated cases must be out there, I have found no institution that requires of its entire freshman class a reading course analogous to the freshman composition course. Even reading researchers who understand the problem fall prey to the assumption that colleges

shouldn't have to teach the reading they demand. Pearson and Tierney, for instance, say that the problem should be addressed in high school: "Secondary reading programs are necessary for even the best of readers. We feel the culprit behind the lack of advanced developmental reading programs is an inadequate model of what it means to be a reader, especially a thoughtful reader" (170). They are absolutely right, but blind to the fact that even if such programs began tomorrow, several freshman classes would have missed the instruction. Such instruction also involves teaching students to think for themselves, something to which high schools have not historically been well suited, but to which colleges have. By insisting that high schools clean up their own mess, we deflect attention from the fact that *college* students now regularly graduate with sixth-grade reading skills.

Of course, almost all colleges do offer some reading courses, primarily remedial but occasionally associated with some form of "study-skills" class. However, these courses still teach the vocabulary, speed, and literal comprehension skills that mark informational reading. These courses aren't designed to teach *college* reading so much as to get students up to the reading level they should have been at in high school. In most cases, only the worst readers are required to take such classes. Another indicator of the problem: in 1995, 13 percent of college students were enrolled in remedial reading courses (Hansen 4).

Students also have the avenue of "self-help" reading instruction, such as courses or texts in methods like speed reading, SQ3R (survey/question/read/recite/review), and more recent approaches like "muscle" reading (Ellis 103). Dave Ellis's book, *Becoming a Master Student*, is notable for its almost childish approach to reading that seems to be targeted, oddly enough, at nontraditional students. His chapter on reading addresses problems college readers most frequently face, such as boredom, sleepiness, and those ever-present "mental mini-vacations" (103) (where the eye scans the page and the mind picks up nothing

because it's thinking instead about breaking for a Scooby Snack). "Muscle" reading, the author claims, will "decrease effort and struggle by increasing energy and skill" to allow students to actually "spend less time on [their] reading and get more out of it" (103). The used-car sales pitch continues as Ellis later concedes that muscle reading might look like more work "at first" because "effective textbook reading is an active, energy consuming, sit-on-the-edge-of-your-seat business" (103). When I first read that, I thought Ellis had become confused and was describing his son's Sega reading *game*. By now the reader should be feverishly curious: what is "muscle reading"? In essence, visualization: if the textbook discusses metamorphic rock, get a picture of the stuff in your mind. (How might one visualize constitutional law?) In essence, Ellis's book responds directly to a culture that has made reading passé: make reading visual, make it action, and maybe they will come.

It is fair to conclude that despite self-help texts, remedial courses, blame-shifting, and even so eminent a solution as ignoring the problem, college students' reading problems will not go away. All these approaches *may* improve students' informational reading ability, and for a fortunate few perhaps even their critical reading ability, but we have not yet addressed contributive reading at all, and for most students even critical reading is merely another nasty nightmare. So faculty turn to the only remaining solutions. If students *will not* read, a teacher has only two choices: stop asking them to read, or attempt to cajole or trick them into reading (as Ellis's muscle reading tries to).

Recall my earlier figures on how much reading per class a typical ESU freshman claims to face: over 75 percent think they see fewer than 100 pages per week. That's 20 or 25 pages per week per course, depending on how many hours a student is enrolled in. If the class meets two or three times per week, average reading assignments would be 10 pages or fewer per meeting. That's not such a bad way to work through a college degree. Though I

have only anecdotal evidence for this claim (and it would be a great site for further research), I think most faculty would agree that reading assignments have, over the past three or four decades, been cut back significantly. Many instructors also fall into the trap of covering readings in class. Instructors who rely on having that material covered in order to teach the next day's lesson wind up covering it live because students haven't done it. Less ground is covered, and students learn that there's no reason for them to do homework reading when the instructor will read it in class anyway.

The pressure on instructors to rely less on reading and texts is tremendous. They find other ways to get materials and ideas across to students, more direct, experiential, exciting ways. Such methods—multimedia presentations, discussions, hands-on experience—on the whole enhance the classroom and are certainly welcome advances in teaching. Like most other measures taken to combat the problem of student reticence to read, though, they compound the problem by further removing texts from their students' lives. This trend affects composition courses most of all. Aside from some literature courses (in which most students have never read independently and critically anyway, trained as they are to accept the correct interpretation from the instructor), only composition focuses on text as text. No composition instructor can simply throw up her hands and haul in the multimedia, because she'll still have to ask her students to write texts, and then to read their neighbor's texts. When a composition course goes for hands-on experience, the only activities are writing and reading. "Experiential" *is* written text.

One other mutation to combat student disinterest has come from textbook publishers: the textbook as entertainment. Amusingly, it was back in 1975 that Virgie Granger forecasted changes in textbook design. "Publishers," she warned, "are beginning to simplify college texts to accommodate the college student who can't read. . . . These

simplified texts will only make the problem harder to solve" (7). She and others like her who were raising questions then have the bitter satisfaction of "I told you so" today. I have no evidence as to whether textbook prose itself has become simpler or not; it seems safe to assume that it has, however, given other steps publishers have taken to make textbooks palatable to people who hate reading. Ellis's book is an excellent example. There is, simply put, much less text on any given page than textbooks once featured. In addition, intense color photos, snappy graphical treatments, buzzy icons, and even unusual typefaces manifest new creativity in attention values. Publishers are also becoming masters of chapter previews, summaries, and built-in outlining that remove from students the burden of making structural sense of chapters, and conform to the accepted "read quick for facts" approach. Perhaps the design of Ellis's and other textbooks can be summed up in a question almost too obvious to be asked: why does a book which espouses muscle reading go out of its way to avoid requiring muscle reading?

Summary

Left uncollected, the surveys and studies and anecdotes are easily ignored. Together, though, their message is unequivocal: when the need for critical and contributive reading has never been higher, when for composition students these skills have never been more necessary, students' interest, experience, and skill in reading are declining. When my composition students cannot accurately summarize a 6-page text, how can I trust their use of sources in research papers? When they cannot critically read a fellow student's writing, how will they critically read their own, a task both more difficult and more necessary? When they read texts with no sense of the writer's identity or purpose, how can they read as if conversing? And if they cannot read with a sense of conversation, how will they *join* that conversation and, as we demand, contribute to it?

College students, particularly composition students, need instruction in the kind of reading faculty want them to perform. We can no longer rely on the inherent skills and experience we once could. We can no longer rely on time and exposure at the college level to help the skills magically appear by the time a student is ready for graduate school. Pedagogy and fairness both demand that we offer students instruction, demonstration, and assistance in doing the sort of reading we already assume they will do.

The evidence I have cited thus far convinces me that at some point in college, students need instruction in critical and contributive reading. It would be the first such instruction that most have ever received. But even if we agree on the need for this instruction, agreeing on venue and methods may not be so easy. In the second part of this study, I will argue that freshman composition is the place most suited to reading instruction.

Chapter 4

Principles and Strategies for Teaching Reading in Freshman Composition

> *We intend . . . to reclaim reading and writing from those (including our students) who would choose to limit these activities to the retrieval and transmission of information.*
>
> *David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky (276)*

> *The mysterious innerness of reading . . . [is] also because there's no tradition of revealing misreadings and wrong takes (like sharing early drafts).*
>
> *Peter Elbow (15)*

> *Strategies are best taught when instructors model expert processes directly.*
>
> *Lorraine Higgins (82)*

Linearity is a real pain when one wants to talk about two things at once. For instance, neither reasons for teaching reading in a composition class nor suggestions for how to teach it really precedes the other, as they are interdependent. For now I'll present principles, strategies, and specific tactics for teaching reading were we to decide that it was indeed a good idea. A specific sense of what exactly "teaching reading in the composition class" might look like will be helpful in a debate over the advantages and disadvantages of the idea. Perhaps, too, a better understanding of a vague term will eliminate a few objections immediately, leaving us better prepared for a more theoretical chapter on the reasons for teaching reading in the freshman composition course.

My ideas for teaching reading in the freshman composition course include some

global principles, practical strategies, and specific tactics to implement those strategies. Before addressing these areas, however, I want to address the issue of scope: just how much attention would reading get in such a class? Although the freshman composition course is the best place to teach critical and contributive reading, I think it would be detrimental to existing courses if reading instruction were given even equal weight with writing instruction. Writing *must* remain the focal point of the class; reading instruction must be present but limited. By "limited," I mean focused closely on reading for about one or two weeks of a sixteen-week course.

The reasoning behind this scope introduces one global principle. Readers may be skeptical that a mere two weeks of explicit instruction will help if the problem is really so bad. Perhaps—if reading were then never mentioned again. Instead, though, instructors should let reading run in the background, occasionally foregrounding it as an ongoing concern. This strategy parallels that which many instructors use for development of skills in particular areas of writing (e.g., source citation or argument strategies): initial instruction and heavy practice, followed by periodic "refreshers" or use of the skill in particular papers. With reading, there is no need for extra work or extra material beyond the initial instruction; instead, the idea is to take advantage of all existing class reading, to never let the reading process go unexamined. This "foreground/background" strategy also allows for brief lessons or discussion whenever particular individual problems in reading present themselves. In short, this approach involves little more than a commitment to make reading a conscious activity. Making students conscious of reading—how they do it, what actually happens during reading—is the most important principle with which to begin.

The foreground/background strategy will work because the subjects are college students, not third-graders. A lack of time or focus can be compensated with metacognitive

ability. Reading is a tough process to master as a child in part because children lack the ability to examine their reading processes, decisions, and activities. Haas opines, "Part of what may distinguish 'better' and 'poorer' readers is the ability to bring the process of reading under conscious metacognitive control, to make it a true act of decision-making" (22). College students are capable of such control.

The comparison of elementary and college students illustrates another global principle: reading, like writing, is a developmental skill. Our education system tends to treat reading ability as a yes-or-no question, but levels of reading are in fact to some degree age-dependent. Although researchers have not done a particularly good job of pinning down the ages at which it is reasonable to teach and expect various levels of reading, there is general consensus that most fourth-graders are simply not cognitively prepared for contributive reading (Carter-Wells 45).

A word about words here. In an effort to boost the self-esteem of an entire generation, educators (when did they stop being teachers?) regularly mask poor performance in euphemism. Thus the concept of *performing well below expectations* has become the much more reassuring *developmental*. Unfortunately, when a word becomes a euphemism, it is stolen from those who would use its original meaning (the word *gay* is another excellent example). Teachers of skills that are expected to develop slowly over time have every right to call such skills "developmental," but to do so these days is instead to suggest that such skills require remediation. Because I generally refrain from inventing words or abusing their original meanings, I will in this study say what I mean and hope the reader can handle having a euphemism used in its original, non-euphemistic sense.

Reading, then, is similar to writing, which is also developmental. Students enter college with different abilities, and freshman composition cannot make them all stellar

writers. Some will improve dramatically, others slightly, and many not at all. But regardless of improvement during that 16-week course, the instructor has to believe that he or she is planting seeds that, with further cultivation, will bring the student to a new level of writing during four years of college. Teaching reading works the same way. As much as to get immediate, measurable results, those who teach reading should seek to develop patterns of thought that students will not lose. With the practice that college inevitably brings (lather, rinse, repeat), students who consciously examine their reading processes *will* improve.

One other global principle the instructor must adopt is taking every opportunity to tie reading and writing into the same assignments and operations. All writing creates reading opportunities and all reading creates writing opportunities. Instructors must become adept at "flipping the coin"—realizing that within lessons for one operation always lie lessons for the other. This principle connects not only to foregrounding/backgrounding (opportunities for a brief reading lesson are never far below the surface in a writing course) but also to the principle that students must read consciously. Anytime writers work with writing, they are doing so by reading, a fact that students must not be allowed to forget.

The global principles of foregrounded/backgrounded teaching, reliance on metacognitive ability, the developmental nature of reading, and the connection of reading and writing should guide the instructor's integration of reading instruction into a writing course. The meat of the program, however, lies with practical strategies teachers can use to teach the ideas behind critical and contributive reading and to let students practice them.

First, students will be helped by brief coverage of the constructive theory of reading. While we lack empirical evidence for the benefit of such instruction, obviously students cannot become conscious of a process they don't understand. The course should cover the use of schemata and the text-as-blueprint metaphor, as well as the use of prior knowledge

and prediction. Tierney's comparison of reading and writing would also be helpful.

Such theory would lead naturally into discussion of levels of reading, which could be presented to students as *ways* of reading that readers select on grounds of purpose and exigency. Here an instructor would demonstrate how different texts call for different ways of reading. Students might research and write a short piece on the kinds of reading called for in a particular discipline. Haas suggests interviewing readers of particular discourse communities for the same purpose (30). At this point, too, the class could work with various strategies for doing a particular kind of reading. Haas and Greene, for instance, both speak of the rhetorical aspects of critical and contributive reading. Most notably, instructors should inculcate students with a sense of *author*, of the person behind the text. Nothing will do more to force students beyond informational reading than the sense of being talked to by a human, rather than some voiceless, machine-produced text.

Above all, instructors must model their own reading processes for students. According to Bartholomae and Petrosky, it is most difficult to get marginal readers to carve their own space out of a text, to take the authority to decide what the texts says—to make their own meaning instead of waiting to be told what the meaning of the text is (282). They *have* to be able to see mature readers at this process, and while watching good peers read is helpful, the best reader in the classroom is likely the instructor. Tierney, Readence, and Dishner offer a curious method of forcing students into the questioning role of a mature reader. Students ask the teacher questions a teacher would ask a student, and evaluate the teacher's answers. (The questions students would want to ask might involve the author of the text, the context in which it was written, the author's apparent purpose, its intended audience and how closely the current audience matches that ideal, and the content and style of the text itself.) When students run out of questions, the roles are reversed. The idea is to

teach the kinds of questions readers should ask, as well as to encourage conscious prediction in reading (265-69). Such an activity would, of course, need to be prepared for in previous classes by having students note specifically the kinds of questions teachers ask about various texts. In the end, such an activity makes students responsible for the meaning of a text—they become critical readers.

Such a tactic also exemplifies the next strategy: demonstrating hidden processes. Reading theory and process need to be taught in the first place because they are internalized and invisible in fluent (e.g., sixth-grade) readers. Prediction, revision, alignment, and other operations happen so naturally and so quickly that readers are rarely aware of them. Before they can consciously control these activities, students must first believe such activities exist and see how they work. The first step to this awareness is reading aloud, which forces the reader to slow down (if only slightly) and provides monitors other than the reader.

A number of writers have offered other tactics for teaching "hidden" reading; two of the best suggestions come from Troyka and Elbow. Troyka uses an exercise in which a student paper is revealed by an overhead projector sentence by sentence, and students predict the next sentence based on what the current sentence talks about. "What an eye-opener for the writer!" she says, when students predict something completely different from what actually comes next ("Writer" 313). Not only does this exercise show students prediction in action, and readers' reliance on it, but it also shows them weaknesses in the organization of their own writing. Elbow suggests that instructors slow their reading down and demonstrate "drafts" of readings that they have discarded on the way to the particular readings they adopt. He calls this process "making movies of the reader's mind" (14-15). A more general tactic that works along the same lines, the "think-aloud," is covered in Tierney, Readence, and Dishner's compendium of *Reading Strategies and Practices* (284-

88). The think-aloud involves talking about each stage of a reading as it is happening. The authors argue that think-alouds are useful when making predictions, describing images, applying prior knowledge, verbalizing confusion or problems, and demonstrating fixing strategies. They suggest moving from teacher modeling to paired-student practice to independent practice following a checklist, and finally integrating the use of the think-aloud with practical materials (285-86).

But on which texts should instructors focus when displaying these hidden processes? Should they privilege student writing or professional writing? Literary works or expository works? I argue fairly vehemently against the use of literature to teach reading, for a number of reasons. Before enumerating them, I should attempt to loosely define "literature," by which I mean imaginative or fictional prose or verse that has a primarily aesthetic purpose and lends itself to a wide variety of interpretations or multiple levels of meaning. Thus *Ulysses* would clearly be a literary work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* would be borderline, and an essay by Thurber would be clearly expository rather than the literary. Asking "Is this a genre in which I would ask my students to write?" or "Will students encounter this sort of text in any of their other classes?" will clarify borderline cases.

Those questions get to the first reason for disallowing literary texts in a reading/writing classroom. Based on Iser's theory of gaps or free-space in texts (1224), I would argue that literary reading is a level even beyond contributive reading. Literature is aesthetically pleasing in part because it gives readers so much interpretive latitude. It is not imaginative writing just because it sprang from imagination, but also because it tempts the imagination. The manner in which one reads literature is not that required for success in college, career, or the life of a well-educated and generally thoughtful person. This argument parallels a familiar argument in composition that, if students will not be writing

literature, there is little sense in using literary models. Instructors should privilege texts that contribute directly to students' preparation for future reading and writing experiences.

Another strike against literary texts is that, thanks primarily to the careful drudgery of high school, literature already enjoys a specific reputation in the minds of college freshman, one against which instructors might not wish to work. Lacking empirical evidence, I will claim anyway that most high school graduates believe literature is something they can't understand, and further that most students associate literature with boredom, lack of freedom, and rigid meaning. Teachers who ask their students to read are up against enough attitude problems to begin with; why compound them with another set of negative attitudes? A corollary is that, according to Abrahamson and Carter, students coming from high school are likely to have a greater interest in non-fiction texts than imaginative, literary texts (53). Recall that in my own survey, nearly 90 percent of students said they read magazines or newspapers, and nearly 30 percent read *only* those formats. Most tough tasks are easier with interest. Why use texts students find less interesting if we don't have to?

In addition to these theoretical and practical reasons, there is political expedience, frankly, in not picking one more fight over the use of literature in the composition classroom. That staunch opponents of literature in composition (such as Elbow and Lindemann) apparently cannot imagine an English-department employee using nonliterary texts is bad enough. The last thing that will ease tensions is stealing time from writing practice for the purpose of reading *literature*.

The use of literature in writing/reading programs does have its proponents. Bartholomae and Petrosky developed a basic writing program based in part on literary autobiography, using such texts mostly to prove to their students that meaning is generated by the reader rather than the text. "A text in our class," they say, "becomes an occasion for

meaning, not a meaning in itself, and the possibilities for meaning in any given text remain open until, as a class, we see what we have done and begin to imagine what else might be done" (284-85). Arguing against the "myth" of the "main idea" of a text (the idea that every reader should be able to pin down the writer's intended meaning), Bartholomae and Petrosky swear off reading as a transaction of information and view it instead as experience (282). The problem here is that while literary texts offer the freedom of such reading, expository texts (which comprise most college and career reading) abruptly narrow the range of plausible readings. Bartholomae and Petrosky note this problem (304), although they don't seem to have carefully considered its effects. Literary reading gives students their own voice but paints an unrealistic picture of just how much voice readers may have in response to tightly focused expository texts. Mariolina Salvatori, who has taught in Bartholomae and Petrosky's program, defends the use of literature by arguing that literature teaches students how to handle ambiguity (Salvatori 180). While students do need this training, it's not clear that expository texts don't offer enough ambiguity to suffice as teaching tools. Indeed, I would argue that the ambiguity in the average literary text is daunting, rather than healthily challenging, to the average student. (Their basic writers, the three insist, eventually meet this challenge.)

I don't disagree that literature *can* be used to teach critical and contributive reading, since good literary reading requires both. And in fairness to Bartholomae, Petrosky, and Salvatori, modern, culturally explicit, literary autobiography is fairly accessible stuff, as literary texts go. Although they and I agree that the texts (such as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*) are indeed literary (Salvatori 176), the texts do fall into that gray area between literature and exposition. And students *are* most familiar with fictional or narrative texts. But if expository texts fulfill the same purposes and better represent the

texts produced and consumed in college, we ought to be using expository texts.

Such texts can be either student or professional writings. Essays or articles of moderate length (3 to 10 pages) that appear in news-weeklies or other general-interest publications would be highly appropriate for reading study. These texts likely cover issues of interest to students, and are likely written in a style appropriate for students to mimic in their own writing. In freshman composition, I'm less interested in teaching students to write like seniors in a discipline than I am in teaching them to read and compare texts on issues that impact them. As they are not yet equipped to write in the discourse of a particular discipline, my class, and therefore the texts in it, do well to remain general-interest.

The course would do even better, though, to continue privileging student texts. If students need to read critically and contributively in part to improve their reading of their own and their peers' writing, then reading instruction should be focused on student texts. In addition, student texts often require their readers to work harder for comprehension than do professional texts, and student texts allow dialogue between reader and writer unattainable with professional texts. Lastly, using student texts integrates reading and writing closely.

A final note in this discussion of texts: many writing/reading proponents value longer, even book-length, texts because of the challenge these provide in sustained prediction, use of prior knowledge, and comprehension (Cooper, Evans, and Robertson 6; Bartholomae and Petrosky 297). Boy, I could use a grilled cheese sandwich right about now, and maybe a pint of something else, too. While that theory seems sound, several realities make the use of lengthy texts in a writing/reading course impractical. Once again, how often will the average student encounter such texts? Also, given the condition of our culture, will forcing students into long texts improve their attention spans, or set them up for failure? Lastly, the average composition course has so many other foci already (e.g.,

argument, use of sources, style) that reading book-length texts would surely weaken coverage elsewhere.

Demonstrating theory, hidden reading processes, and different ways of reading are proactive, "do this" kinds of strategies for teaching reading, as is an instructor's choice of texts. Instructors can also be proactive in the specific assignments and other tactics they use every day in the classroom. The most common recommendation among writers on this subject is, simply, *practice*. Daane calls for "immersion in print" (188), Campbell advises that teachers do anything they can to give their student readers experience (38), and Newkirk counsels that students must repeatedly make critical judgements ("Writers" 159).

While classroom context, instructor, student body, and exigency will be the instructor's best guides in selecting opportunities for practice of critical and contributive reading (classes are nothing if not unique and non-replicable), some tactics would work well in most places. First, instructors should inventory students' reading histories. Such an inventory allows adjustment for students' interests, skills, and needs (Daane 185). (It may also scare the teacher.) Two tactics that align nicely with existing theory are suggestions by Horgan that students be given questions to guide reading (44), and by Higgins that students note particularly useful strategies on cards (82). Horgan's idea builds on the fact that prior knowledge guides predictions in reading. Reading questions become prior knowledge on the topic and therefore help set the reader's schemata to provide sensitivity to particular parts of the text. Offering questions also keeps reading instruction from becoming a "gotcha" game. A reading ought to be important enough to guide students to particular ideas in the text. Higgins's tactic of having students find and formalize helpful strategies by writing them down seems geared toward younger readers, but college readers might find the practice initially useful. It shows how readers use various strategies, usually unconsciously,

in reading. If students are aware enough of the strategy to write it down, they likely are in a much better position to consciously control its use. If students need help in beginning their search for strategies, those identified by Olshavsky would be helpful examples (664).

We are perhaps more familiar with tactics that strengthen reading through writing. McGinley has collected evidence from several studies to show that the more involved writing about reading becomes (from note-taking to answering study-questions to writing essays), the more students engage and reason with sophistication (228-29). More-involved responses were particularly useful for spurring deep questioning of specific parts of texts and the use of hypotheses (228)—skills required in critical and contributive reading. Common sense and research have made writing-from-reading prompts popular. Phillip Egan summarizes the thoughts of most people in the field when he says "the best way to teach students to read . . . is to have them write," frequently, with focus, and "in a way that invites them to create coherence" (15). To this end, he advocates out-of-class responses to prompts. I favor directing homework reading with questions, followed by in-class reading responses announced at the time the reading is assigned. Students then have time to read as they will, knowing that they must complete the reading, and the class as a whole can discuss the reading after responding, when those who have read poorly quickly learn of that fact.

Practice can be almost constant, but eventually the skills need to be synthesized in a major project. The most obvious and highest-level reading/writing assignment is a significant research paper that requires the writer to make an argument after reading multiple sources on the topic. Teaching writing-from-sources is a separate challenge, one we needn't examine here except to say first that it requires contributive reading and second that most students will do exactly as much as their instructor asks. Assignments like this are the place for the instructor to be demanding, to push students in their reading in order to

creatively contribute to the field they are studying. Mike Rose is right when he claims that "students will float to the mark you set" (26). My students continually amaze me with the usefulness and creativity of their ideas when I expect such ideas of them.

Along with using the available proactive strategies, theoretical and practical, instructors must also respond to existing, generally negative, features of the reading situation. They will probably need to quell some myths, demonstrate "bad" or unacceptable reading, and address the drawbacks of deeply engaged critical and contributive reading

Not surprisingly, most myths about reading that have sprung up among students stem from high-school experience, centering around textbook reading and literature reading. Some myths are even pairable opposites. For instance, an instructor might need to disabuse some students of the myth that a text has a single correct meaning at the same time he or she is quashing the myth among other students that every opinion of textual meaning is equally valid (shades of William Perry once again). Students are exposed to these ideas in high school literature classes—the one-reading-only myth from traditional teachers, and the any-reading-at-all myth from teachers attempting to make up for such traditional excesses (before they go on to make some readings invalid anyway). Literary criticism itself has for much of the century sought to balance these extremes, and, especially for expository texts, the most reasonable position seems to be somewhere in the middle, acknowledging that texts create a range of plausible meanings infinite in depth but not in width.

Other myths, such as the ideas that good readers should only have to read the text once, that they should be able to skim a text engaged at Warp 9, and that the point of reading is to remember everything one reads (Bartholomae and Petrosky 286), have their roots in the reading of textbooks. Until students are disabused of such notions, critical and contributive reading will be unattainable; informational reading only accidently becomes

critical or contributive. Using texts that lack standard "finding aids" (e.g., built-in outlines, bold type, etc.) may break students of the myth that all the important stuff is in bold print.

One mustn't forget to debunk the most obvious myths. The most pervasive myth about college reading may be that reading assignments just don't matter— that if a student can get decent grades without doing the reading, then it isn't important. Instructors in classes that shatter this myth do owe students fair warning that uncompleted reading assignments will damage grades.

Along with eliminating myths, instructors must also clearly delineate unacceptable reading practices—or, more precisely, reading strategies that make for bad critical and contributive reading. In part because there are so many good ways to read, reading that is out of bounds must be clearly delimited. Demanding critical and contributive reading is actually forbidding students to read informationally. Thus, instructors must demonstrate specific features of informational reading—the emphasis on speed, general comprehension, and even actual misreadings—and have students evaluate their reading processes against it. Where critical and contributive reading strategies are distinctly *other* than informational strategies (not in addition to them)—for example, going slower, rereading, conversing with rather than ignoring the author—students should be told explicitly what are unacceptable strategies. When the strategies are above and beyond informational strategies (greater noting or marking margins), these should be demonstrated and checked. Instructors must define clearly what is unacceptable, put it off limits, and enforce the distinction.

One other response to existing negative factors is to confront the undesirability of reading. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, most students rank reading low on their list of favorite activities, perhaps even below taking out the trash. As long as college teachers sit by and pretend that this disfavor of reading does not exist, classes that attempt to teach

reading will be a torture session for teachers and students alike. A writing/reading class dramatically raises expectations for the time students spend on reading homework, and instructors should expect a struggle, at least initially. Some students, the ones attending college for the sake of learning rather than merely for a degree, will come around quickly. Others never will. As usual, the students in the middle will demand the most attention in combating negative feelings toward reading.

Instructors can allay such feelings through a combination of subterfuge and honesty. Instructors can use the shock students are certain to feel when they realize they must read pieces more than once, take notes, and write in response to readings. The shock of spending an hour pondering a six-page essay, which students know could be read (informationally) perfectly well in 15 minutes, would also be helpful. This shock would differentiate critical and contributive reading from any other reading students have ever done. Instructors should also use students' freshman status. Freshmen are usually rudely awakened by the difference between high-school and college writing; why not rely on the same effect in convincing students that in college they face a radically different kind of reading that will force them to revise their thinking about reading in general? This is where the subterfuge comes in: experienced college students might see how far from the norm critical and contributive reading is, but freshmen would never need to know the difference. In effect, an instructor can move students to the defensive on reading rather than having to deal with an aggressively oppositional stance on the part of students.

Having suppressed naked opposition, instructors should next be friendly and honest about the costs of such reading. Why pretend it will be quick and easy when we know it isn't? Instead, we must question the assumption that college education *should* be quick and easy. Why pretend it will be fun when often it will not be? Instead, we should critique the

warrant that learning is supposed to be fun. Learning should be *interesting*, but "interesting" and "fun" are not synonyms. On the other hand, if the work invested in learning is rewarding, then the learning might be "fun."

Lastly, instructors can placate students by demonstrating the benefits—possibly unfamiliar benefits—of critical and contributive reading. First, there is true power in learning to read and think contributively. Such reading lends authority to writers, giving them grounds to speak their minds in the certainty that they know what they're talking about and that others will find them persuasive. We hear all the time that knowledge is power—an education cliché, but true. Closely linked to this power is the pleasure of gaining expertise on a subject. Usually reserved for graduate students, such expertise need not remain inaccessible to freshman in a writing/reading course. Third, perhaps students, at least those who value learning and participation in intellectual exchange, will find this kind of reading truly enjoyable, if only they'll try it.

Such benefits, however, may be a little too intangible for a student who won't tolerate spending an hour reading for a single class. All too many students, certainly, see only the benefit of decent grades. Thinking that the "teeth" of grades are not necessary in teaching critical and contributive reading would be somewhere between naiveté and stupidity. However, graded reading performance should be infrequent; curiosity should drive learning before grades force "learning." Also, instructors would have to remember that the reading is developmental. Some sort of final grade for reading would be fairer than grading reading all along. As with writing, grading on reading will be a necessary evil.

These principles, strategies, and tactics for teaching critical and contributive reading in a freshman composition course are, I think, necessary and workable. Ideally they would be discussed in the context of a linear course proposal and description, but without further

research and particularly experience, such a proposal would be at this time somewhat uninformed and wholly unwise. Besides, there is value in offering strategies piecemeal so they can be pulled from a parts bin, so to speak. Such a presentation of ideas suits the reality that no two courses, indeed, no two semesters of the same course, are ever precisely the same.

I hope that this description has clarified the vague suggestion of "teaching reading in a writing course" and has softened or perhaps even eliminated many objections to that idea—hopefully, at least, more than it has raised. However, further opportunities for debate over the wisdom of such a course will come in the next chapter, where I discuss the theories and practicalities that make the freshman composition course the best place colleges have in which to offer critical and contributive reading instruction.

Chapter 5

The Logic of Teaching Reading in Freshman Composition

> *The writer has an insider's view of written language. As an insider, as a maker of language, the writer is less likely to be intimidated by written language.*
> *Thomas Newkirk ("Writer" 159)*

> *The day-to-day business of English classrooms is bound up in texts.*
> *Christina Haas (19)*

> *I don't know anymore how to teach students about writing without teaching them about reading.*
> *Lynn Quitman Troyka ("Closeness" 188)*

The previous delineation of principles and strategies for teaching critical and contributive reading rested on the assumption that such teaching takes place within the context of a freshman composition course. Such instruction could happen, really, in just about any course that requires reading. Alternatively, it could be its own self-contained course, another basic freshman requirement.

In this chapter, however, I will argue that freshman composition is not merely suitable for the teaching of reading, but is instead *ideal* for such instruction, the best solution available. I base this judgement on reasons of purpose, theory, practicality, and experience. There are some objections to this claim, which I will address in the final chapter of this study. For now, however, allow me to discuss the advantages of such an approach.

When one compares the purposes of a hypothetical "freshman reading" course and those of an existing freshman composition course, the two are remarkably similar. These two kinds of training have the same overall purposes, with only slightly different emphases.

Currently, writing is seen as something of a "survival" skill for college students, an

ability they must have to learn and to earn a degree. Critical and contributive reading, too, should be viewed as a survival skill. Elbow demonstrates that college requires of students a great deal of reading (5). Students need to acquire college-level writing and reading skills, and the writing instruction already comes in the form of a required class. Why not combine the reading instruction with it? Two required skills, one required class.

That argument is bolstered by the fact that reading and writing instruction lead to the same end: the facilitation of academic discourse. Freshman composition exists to train students to *produce* academic discourse, and reading such discourse is the flip side of that coin. As it is quite impossible to write without reading, so it is quite impossible to write academic discourse—the purpose of freshman composition—without reading academic discourse. We could construct a second course to deal strictly with the consumption of academic discourse—or we could, as students write such discourse, concurrently train them in the reading of it. From a slightly different angle, I have advocated the use of composition training to let students join a conversation. Bazerman argues that this goal has, in fact, become somewhat standard among composition courses (657). But no one, I would argue, has ever taught *oral* conversation by using one class to teach speaking and another to teach listening. There may be specialized courses in either one, but the introductory, basic course in conversation is sure to cover both speaking and listening. Kathleen Welch argues that we should use freshman composition to make students encoders of knowledge (774). Such social construction of knowledge requires listening skills as well as speaking skills, reading skills as well as writing skills.

We also use freshman composition courses to build "critical thinking" and research skills. Not coincidentally, a pile of evidence suggests that reading can be used to exactly the same end. Carter-Wells claims that "there is a growing recognition of reading and writing

as *modes of reasoning* that facilitate learning," and cites studies to show that critical reading is really simply a manifestation of critical thinking (46, 49).

Such critical thought contributes directly to research, and though we may teach a research *process* in the average composition course, many researchers see a large hole in training between finding sources and taking notes. The instruction skips the reading and integrating of multiple sources—once again, instructors assume reading competence where there may be none. Campbell found that the quality of summaries and synthesis of multiple texts is affected by reading ability (12). Recall too the link Spivey established between reading ability and organizing sources and papers (267). Once again, the reading ability these writers refer to is not informational ability. In fact, Higgins complains about students who try to do research using informational reading (72). Why teach reading in a composition class? Because that's where students *need* the reading in order to *write* research papers. (Of course, one might argue that the same applies to *any* course which requires research writing. I am confident in claiming, however, that composition courses demand more researched writing than all but the most challenging upper-level courses.)

What I have sought to show so far is that, far from clashing or being even slightly at odds, the purposes of reading and writing instruction are complimentary. Purpose presents no impediment to folding reading instruction into the freshman composition course, and indeed, reading actually *completes* the purpose of the course in several respects. There are also several theory-based reasons why freshman composition is the ideal place to teach college-level reading.

The first is that, because of changes in our theory of reading and how it should be taught, reading pedagogy and composition pedagogy are much more closely aligned than they were even ten years ago. When Tierney compares the theory and practice of reading

instruction in the 1970s with that in the 1990s, the difference is amazing. The 1970s views were that reading is receiving or consuming while writing is producing, that the two operations should be taught separately, and that reading precedes writing. In the 1990s, reading theorists have come to think of reading and writing as "composing, constructive problem solving activities" that should be taught concurrently and interdependently (248). In other words, 20 years ago we didn't have the theoretical underpinnings necessary to teach reading and writing together. Now we do. In light of this change, is it unreasonable to review the decision to de-emphasize reading in freshman composition?

It is profitable, in fact, to critique that decision itself. In a stern appraisal of Janet Emig's seminal *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, Steven Schreiner argues that as the process and expressivist movements booted books from composition courses, they ignored the fact that only well-read students attain the level of "literariness" that expressivist theorists expect to see in student writing (101). "The model writer of Emig's study is an established literary, often modernist author," Schreiner insists (93). One of Emig's main charges is that high-school composition training inhibits writers by emphasizing correctness, detail, and time-efficient linearity in the writing process. But, Schreiner says, Emig fails to note any positive effects such training, or her subjects' literary backgrounds, might have had (97). "In retrospect," he writes, "it is ironic that Emig's study launched a movement that viewed reading as secondary to the development of writing skills, when in fact a reading background was necessary for these subjects to be comparable to her model writers in the first place" (98). In short, expressivist and process theorists often fail to consider just how much reading background the process and product they wished to see actually required.

In reality, as I have already argued, reading and writing operations are both text-focused. What unites them is print on a page. Because education has separated reading and

writing in most people's minds, we don't usually think of the two as the same operation, but they are indeed close. Newkirk argues that our view of them as separated is artificial—that if we taught them together from the very beginning, students would never see them as separate ("put away your books; it's time to write now, children") to begin with ("Writers" 159). Unlike any other college course, freshman composition has already directed students' minds to the construction and analysis of texts *as texts*—as much as textual work can ever be content-neutral, the approach in freshman composition courses is.

At the heart of the issue is theory showing that writing and reading are inseparable, complimentary skills. Pearson and Tierney led a trend at the beginning of the last decade when they called for an end to "pigeon-holing" reading and writing instruction because theoretically one could not exist without the other (171). They offered their theory of reading and writing as composing operations as evidence that readers and writers do essentially the same things, and others have since agreed. Cooper, Evans, and Robertson state, "The more students use reading and writing together, the more they will learn from both activities" (52). As these skills are so intertwined, separating them makes no sense. In fact, the proponents of separation are the ones who should be defending themselves . . . but no one realized that when the movement to separate them at the college level began.

As I mentioned above, students should become encoders, contributors of knowledge. This idea is supported by theories of social-epistemic learning—the idea that knowledge is synthesized and adopted by consensus. Brent makes an extensive case for the importance of reading to such a process, because reading is an act of conversation and persuasion (72-75). During the 1980s in particular, the social-epistemic movement took off among pedagogy theorists in composition, resulting in the demise of lecture-based composition courses and the rise of peer-review sessions in many programs. It now lies at

the heart of our assumptions about freshman composition. As reading is compatible with this function, it is appropriate for inclusion in composition courses.

It would be nice to be able to say that better reading directly results in better writing, or that one learns to write by reading. Unfortunately, the world is not such a neat place; the jury is decidedly out on any such direct connection. However, the link may be strong enough to be useful. Cooper, Evans, and Robertson argue that many "writing" problems are in fact reading issues: "When [students] tell us about things they understand well, their writing naturally shapes itself into recognizable forms because they can spare some energy to respond to the rhetorical context. But the minute they return to writing about difficult reading, all the old problems reappear. Their main problem is reading, not writing" (1). Mary Battle says there is no causal correlation between reading skills and writing skills, and that instruction in one won't result in improvement in the other. However, when both are taught directly, or "interrelatedly," both skills do improve noticeably (7-10).

Most researchers in the field recognize the need to figure out this relationship (Beach and Bridwell 129); however, we should also keep in mind the caveat that research isn't everything. In fact, we often rely a little too much on hard numbers and not enough on our hearts. Egan Guba and Yvonna Lincoln write that

> the worst thing that can be said about any assertion in our culture is that there is no scientific evidence to support it; conversely, when there *is* scientific evidence, we must accept it at face value. . . . Finally, because science is putatively value-free, adherence to the scientific paradigm relieves the evaluator of any moral responsibility for his or her actions. (Qtd. in Hewitt 186)

In addition, the inability to determine a trend cannot take away individual successes. While studying sixth-graders' ability to write persuasively from multiple sources, Marion

Crowhurst found that "instruction in a model for persuasion plus reading practice" was enough to noticeably improve students' writing ability—*without practice writing* (332). (Comparatively, students writing book reports on fictional texts showed no improvement.) That finding flies in the face of current composition pedagogy. As Crowhurst suggested, "the fact that students transferred the knowledge gained from reading and from reading instruction to writing in the case of this single, narrow discourse type may be taken as a small piece of evidence for the more general proposition that reading affects writing" (333).

Along with these several reasons of purpose and theory, there are also a number of arguments from practicality to be made for teaching reading in the freshman composition course, reasons that involve more administrative and political aspects of teaching reading.

Though many composition specialists resist the classification of freshman composition as a service course, much of the university does view the course as such. The idea of using the composition course to make students better people, not merely better students, is a wonderful ideal, but when other professors complain about their students' composition abilities, their concern is with whether or not the students can produce coherent writing. In a time of exploding class sizes, decreasing individual instruction, and loosening requirements on courses, freshman composition remains at many institutions the only small, personalized, required course. Administrations have accepted this privileged position as the price for the service the course performs for the rest of the university.

The point is that a college reading course would be a service course as well. What are the odds of getting approval for *two* required, personalized, small courses renowned among students for their drudgery (three, if we include math)? Imagine basically doubling the existing logistical demands of freshman composition. Which faculty would be interested in teaching such a course? Which students would be interested in paying for an additional

three credit hours for their degree? Which departments would be interested in having some other course cut out of the major requirements to make room for the second service course? These drawbacks, I think, go a long way toward explaining why reading is not currently taught in college: it's a nasty hand, and no one—faculty, administration, or students—is willing to ante up. From this perspective, it would be crazy *not* to piggy-back reading instruction into an already existing course. Since it would look very much like a service course if left on its own, why not put reading instruction in the course which is one of the few already guaranteed a visit from nearly 100 percent of the freshman class?

From a less pessimistic (though perhaps more cynical) perspective, it makes a great deal of sense for English departments to grab this job while no one wants it. An awakening to students' poor reading ability is beginning, and concern about the decline of students' reading activity is spreading among the grassroots professoriate. Within the next decade, I think, the need for reading instruction will be widely recognized, and the competition for handling it will be great. English departments should pounce on this job for two practical reasons: relevance and survival.

Both reasons have roots in the competition English departments have faced in recent decades. English and other humanities have struggled to justify their existence to students who, spurred by an ethic which equates money with happiness, have moved into areas that guarantee jobs and high salaries. Thus literature is fast becoming, if it has not already become, irrelevant to mainstream America (despite, or perhaps because of, being crammed into every high-school graduate). English faculty now study something that fewer and fewer people care about, and we do it to improve *people* rather than job prospects. But we can do both. Critical and contributive reading are necessary to the study of literature. Such reading, then, really is the English department's area of expertise. We face an opportunity

to take *some* principles of literary criticism into the practical, mainstream realm of everyday reading, to make the discipline relevant to the common college student. Instead of having the reputation of arguing over niggles in texts few people read, the English department could advance its reputation as the home of skilled readers.

Some English faculty might wrinkle their noses at the thought of "popularizing" their skills. But even if making the work of the English department relevant to people outside it is not a worthwhile goal, perhaps ensuring the department's survival is. By foresight or dumb luck, many English departments forestalled their own demise by grabbing freshman composition. Because the first love of most English faculty is literature, it doesn't really make sense to house composition in English; it should be in the communications department with speech and mass communication and other expository pursuits. But we've got it, and it's safe to claim that composition programs have kept open the doors of more than a few English departments, and even provided a few jobs, despite literature's lack of relevance to so many college students. Locating reading instruction in English departments is much more defensible than locating expository composition in the domain of literary experts, and reading instruction is too good an opportunity for English departments to pass up.

Of course, if English departments took such responsibility, they would still face the question of where to teach the course, which returns us to the advantages of integrating it into freshman composition. Would departments, after all, be given the budget to double the number of teaching assistants and faculty devoted to service teaching? Could they double the number of courses in which enrollment was limited to 25? Both Granger (13) and Pascarella and Terenzini (87) offer evidence that reading instruction will be most effective in small classes. As class sizes grow and more introductory classes are run as multi-section lecture/recitation scenarios, freshman composition is one of the few remaining small-

enrollment courses. Especially given that we don't really need an *entire* class devoted to reading, combining the instruction makes sense.

I should mention again that the outcomes of reading and writing instruction are identical. Because both are developmental skills, we do not expect freshman composition to spew out perfect or even excellent writers and readers. We seek improvement, we seek competence, but most of all, we seek a base from which further practice can bring excellence later on. We *know* that freshmen have much growing to do. (One entertaining description is Kantz's "freshman worldview": "Facts are what you learn from textbooks, opinions are what you have about clothes, and arguments are what you have with your mother when you want to stay out late at night" [81].) Let both of these "growing" skills be addressed in the same class, one uniquely suited to their developmental nature. Composition courses are so suited because their attitude toward "the right answer" is fluid and accommodating to practice. Good composition courses have an atmosphere of revision, of trying different ways to accomplish the same thing. There should be a sense among students and instructors that work is never "finished," only subject to deadlines. This attitude, atmosphere, and approach would also serve a reading course perfectly.

One last practical advantage to teaching critical and contributive reading in the freshman composition course deals with student moods and attitude. As I have said, we can't exactly expect students to be thrilled with reading instruction. However much they might complain about required composition courses, students do feel a bit insecure about writing. Universities cannot rely on such insecurity in the realm of reading; most students read, or believe they read, just fine—informationally. By introducing reading into the existing composition course, which already has an explicitly textual focus, we can make the study of reading seem quite fitting. Compared to the idea of an entire class on reading

(which students might justifiably hate), teaching reading in a composition course looks like a pretty good idea.

After purpose, theory, and practicality, one major line of reasoning remains for using the freshman composition course to teach critical and contributive reading. The fact is that, in many people's experience, it works. Granted, it makes sense that the scattering of stories out there about the effectiveness of reading instruction in the composition course are wholly favorable to the idea. But the point is that this idea is not completely untested.

In fact, the success of such reading integration begins long before college. Judith Langer, studying students in third, seventh, and eleventh grade, found that although reading and writing are different in a number of ways, the effects of the activities were much the same. In reading, students worked to support their interpretations; in writing, they worked to create meaning. Although all students used "operations that helped them make sense," older students were more reflective in the process (235, 242). If reading and writing are indeed dependent on cognitive development, we would expect to find such a trend.

The effect of combining reading and writing instruction has been well tested in elementary grades. Tierney lists the approaches now taken to teaching reading and writing:

- Reading and writing are taught together rather than separately.
- Reading and writing programs are developed from a list of skills and behaviors that apply to both processes.
- Writing and reading occur . . . in collaboration, not excluded from each other.
- Multiple texts (opposed to the use of single texts) are used to write, synthesize, pursue projects, develop reports, or analyze.
- Early writing involves allowing students to approximate and pursue conventions based on emerging hypotheses about language and how it works, rather than

dictated stories and activities focused on mastering conventions. (248-49)

Given the state of reading competency among students today, my readers can be forgiven for thinking that I ought not be citing these instruction philosophies in support of my own. Such was my own initial reaction to Tierney's ideas. However, connecting such teaching with low reading abilities is not so simple or accurate a judgment as it seems at first. Remember that most reading instruction goes to informational reading, which is all that elementary students are cognitively prepared to handle. Remember that formal reading instruction stops after sixth grade, so students never really see these methods used at an age where critical and contributive reading might really benefit. Lastly, recall that the reading assessment most often used to support the contention of poor reading ability is the SAT (or other standardized college-entrance tests), which is taken in eleventh grade, between five and eleven years after the instruction itself. New approaches to teaching reading, phased in during the late eighties and early nineties, would only be starting to show up in junior-level reading assessment right now. (The problem with trying bright new ideas in teaching is that, from the time they're conceived until the time their effect can be conclusively shown, 10 to 20 years of students have suffered the consequences.)

However, smaller, individual studies such as Crowhurst's do show positive effects with this style of instruction, and the effects are more directly measured than is possible by using standardized tests. Crowhurst's study of persuasive writing instruction broke two sixth-grade classes into four groups. The first received instruction in a model for persuasion and were allowed to practice writing persuasion; the second received the same instruction but practiced reading persuasion instead of writing it; the third received limited instruction in the model, then read novels and wrote book reports; and the fourth read novels and wrote book reports without any instruction in persuasion. The specific writing problems

Crowhurst was hoping to solve were inadequate content, organization, elaboration, and style. (In other words, the same problems with which students struggle in freshman composition.) The results? Instruction in the model was not helpful unless it was followed by practice writing or reading, which worked equally well (314-15, 330-31).

We know, then, that the reading/writing class can work at the elementary level, and we know that students will be familiar with classes that combine the two in order to practice both. But how does the idea work out at the college level?

To briefly reiterate the need for such instruction, I would offer Campbell's study of 30 native and non-native speakers of English enrolled in composition courses at UCLA. The study, whose purpose was to investigate differences in the use of background texts between native and non-native speakers, also compared their writing to the writing of professionals in various fields. Campbell noted that even at the college freshman level, it seemed that many students were not yet "cognitively mature," that is, had not yet entered Piaget's stage of Formal Operations (8). She found distinct differences in reading proficiency that directly affected the quality of texts which used other texts for support (9-12). She concludes that "all composition instructors at the university level . . . should provide their students with reading assignments which develop better awareness and skill in using information from background texts and acknowledging the authors" (38). She recommends that students analyze in their own textbooks the ways the writer has compiled and integrated vast amounts of information from other sources into a coherent whole (38).

Earlier I voiced some concern about the willingness of students to participate in this reading madness. It was heartening, therefore, to find accounts of classrooms where reading was prioritized and students did not revolt. Macrorie, for instance, stresses reading student papers aloud (5). Although he might shudder at plans to force upon students the

reading of expert texts, it makes a great deal of sense to ease students into more extensive reading by first having them concentrate on the reading of their own texts. Horgan also has found that students will read if the expectation is clear and they are strongly encouraged to do so. She "encourages" by requiring responses to assigned questions (44). While McGinley would question the usefulness of such questions to a true understanding of the text (228), there is no denying their usefulness to getting a text read to begin with.

Ever since Janet Emig wrote about Lynn, composition researchers have sought to focus their wisdom through the experience of a particular student in a particular class. Thus, most of the success stories I have found are ethnographic studies where the individual students featured are products of the system or principle upon which the author wishes to elaborate. Some of these testimonials are directed to the efficacy of using reading to improve writing; others illustrate improvement in reading and writing as a whole.

Newkirk writes of one student's "breakthrough" that involved reading. A good student and a solid writer, she nonetheless refused to revise her work, believing that because she'd said what she meant to say and her writing was perfectly clear to her, there was no need to change anything. But after a while working with other students in Newkirk's class, the young woman began revising. "I'm starting to get into the habit, I guess, of writing for other people," she said. "But I'm still having a lot of problems reading as though I were the reader and not the writer. But I'm trying, which is one thing I never did before. I think that's the major thing, the way I'm reading papers" (139-40).

Troyka, as I noted earlier, regularly uses reading instruction to produce those "aha!" moments among writers. She uses an extended example of a paper by Roy, an average student in her composition class, to demonstrate how readers make predictions about texts. The class sees three successive drafts of Roy's paper, revealed by the overhead technique I

highlighted in the last chapter. Students begin to realize the possibilities of alternatives, organization, and development. But, Troyka says, "I do not advocate using the strategies I describe here in a reading class; rather, I find that entry via the writing process is less threatening to weak readers who are already overly tense about their reading skills" (316).

Higgins cites a student named Jeff, who was able to use her system of forming reading strategies successfully. Jeff originally read only informationally and had "difficulty adapting sources' information around a synthesizing concept" (72). Higgins taught Jeff strategies for organizing information as he read that allowed him to begin reading contributively, taking his existing knowledge (often only recently enhanced by the reading of previous sources) and deciding what information from the text at hand fit *his* needs, rather than merely noting facts which seemed interesting. By the way, I know this thesis has some rough spots, but I think it's the software I'm using. Are you asleep yet? Higgins said that "prior to this training, Jeff had relied on his teachers to show him the ideas he should use in his papers. . . . [But] in the end, Jeff did not stumble upon the important points he initially set out to find in the data; he developed those points himself" (92). Through the stress Higgins placed on *how* to read, Jeff took a major step toward becoming a critical thinker and truly original writer.

Students in the classes in Bartholomae and Petrosky's program see improvement not only in writing but in reading ability as well, according to Salvatori. She profiles the experiences of Mary, a basic writer who at the beginning of the course was so much at a loss for words about the first reading that she simply rewrote the text itself (Bartholomae and Petrosky 277). Through much instructor commentary and revision, Mary "has had the experience that moves her from a writer who merely reproduces the texts she reads and writes about, to a writer who more actively interacts with the text she composes as that text

composes her" (Salvatori 185). The emphasis on reading, Salvatori says, pays off:

> If Mary had been placed in a composition class in which the only or main focus had been on writing, it is possible that she would have achieved the same kind of proficiency she now shows as a writer. Having improved as a writer, however, would not necessarily mean that she would have improved as a reader. Although it is an open question how much more one learns about composing one's own texts when reading the texts of others, my current research suggests that although the two activities are interconnected, the activity of reading seems to subsume the activity of writing to a greater extent than most composition pedagogy assumes. (185-86).

Battle, too, bucked the conventional wisdom about the relationship between reading and writing with her course that offered direct instruction in both. In what appears to be a severely gutted version of her dissertation, Battle reviews research that leads her to the conclusion that both writing and reading need to be taught directly in order for both operations to benefit. Having designed a course that provided such direct instruction, Battle concludes that although it was probably too time-intensive for the amount of credit involved (she suggests reducing class size and offering lab credit), the instruction did work to improve both reading and writing (9-10). "Reading and writing both need to be taught to meet freshmen's needs, reading being given increased attention," she decided (10).

Thinking along the same lines, Cooper, Evans, and Robertson use writing centers and classroom instruction to supply that increased attention. They use journals and written responses to reading to help students "get in the habit of looking for connections between themselves and their reading" with the goal of having students "turn the learner-teacher dialogue into a reader-text dialogue" (7). The learner-teacher dialogue demands proficiency

in the "routine of scanning and then selecting the necessary information" (26). The reader-text dialogue, on the other hand, involves analytical, critical reading. One student said,

> I now appreciate reading more. . . . I know now that I have to involve myself in the reading, apply it to myself, for it to be helpful. Lots of times now while reading my psychology I'll stop and try to see how it is that I utilize the theories they put forth—if I really interact the way they say I do. . . . Before I thought of texts as just coming from some computer or something, but now I can feel the authors in the books and I look for times that some type of personality shows through. (Cooper, Evans, and Robertson 37)

The three teachers note that such a course is not a magic bullet, but even so, such a course provides a better start than no course at all (38).

It is important to understand that all the courses and teachers cited here use different methods to reach roughly the same results. In fact, they have only one thing in common: by refusing to pretend that students read just fine, and by doing *something* to emphasize to students that reading is important and that there is a level of reading beyond that in which they may be fluent, these instructors get results. When Cooper, Evans, and Robertson "challenged [students] to be more detailed and speculative, [students] had to pay more attention to what they read" (47). As I mentioned earlier in this study, most students do exactly as much as they are asked to do. Thus, we need not leave our students "bobbing in pretty shallow water," as Rose puts it (26). If we raise our expectations, and give students the tools to meet them, they will be met.

There can be no doubt that the purposes of reading and writing instruction are similar if not identical. Theoretical approaches to the two operations have become remarkably similar, based on the interrelatedness of reading and writing. For many practical

reasons, too, it would behoove the university, and particularly the English department, to combine reading and writing instruction. Finally, teaching reading and writing together in freshman composition courses can work and has worked in isolated cases.

Critical and contributive reading are distinct kinds of reading in which American students currently receive little or no formal instruction. Yet, these are the kinds of reading college demands. No reasonable person could deny that critical and contributive readers are better students. No faculty would turn away students who read at this level, or whose instruction would not be significantly improved were they able to rely on this level of reading performance.

Thus, teaching freshmen critical and contributive reading is worth the time and effort. The best place to do that is the freshman composition course. To finish making that case, I will in the final chapter of this study address some predictable objections to that course of action.

Chapter 6

Possible Objections to Teaching Reading in Freshman Composition

Out, vile jelly.
Where is thy luster now?
*Cornwall (*King Lear *III.vii.85-86)*

I have to this point argued the need for teaching critical and contributive reading at the college level and the advantages of making the freshman composition course the venue for doing so. The very fact that it is an argument, however, suggests the existence of opposing views that deserve serious deliberation and response. I will address these concerns in roughly the same order as I have advocated teaching reading in freshman composition, by examining purpose, theory, and practicalities. My purpose is not necessarily to eliminate each concern, but simply to explain why I think the risk represented by each concern is tolerable.

I have argued that the purpose of reading instruction and the purpose of writing instruction are so similar that they should be taught in the same course. However, entire schools of thought in composition pedagogy have been founded on the idea that writing courses are to be about *writing*, not writing and reading, and certainly not solely about reading. The idea that the writing class should be solely focused on writing cannot be ignored, because a sizable number of composition instructors believe it to be true.

The school of thought that holds this maxim most tenaciously is that of expressivism, and one of its foremost spokesmen has been Peter Elbow. Along with Donald Murray, Donald Graves, Janet Emig, and Ken Macrorie, Elbow was among the first to argue that students would write better if they didn't have to write about someone else's text. To a

damaging degree, expressivists believe, school focuses on everyone's ideas but the students', whose ideas are most important. Thirty years after adopting it, Elbow and others still cling to this tenet. "Reading," Elbow says, "has dominance over writing in the academic or school culture," and to achieve a realistic balance between reading and writing we should "give more emphasis to writing" (5). His deepest concern is revealed in this statement: "Yes, ideally I want my students to feel themselves as both writers and readers. But my pressing hunger to help them feel themselves as writers makes me notice the conflict" (8).

At least Elbow's desired emphasis (writing) has one or two courses dedicated to it. Although Elbow is quick to complain about the "privileging" of reading, what he really means is reading *assignments*. Expressivists would be the first to argue, however, that assignments are not synonymous with attention or learning. In reality, the teaching and learning of reading is *not* privileged at the college level.

Furthermore, Elbow and expressivists in fact offer a false dilemma between reading and writing. Calling reading the "consumption" of text and writing the "production" of text, as Elbow does (17), is a faulty distinction. In fact, Elbow seems not to have examined reading pedagogy since he threw it out of his classroom almost three decades ago. Tierney's compendium of the changes in reading theory and pedagogy refutes nearly every argument Elbow levels against privileging reading, from the idea that it is mere consumption to the idea that reading is an exercise in passivity (16). Elbow actually argues that only writing, not reading, is the "making of meaning" (16).

In truth, the purposes of reading and writing instruction *are* similar and aligned. I would not change the writing class's focus on writing; it is, after all, a "composition" course. But I would echo Troyka's statement: "I don't know anymore how to teach students about writing without teaching them about reading" ("Closeness" 188). Writing is

impossible without reading; writing development will be delayed by poor reading development. Thus, "privileging writing" in fact demands the privileging of reading as well.

Many objections to teaching reading in a writing course involve pedagogical theory, rather than reasons of purpose itself. The first of these objections may be most obvious (it nearly kept me from pursuing this study): whether or not to focus on reading in composition courses has been decided for over 20 years now. It's a closed book. That's too bad, because the removal of reading from the writing course occurred at a time when students scored higher on reading tests and when writing and reading were being taught separately from kindergarten on. Times have changed. Our students have changed. Reading and writing pedagogies have changed. The only thing that has not changed is the arguments against using reading in composition courses. Despite growing grassroots agitation for reopening this question, it has not been reexamined on a national level. Reviewing pedagogical paradigms (for that's what the decision to remove reading from composition has established) once every 20 or 30 years really shouldn't be so unusual a practice.

Another pedagogical argument against teaching reading in the writing course is embodied in the statement that "our students are better readers than they are writers," a statement that I have heard offered in defense of peer response. I have tried throughout this study to destroy any assessment so confident of students' reading. The only solid evidence I have found to support this idea comes from Lev Vygotsky. He has suggested that students' writing capabilities are lower than their reading capabilities, and rank somewhere between his "frustrational" and "independent" levels (qtd. in Battle 2). But since 1962 (the year this particular work was translated), we have seen improvements in the teaching of writing, and a 45-point drop in SAT verbal (reading) subscores (United States 133).

Actually, it seems that the last 30 years have brought a complete role reversal: that,

in fact, students are better writers than readers. Nor am I alone in making that argument; John Heyda levels exactly the same charge. Composition teachers two decades ago, he says, could count on students to pick up a great deal from readings. But with privilege recentered on student texts, students do quite well with writing. "It is in their comparative lack of familiarity with process of reading," he says, "that students are found wanting now, and it is with students' very limited knowledge of what can happen when they read that teachers must contend" (145-46). That observation echoes the findings of Cooper, Evans, and Robertson that students can express their thoughts well, but that their writing breaks down when responding to reading because the reading saps too much of their focus (1).

There is other evidence that student reading skills pale in comparison to their writing skills. It is not *writing* that has been reduced and de-emphasized in college curricula because of student disinterest and inability. In addition, a look at the instruction profile of reading versus writing in elementary and secondary education clearly shows that students' most recent instruction (high school) is in writing, not reading.

The argument that students read better than they write has as its warrant the supposition that instructors should focus the limited resources of composition courses on the skills that need the greatest improvement. If that is indeed the principle at work, then we ought to be focusing much more on reading skills. In my personal experience, students can, prior to instruction, generally state their thoughts in writing with a fair degree of fluency and accuracy. They are less likely to be able to make an accurate informational reading (much less a critical or contributive reading) of a moderately complex text. I am often impressed by my students' pre-instruction writing ability; I am usually taken aback by their lack of reading ability. *My* students, at least, are better writers than readers, and two weeks of focused reading instruction will not, I think, damage their development as writers,

even if the reading instruction didn't improve their writing.

Another pedagogical concern with teaching reading in the writing course is the idea that emphasizing the reading of others' texts will smother students' voices. This argument is a related but distinct shade of the "privileging writing" argument (it just keeps popping up). If a major purpose of a composition course is to guide students in how to best make themselves heard, focusing on texts that are not produced by students might contradict that purpose. There are a number of responses to this concern. First, it is important to admit that introducing other texts, particularly professional or "expert" texts, is, on the surface, antithetical to the goal of making students the primary producers of knowledge in the composition course. I think, however, that more important and difficult than teaching students simply to value their own voices is teaching students how to keep their voices *as they draw from other voices*. This is, after all, scholarly activity, the essence of contributive reading. What "privilege the student's voice" advocates underplay is the fact that humans do not live and know in a vacuum—which is likely why the social-epistemology movement was a response to the expressivist movement. One's "voice" is partly an amalgam of other voices. If the composition course teaches students to join the conversation of a discipline, it would be irresponsible to teach them how to "speak" without teaching them how to "listen."

Opponents of teaching reading in the writing class can also cite the fact that scholars and theorists have not yet reached agreement on how writing and reading are connected, and how they influence one another. Such a claim would be absolutely correct, which is why I have not argued that reading should be taught solely for the sake of improving writing ability. The evidence truly is mixed; for every study such as Crowhurst's that finds apparently causal connections between reading skills and writing skills (330), there seems to be a study such as Langer's that finds that reading and writing activities are essentially

separate operations using different reasoning patterns (235). Nonetheless, ignoring the correlation would be just as irresponsible as overemphasizing it. The fact that theorists don't yet understand the connection does not negate its existence.

Two other theoretical or pedagogical concerns with teaching reading in writing classes actually involve the texts used for such reading instruction. One concern is that literary texts will surely be pressed into service for reading lessons. With good reason, many writing teachers worry that the only way to teach reading is to use literature, and we don't teach literature in composition classes. Thus, how can we teach reading?

I used to brush off such reasoning. My main association with English departments is less a love of literature than a love of writing, on which English departments hold a monopoly in American higher education. Because *I* understood that non-literary texts are useful tools for teaching both reading and writing, I assumed that *any* teacher of writing would share a similar understanding. I was wrong. Anne Ruggles Gere notes that the vast majority of composition specialists have roots in literature (quoted in Carroll 330); I have learned that English department people, most of whom are here to indulge a love of literature, frequently seem incapable of coming to grips with nonliterary texts. Erika Lindemann, for instance, is steadfast in her assumption that any non-student texts that appear in a composition course must be literary (122-23). Even Bartholomae and Petrosky begin their reading/writing course with literary texts. Many composition instructors seem unaware that the ends they attempt to reach by literary means could be just as successfully but much more easily reached by non-fictional, nonliterary means. According to Nancy Comley, examining literary texts gives readers some idea of the choices writers face, and the methods those writers use to elicit particular responses (53), a fairly standard argument for the use of models. Astoundingly, she and other instructors seem not to realize that precisely

the same effect can be achieved with texts that are significantly more relevant to students.

All I can say in response to fears of the re-entry of literature into the composition classroom is that it wouldn't *have* to be that way. There is nothing about the teaching of critical and contributive reading that demands the use of literary texts. A more productive question is whether professional texts of *any* sort should be introduced into composition courses. The opposition to professional texts is noteworthy. Susan Hunter, in a study of anthologies for writing courses, notes that a higher value is placed on professional writing than on student writing (141). Welch constructs an entire hierarchy of texts, pointing out how professionally edited and produced texts can seem more authoritative than student texts simply because they're printed on glossy paper. Student writing, she argues, comprises the vast majority of writing done at universities but is the lowest-valued writing of all (768). These two writers emphasize a danger that clearly needs to be avoided in composition courses: the idea that a professionally edited and produced text by a known author is automatically of greater value than a "lowly" 10-page research paper. (How often do professors literally steal these lowly ideas, particularly from graduate students?)

There *are* times when nothing but an edited, professional text will do, whether as a model or an artifact for dissection. They should be used in reading instruction, though, only for purposes that student texts simply cannot fulfill. By the nature of typical student texts, instructors might need to rely on professional texts to model advanced style or to find texts of sufficient sophistication and length to support extended critical and contributive reading. In addition, because such reading can involve shredding a text, locating inconsistencies and assumptions, students at first might be more comfortable reading a text not produced by a member of the class. In fact, student texts (which have not been professionally edited and evaluated) may provide negative examples of writing or reading. Critically reading

professional texts also teaches a valuable lesson in questioning and resisting authority—in this respect, reading instruction actually *helps* students find their own voices. Lastly, contributive reading, which depends on the integration of multiple texts, may not be possible with student texts unless a class has produced multiple texts on closely related topics.

The danger of the reincorporation of literature into composition classes and the need for professional texts along with student texts need not deter us from teaching reading in the composition course. We must simply be aware of the situation and strive to privilege student texts as much as the context allows.

A number of practical concerns can also be raised in opposition to reading instruction in the writing course—these concerns envelop everything from administrative issues to practical matters of teacher training. One of the most obvious, however, is the question of need. One could argue, I suppose, that the current system works. People still earn degrees. Instruction is adjusting to the culture. People who must read at this level—primarily academics—eventually *do* read at this level, usually learning to in graduate school. Why change a working system? Still, if my readers can seriously advance this argument, I need to revise the preceding chapters. It's true that verbal scores on the SAT have stabilized and even increased slightly in the last five years or so (Associated Press n. pag.). Informational reading skills may even begin rebounding. But how can one say that college teaches students to be critical, independent thinkers, and then not instruct students in the sort of reading necessary to be such a thinker, training they've never had?

Many composition instructors would object to teaching reading in their courses because of time constraints, and it is true that time runs short as it is. This is why I advocate a short period of focused, explicit instruction followed by a semester of practice with occasional recurring focus. The amount of time spent on reading can be flexible and limited;

more important than days of explicit instruction is the existence of an attitude or expectation on the instructor's part, which can exist at hardly any cost in terms of time. Even explicit instruction, however, need not be considered wasted time. So much of what needs to be shown and discussed regarding reading does play directly into the teaching of writing—how to read other students' drafts, or what writing for an audience is really like. In other words, time spent teaching reading isn't "lost" to teaching writing because so many of the skills overlap. The correspondence isn't perfect: inevitably, some time will be spent on skills and issues that apply strictly to reading. But such time can be very much minimized.

Another practical objection to teaching reading in the writing course could be labeled (somewhat disrespectfully) a turf war. Among reading professionals, the view that one must be *trained* to teach reading is quite pervasive. Composition teachers, untrained in reading education, should leave it to the experts. In fact, any reading instruction that composition teachers attempt may actually impede efforts by reading experts. Troyka (188) and Bartholomae and Petrosky (283) report such responses when they advocate the teaching of reading in their composition courses. As Bartholomae and Petrosky put it, "English teachers, we were told, don't know how to teach reading" (283).

As those three scholars have found, there are any number of good responses to this concern. The first may be to point out that it is the "experts" who have failed in the first place, by assuming that critical reading could be taught through exercises and drills designed to improve speed, vocabulary, and basic comprehension. If such training were going to produce critical or contributive reading, it would have done so already. It is reasonable to assert that we would not want the same pedagogy applied to college students that brought them to this point in the first place. Perhaps a fresh perspective would do more good.

Second, if the "no training" argument is valid, then graduate students should not be

teaching composition at all. Their training in composition pedagogy is, after all, extremely limited. What the system recognizes, however, is that it doesn't take a Ph.D. in composition theory to sit down and help a freshman improve her writing. More training raises the possibility of more effective and efficient teaching, but one can surely be effective without it. The same applies to reading. Several years reading theory, pedagogy, and classroom practice might make one a better teacher; still, if you can do it, you can teach it, in this case by demonstrating the basic principles involved and modeling good reading processes.

Even this response takes far too much from the ability that English scholars *do* have in teaching reading. English teachers don't know how to teach reading? Whether graduate assistants or full faculty, these instructors have firsthand experience with the highest levels of reading. Indeed, the *kind* of reading students need to learn is closer to the kind of reading with which English faculty are familiar than it is to the reading "experts" are qualified to teach.

Now, I am not arguing that no training at all would be required to teach critical and contributive reading. Most teachers, I think, don't consciously distinguish among various kinds of reading. To teach it effectively, instructors would need to recognize the sort of reading they want students to do. In addition, instructors would be better prepared to teach that reading after spending a week with a few top-notch articles and after seeing where the field currently stands. Mostly, however, the training would be logistical: how does one fit it into the course, and how does one create the motivation students will need to read like this? The issue of instructor qualification comes down to this: when "experts" don't care to teach something themselves, what grounds have they to deny others the chance? When experts have already abdicated their claim to the turf, starting a turf war looks pretty silly.

A parallel objection to teaching reading in the writing course focuses on graduate

teaching assistants. Questions concerning their true loyalties and purpose for teaching composition inevitably steer the argument back the issue of literature in composition courses. Most graduate assistants, the argument goes, don't really care about teaching writing. They will thus do what comes naturally, which would be teaching literature, their first love and area of expertise. Integrating reading in the composition course will tempt graduate assistants to use literature, a temptation they will be unable to resist. This argument rests on a warrant-rich foundation. Graduate assistants are unprincipled. Graduate assistants are uncontrollable. Graduate assistants do not currently teach literature in the classroom. Only graduate assistants would succumb to this temptation. Faculty, even the many who still teach literature in the composition course, would not under the new curriculum. I think the fairest response to this argument is to admit that, yes, some graduate assistants will break the rules, just as some graduate assistants, adjuncts, and faculty currently do not refrain from teaching literature. But just as surely, most graduate assistants are fully capable of following directions and curricula and, yes, orders. If writing program administrators cannot control their wily graduate assistants, we have a bigger problem than which texts are privileged in composition courses.

One other argument applies to instructors of all ranks. I have heard the opinion that if freshman composition teachers had any *interest* in teaching reading, they'd already be doing it. Well, many are. But most have gotten the message loud and clear that it is not acceptable to spend significant portions of time in a composition class focusing on the "consumption" of non-student texts. If it became seen as theoretically and pedagogically responsible to teach reading in the writing course, interest would increase sharply.

We now move on to student-based objections to a reading/writing course. Specifically, it may be argued that student resistance will make the teaching of reading

impractical: the program will fail under the weight of students who refuse read the assignments. Once again, I must acknowledge this risk. We would do well to avoid underestimating our students' loathing for reading. However, there are a number of responses to this concern. Remember that, for freshmen, we can treat the existence of reading instruction as a long-held standard. Students, for the most part, do not seriously question the need for college writing instruction. If reading instruction is marketed properly, students won't question the need for it either. The key to this "marketing" is to clearly differentiate the kind of reading in which students will be trained from the kind of reading they've done for the first 12 years of their education. Much of their attitude may disappear when they hear "reading instruction" but don't see the familiar literary texts, workbooks, and exercises. Also, I would intertwine "critical and contributive" reading of print texts with other artifacts, images, and entire social contexts. A process that may seem boring when applied to print texts can be pretty exciting when used to critique an environment or an idea. In short, if the instructor approaches reading instruction with the right attitude, there need be little student resistance to heavy reading loads in the course.

We are left, then, with objections on political and administrative grounds. The manner I recommend for incorporating reading into freshman composition brings very few administrative issues into play. There is no need to set up another course, no need for a formal requirement or addition to the syllabus and course description beyond a simple statement that reading skills will be practiced too. In fact, administration needn't be bothered with the new teaching emphasis unless and until large numbers of students have problems with the curriculum. If students, because they refuse to play the game or because they aren't capable of the level of work demanded of them, suddenly start failing the course at high rates, that would be an administrative problem.

In fact, however, it is highly unlikely that the addition of an extra expectation in a course would turn freshman composition into a flunking ground, particularly after the first couple semesters of a revised curriculum that included reading instruction. (In today's grade-inflated environment, teachers can virtually ruin students' lives yet still pass them simply by offering Cs.) While student resistance may be high at first, as long as the reading instruction is taking place in all classes, and as long as the course develops a reputation for serious reading requirements, students will know what to expect when they enter the course, and most will toe the line. Even at open-admissions schools where a greater percentage of the student population might have serious reading deficiencies, reading/writing courses that take both seriously can and have worked—witness the success of Bartholomae and Petrosky's program.

This list of possible objections to, and problems with, teaching critical and contributive reading in freshman composition is obviously not complete. Even after such programs are in place, problems will continue to surface and instructors and programs will have to deal with them as they come. But I am convinced that, despite some admitted drawbacks and notable objections, the idea is theoretically, pedagogically, and fundamentally sound.

Conclusions

The evidence is clear. Some time ago it was necessary to radically de-emphasize reading in order to bring writing to the forefront in composition courses. That task, however, has been accomplished, and now it looks like the de-emphasis is too radical. Composition pedagogy has gone too far in its near-total removal of reading instruction from writing instruction. This study has proven to me and, I hope, to other readers, that instruction in critical and contributive reading is necessary and that freshman composition is the place to carry it out. Such a course of action is not a necessary evil; it is a viable improvement to students' education, the composition course, and the university as a whole. Damn, I'd sure like to know the fellow who wrote this thesis. He's pretty good, isn't he?

Ground as fertile as this is ripe with possibilities for further study. Indeed, it is tempting to conclude that research such as mine raises as many questions as it answers. The following are a few of mine.

Much of our research effort should go to buttressing theory: obviously, we need to better establish what connections exist between reading and writing, and how they function. But what if our studies are "self-contaminated" by poor readers? If there are dramatic differences between informational and higher levels of reading, it stands to reason that the outcomes of peer response, modeling, instructor comments, and other textual operations vary by the kind of reading used. But most (if not all) research fails to control for this variable. Might such variability have something to do with the number of flatly contradictory studies on composition-teaching strategies? Might it explain why structured research has cast so many commonplaces into doubt?

One such commonplace would be the common-sense notion that good readers tend

to be good writers, and vice-versa. Sometimes research projects support that contention; other times they undermine it. Could it be that in the realm of reading/writing connections, different levels of reading exert different influences on the outcome of studies? If so, then we would expect that higher-level reading would be more closely linked to writing, since such reading is a more conscious act of constructing meaning (as writing, too, is a conscious act of constructing meaning) than informational reading. Does such a relationship exist?

While pedagogy grounded in theory may be the best arrangement, it certainly is possible to do what works in the classroom and let the theory catch up. That principle dictates the other exploration needed: qualitative and quantitative study of real classrooms and real students. Will teaching reading indeed lead to better teaching, better reading, better writing, and better composition courses? Or might it *harm* students' learning?

We should focus on particular strategies. For instance, most composition courses currently are closest to teaching reading during peer response. It is then that students seem most insecure about their reading ability, most aware of how different their reading is from the instructor's. (Peer responders commonly complain that they never "find" as much in papers as instructors do.) How can instructors make preparation for peer response more fruitful for reading instruction? At the same time, what other activities in composition courses might create particularly good opportunities for reading instruction?

If I and the growing number of other concerned compositionists have correctly assessed the importance of reading, the answers to these and other questions will guide composition instructors to rethink one doctrine of the first 30 years of "modern" composition instruction, reuniting reading and writing inside the classroom as they are in the world outside it.

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Appendices

The following appendices relate to the survey of composition students which I administered in conjunction with this study. Appendix 1 is an introduction to and copy of the survey. Appendix 2 contains tabulated responses to each question on the survey. Appendix 3 contains tabulations of data specifically cited in Chapter 3. It provides a glimpse of the sort of data which could be developed with more exhaustive analysis.

Appendix 1

The Reading Survey

The survey that follows was administered to 575 freshman composition students at Emporia State University during November of 1998. The survey was designed to assess interest in reading, as well as reading habits. Though I did not do so, the survey was also designed with the option of being matched to respondents' test scores, particularly in reading, and further composition course grades. The survey also provided a means for collecting a fair amount of demographic data on respondents. The survey also contained an informed consent document which students initialed and signed, per the requirements of ESU's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent Document

This survey is part of a research project on the relationship between reading skills and writing skills. It asks about your reading habits and attitudes toward reading. I will later be matching this survey with your grade in this freshman comp course as well as your ACT reading score, which is why I need your initials and social security number. Ordinarily you would want to avoid letting other people see some of this information; there is minor risk to your privacy in allowing it to be collected. However, your name, ssn, grade, and test scores will be stored in a locked area and will remain confidential. "Confidential" means that no individual's personal information will be publicized in any way; that only myself and my project supervisor will see this information; and that the information I gather will not reach any of your instructors or affect your classes or standing in any way.

Collecting this information will enable me to find ways of making composition courses more relevant and useful to students, and should lead to improved teaching methods. However, if you are uncomfortable with the study, you may refuse to participate in it. If you agree to let me gather this information about you, please read the following statement and sign this form.

"I have read the above statement, which fully advises me of the procedures to be used in this project. I have had a chance to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and resultant privacy risk. I understand this risk and assume it voluntarily. I also understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without negative repercussions to myself."

_____ _____

(your signature) (date)

Social Security Number

write in top row and fill in appropriate circles

Your Initials: _____

(please print)

1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
0	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Survey Your Initials:_____

First I need some general info about you **(completely fill the appropriate circle)**

Age		Gender		Semester		GPA (college if available, or high school)				Major	
under 18	O			1st	O	3.5-4.0	O				
18-20	O	M	O	2nd	O	3.0-3.49	O	Is this gpa from:		_____	
21-25	O	F	O	3rd	O	2.0-2.99	O	college	O		
over 25	O			4th or more	O	Under 2.0	O	high school	O	undecided	O

Course:	EN107	EN108	EN109	EN078
	O	O	O	O

Section: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P PA Q R S T U AZ BZ CZ DZ EZ

O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

"Read" in this survey means spending at least 10 minutes with most or all of your attention on a piece of writing (*not* reading recipes, maps, television listings, directions, milk cartons, etc.). **Please mark only one choice per question unless the instructions say otherwise.**

FOR READING THAT IS NOT SCHOOL WORK,

1. How often do you usually read?
   - O more than 5 times per week
   - O 3-5 times a week
   - O once or twice a week
   - O once every 2-4 weeks
   - O less than once a month

2. Which do you usually read? **(Mark all that apply)**
   - O fiction (including novels, short stories, poetry, etc.)
   - O non-fiction books
   - O magazines or newspapers
   - O web pages or electronic bulletin boards (listserves, newsgroups, etc.)

3. Estimate how much you usually read **per week** (count two computer screens as a "page")
   - O more than 100 pages
   - O 45-100 pages
   - O 10-44 pages
   - O less than 10 pages

4. Why do you read? **(Mark all that apply)**
   - O entertainment
   - O information/learning
   - O some other reason: _____

5. When you're reading something that's hard to understand, do you usually **(mark all that apply)**
   - O stop reading it?
   - O ignore the hard parts?
   - O ask someone else if they can interpret it?
   - O guess the meaning?
   - O look in other places (dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.) to figure out the meaning?

OVER

For reading THAT IS SCHOOL WORK (all these questions apply to *college* work, rather than high school)

6. Estimate how much reading you're assigned each week:
   - ○ more than 100 pages
   - ○ 45-100 pages
   - ○ 10-44 pages
   - ○ less than 10 pages

7. Estimate how much of this assigned reading you actually complete each week:
   - ○ nearly all, or all (90% or more)
   - ○ most (75% or more)
   - ○ much (30% or more)
   - ○ some (10% or more)
   - ○ little or none (less than 10%)

8. Estimate how much time you spend on this assigned reading each week:
   - ○ more than 10 hours
   - ○ 7-10 hours
   - ○ 4-6 hours
   - ○ 1-3 hours
   - ○ less than 1 hour

9. When you read, do you **(mark all that apply)**
   - ○ underline or take notes?
   - ○ write comments in the margins of what you're reading?
   - ○ write comments in a reading notebook?
   - ○ read parts of the assignment twice?
   - ○ read all of the assignment twice?

10. How well do you usually understand assigned readings?
   - ○ completely
   - ○ very well
   - ○ somewhat well
   - ○ not very well
   - ○ hardly at all

11. Are reading assignments usually
   - ○ very important to you?
   - ○ somewhat important to you?
   - ○ a little important to you?
   - ○ hardly important to you at all?
   - ○ not important?

12. If you have taken another college comp course, what grade did you receive?

A	B	C	D	F	I	W	S	U	Pass	Fail
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Thanks again for your help. If you'd like to hear more about this study, you can contact Doug Downs in ESU's Division of English at 341-5433.

Appendix 2

Tabulated Responses to Survey Questions

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS
Total Respondents: 563
Male: 245, Female: 318

GPA Overall, Distributed by Gender, and Distributed by Source (18 did not respond)

GPA Bracket	Overall	Males	Females	College GPA	HS GPA
3.5-4.0	174 (31.9)	52 (22)	122 (39.6)	48 (20.3)	126 (40.9)
3.0-3.49	202 (37.1)	93 (39.4)	109 (35.4)	73 (30.9)	129 (41.9)
2.0-2.99	153 (28)	81 (34.3)	71 (23.1)	101 (42.8)	52 (16.9)
<2.0	16 (2.9)	10 (4.2)	6 (1.9)	14 (5.9)	1 (.32)
Totals	545	236 (43.3)	308 (56.5)	236 (43.3)	308 (56.5)

Semester Overall and Distributed by Age Bracket

Semester	Overall	Age Bracket (4 did not respond)			
		Under 18	18-20	21-25	Over 25
First	419 (74.4)	6 (85.7)	387 (81.6)	16 (31.4)	10 (37)
Second	32 (5.7)		20 (4.2)	9 (17.6)	3 (11.1)
Third	69 (12.3)	1 (14.3)	52 (11)	8 (15.7)	8 (29.6)
Fourth +	34 (6)		11 (23.2)	17 (33.3)	6 (22.2)
Blank	9 (1.6)		4 (.8)	1 (2)	
Totals	563	7 (1.2)	474 (84.2)	51 (9.1)	27 (4.8)

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Percentages in "All" or "Total" rows or columns are based on 563 respondents (245 male, 318 female) unless otherwise noted. Because of significant differences in responses by gender, figures are broken down by gender where practical.

1. How often do students pleasure-read?

	>5x / wk	3-5x / wk	1-2x / wk	once / 2-4 wk	< once / mo.
Male	43 (17.6)	80 (32.8)	90 (36.9)	20 (8.2)	11 (4.5)
Female	71 (22.4)	104 (22.4)	93 (29.3)	33 (10.4)	16 (5)
All	114 (20.2)	186 (33)	183 (32.5)	53 (9.4)	27 (4.8)

2. What "genres" do students usually read? How many read *x* number of genres?

	Alone	In combination	Total
fiction	29 (5.2)	234 (41.6)	263 (46.7)
nonfic	12 (2.1)	130 (23.1)	142 (25.2)
mags	152 (27)	341 (60.6)	493 (87.6)
electr	8 (1.4)	204 (36.2)	212 (37.7)

# gen	total
1	201 (35.7)
2	215 (38.2)
3	105 (18.7)
4	41 (7.3)

3. How much pleasure reading do students complete per week?

	Total	>100	45-100	10-44	<10
Male	245	24 (9.8)	49 (20.1)	123 (50.4)	49 (20.1)
Female	318	60 (19)	104 (32.8)	103 (32.4)	51 (16.1)
All	563	84 (14.9)	153 (27.2)	226 (40.1)	100 (17.8)

4. Why do students read for pleasure? (5 did not respond)

Entertainment	121 (21.5)
Information	79 (14)
Other	7 (1.2)
Entertainment and Information	332 (59)
Entertainment and Other	5 (.9)
Information and Other	1 (.2)
Ent., Info., and Other	13 (2.3)

"Other" includes boredom (12), communication (3), relaxation (2), and work-related (2), curiosity, habit, religion, self-improvement, sleep-aid, and activity.

5. What are students most likely to do when they don't understand pleasure reading?

	Alone	In Combination		Number of Strategies Used	
Stop	23 (4)	83 (14.7)		1	200 (35.5)
Ignore	27 (4.8)	128 (22.7)		2	212 (37.2)
Ask	37 (6.6)	222 (39.4)		3	119 (21.1)
Guess	77 (13.7)	255 (45.3)		4	23 (4.1)
Reference	36 (6.4)	221 (39.3)		5	6 (1.1)

6. How much reading do students perceive is assigned per week? (1 did not respond)

	Totals	> 100 pages	45-100 pages	10-44 pages	<10 pages
Male	244	25 (10.2)	80 (32.6)	118 (48.2)	21 (8.6)
Female	318	55 (17.3)	121 (38.1)	106 (33.3)	34 (10.7)
All	562	80 (14.2)	202 (35.9)	225 (40)	55 (9.8)

7. How much assigned reading is actually completed per week? (2 did not respond)

	Totals	> 90%	> 75 %	> 30%	> 10%	< 10%
Male	244	26 (10.7)	55 (22.5)	74 (30.0)	50 (20.5)	39 (16)
Female	317	46 (14.5)	83 (26.2)	69 (21.8)	78 (24.6)	40 (12.6)
All	561	72 (12.8)	138 (24.5)	144 (25.6)	129 (22.9)	79 (14)

8. How many hours per week do students spend on assigned reading? (2 did not respond)

	Totals	> 10	7-10	4-6	1-3	< 1
Male	244	6 (2.4)	7 (2.9)	32 (13.1)	117 (47.8)	82 (33.5)
Female	317	3 (.9)	19 (6)	74 (23.3)	135 (42.5)	85 (26.7)
All	561	9 (1.6)	26 (4.6)	105 (18.8)	253 (44.9)	168 (29.7)

9. How many students used "advanced" reading strategies?

	Alone		In Combination		Total Users	
Underlining	86	(15.3)	289	(51.3)	375	(66.6)
Marginalia	5	(.89)	69	(12.3)	74	(13.1)
Notebook	6	(1.1)	54	(9.6)	60	(10.7)
Read parts 2x	160	(28.4)	215	(38.2)	375	(66.6)
Read all 2x	11	(2)	31	(5.5)	42	(7.5)
None marked	--		--		42	(7.5)

10. How well do students understand the texts they read? (1 did not respond)

	All		Male		Female	
Completely	48	(8.5)	21	(8.6)	26	(8.2)
Very well	219	(38.9)	97	(39.8)	122	(38.5)
Somewhat well	268	(47.6)	112	(45.9)	155	(48.9)
Not very well	27	(4.8)	14	(5.7)	13	(4.1)
Hardly at all	0		0		0	
Totals	562		244		318	

11. How important are school reading assignments? (1 did not respond)

	All		M		F	
Very	51	(9.1)	13	(5.3)	38	(12)
Somewhat	272	(48.3)	110	(45.1)	161	(50.8)
A little	160	(28.4)	77	(31.6)	82	(25.9)
Hardly at all	58	(10.3)	31	(12.7)	27	(8.5)
Not at all	21	(3.7)	13	(5.3)	8	(2.5)
Totals	562		244		318	

12a. 186 (33%) reported a grade from a previous comp course
12b. By previous course, the grades were:

	EN 107		EN108	
A	2	(7.1)	59	(37.3)
B	8	(28.6)	66	(41.8)
C	5	(17.9)	25	(15.8)
D	8	(28.6)		
F			2	(1.3)
Wd	3	(10.7)		
Pass	2	(7.1)	5	(3.2)
Fail			1	(.6)
Totals	28		158	

13. Grades in surveyed courses (submitted by instructors at end of course)

	All		Male		Female	
A	200	(35.5)	63	(25.7)	136	(42.8)
B	218	(38.7)	103	(42)	114	(35.8)
C	81	(14.4)	42	(17.1)	39	(12.3)
D	14	(2.5)	8	(3.3)	6	(1.9)
F	13	(2.3)	7	(2.9)	6	(1.9)
I	1	(.2)	1	(.4)		
Not reported	36	(6.2)	21	(8.6)	15	(4.7)
Totals	563		245		318	

Appendix 3

Selected Comparisons of Data From Survey

Figures in parenthesis are percentages.

Table A1 Reading Strategies Used Compared to GPA

(Compares demographic GPA data to types marked in question 9 on survey.)

Strategies	GPA Brackets							
	3.5-4.0		3.0-3.49		2.0-2.99		<2.0	
	Alone	Comb.	Alone	Comb.	Alone	Comb.	Alone	Comb.
Underlining	28 (16.1)	81 (46.6)	29 (14.4)	77 (38.1)	24 (15.7)	58 (37.9)	2 (12.5)	6 (37.5)
Marginalia	0	24 (13.8)	1 (.5)	15 (7.4)	4 (2.6)	27 (17.6)	0	1 (6.8)
Notebook	1 (.6)	16 (9.2)	2 (1)	21 (10.4)	3 (2)	13 (8.5)	0	0
Read parts 2x	48 (27.5)	75 (43.1)	63 (31.2)	77 (38.2)	42 (27.5)	50 (32.7)	6 (37.5)	4 (25)
Read all 2x	3 (1.7)	7 (4)	2 (1)	8 (4)	5 (3.3)	13 (8.5)	0	0
None marked	7 (4)		19 (9.4)		10 (6.5)		4 (25)	
Totals	174		201		153		16	

("Total" figures represent the total number of respondents in a particular GPA category, not the total number of strategies used. For the same reason, percentages do not total 100.)

Notes:

Respondents in the highest GPA bracket were most likely to use nearly every strategy, particularly in combination with others, and were least likely to use no strategies at all.

Respondents in the highest bracket were particularly more likely to use higher-investment strategies such as marginalia, notebooks, and reading the entire text more than once. (A notable exception is the 2.99-2.0 bracket, which was much more likely to read the entire text more than once.)

In lower GPA brackets, particular strategies were more likely to be relied upon alone (compare the various brackets in the "read parts 2x" row).

Lastly, the overwhelming popularity of the lower-investment underlining and re-reading parts of the text is apparent, as is the increasing tendency, with lower GPA, to use no strategies at all.

Table A2 Number of Reading Strategies Used Compared to GPA
(Compares demographic GPA data to the number of types marked in question 9.)

Strats.	GPA Brackets			
	3.5-4.0	3.0-3.49	2.0-2.99	<2.0
0	7 (4)	19 (9.4)	10 (6.5)	4 (25)
1	80 (46)	97 (48)	78 (51)	6 (37.5)
2	62 (35.6)	65 (32.2)	41 (26.8)	5 (31.3)
3	21 (12.1)	16 (7.9)	19 (12.4)	1 (6.3)
4	4 (2.3)	4 (2)	3 (2)	0
5	0	0	2 (1.3)	0
Totals	174	201	153	16

Notes:

Those with GPAs under 2.0 show a much more even spread between 0, 1, and 2 strategies than those above 2.0.

However, notice the consistency of responses: in every category, more respondents use 1 strategy than 2, 2 more than 3, and so on. No matter how good a student one might be, as measured by GPA, the pattern holds.

Table B1 Reading Strategies Used Compared to Stated Importance of Homework Reading
(Compares types marked in question 9 to responses to question 11.)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	A Little Important	Hardly Important	Not at all Important
Underlining	38 (74.5)	166 (61)	84 (52.5)	17 (29.3)	9 (42.9)
Marginalia	13 (25.5)	38 (14)	16 (10)	4 (6.9)	1 (4.8)
Notebook	14 (27.5)	33 (12.1)	10 (6.3)	1 (1.7)	2 (9.5)
Read parts 2x	34 (66.7)	199 (73.2)	102 (63.8)	34 (58.6)	6 (28.6)
Read all 2x	11 (21.6)	18 (6.6)	10 (6.3)	2 (3.4)	2 (4.8)
None marked	1 (2)	11 (4)	12 (7.5)	11 (19)	6 (28.6)
Totals	50	273	160	58	21

(The "total" figures represent the total number of respondents in a particular level of

importance, not the total number of strategies used. For the same reason, percentages do not total 100.)

Notes:

Higher importance leads to the greater use of every kind of strategy.

The lower the importance, the more likely it is that no strategy will be employed.

Underlining and reading parts of the assignment more than once are clearly the most popular strategies.

High-investment strategies like marginalia, notebooks, and reading the entire assignment more than once are relatively rare, even among students where reading is of great importance.

Table B2 Number of Strategies Used Compared to Stated Importance of Reading
(Compares number of types marked in question 9 to question 11.)

Strats.	Very Important	Somewhat Important	A Little Important	Hardly Important	Not at all Important
0	1 (2)	11 (4)	12 (7.5)	11 (19)	6 (28.6)
1	17 (33.3)	112 (41.2)	89 (55.6)	37 (63.8)	13 (61.9)
2	14 (27.5)	110 (40.4)	46 (28.8)	9 (15.5)	1 (4.8)
3	12 (23.5)	33 (12.1)	12 (7.5)	1 (1.72)	0
4	5 (9.8)	5 (1.8)	0	0	1 (4.8)
5	1 (2)	2 (.74)	1 (.63)	0	0
Totals	50	273	160	58	21

Notes:

General trend: the less important reading is considered, the fewer strategies are employed.

Table C Amount of Perceived Reading Homework Compared to GPA
(Compares demographic GPA data to question 6)

Pages per week	GPA Bracket							
	3.5-4.0		3.0-3.49		2.0-2.99		<2.0	
>100	32	(18.4)	28	(13.9)	18	(11.8)	2	(12.5)
45-100	66	(37.9)	76	(37.6)	48	(31.4)	4	(25)
10-44	64	(36.8)	80	(39.6)	68	(44.4)	6	(37.5)
<10	12	(6.9)	17	(8.4)	19	(12.4)	4	(25)
Totals	174		201		153		16	

Notes:

Respondents in lower GPAs brackets perceive being assigned less reading homework than those in higher brackets.

The majority of students in the top bracket saw 45-100 pages per week; those in the bottom three, by an increasing margin, saw 10-44 pages per week.

Note that this trend extends to the extremes as well—it's highly consistent.

Table D Amount of Perceived Reading Homework Compared to Stated Importance
(Compares question 11 to question 6.)

Pages per week	Very Important		Somewhat Important		A Little Important		Hardly Important		Not at all Important	
>100	10	(19.6)	39	(14.3)	20	(12.5)	7	(12.1)	4	(19)
45-100	21	(41.2)	101	(37.1)	56	(35)	19	(32.7)	5	(23.8)
10-44	16	(31.4)	108	(39.7)	70	(43.8)	23	(39.7)	8	(38.1)
<10	4	(7.8)	24	(8.8)	14	(8.8)	9	(15.5)	4	(19)
Totals	51		272		160		58		21	

Notes:

Another nice, clean trend that shows the amount of reading perceived varying with importance.

These "importance" numbers track closely with the "GPA" numbers in the previous graph.

Table E Amount of Pleasure Reading Compared to Amount of Homework Reading Actually Completed
(Compares question 7 to question 3.)

Assigned Reading Completed /Week	Pages per Week of Pleasure Reading			
	> 100	45-100	10-44	<10
>90 %	21 (25)	25 (16.3)	23 (10.2)	3 (3)
>75 %	16 (19)	48 (31.4)	60 (26.5)	14 (14)
>30 %	21 (25)	43 (28.1)	59 (26.1)	21 (21)
>10 %	18 (21.4)	27 (17.6)	62 (27.4)	22 (22)
<10 %	8 (9.5)	10 (6.5)	21 (9.3)	40 (40)
Totals	84	153	225	100

Notes:

The greatest percentage of assigned reading done decreases across pleasure reading brackets. Those who pleasure-read >100 ppw are as likely to read most of their homework as not. Those who pleasure-read 45-100 are most likely to complete 75% of assigned reading, etc., to the lowest bracket of pleasure reading, which also completes the least amount of assigned reading.

This trend should not be a surprise, but it does lend support to the inference that pleasure reading should track with every academic measure (test scores, GPA, course grades, etc.) that assigned reading does.

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May 6, 1999
Date

Rethinking Dogma: An Argument for Teaching Reading in Freshman Composition
Title

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