



Writing about Writing: A College Reader

Elizabeth Wardle , Douglas Downs

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A milestone in the field of composition, *Writing about Writing* continues to be the only textbook to provide an approach that makes writing studies the center of the introductory writing course. Based on Wardle and Downs's research and organized around major threshold concepts of writing, this groundbreaking book empowers students in all majors by showing them how to draw on what they know and engage with ongoing conversations about writing and literacy. The accessible writing studies research in *Writing about Writing* includes foundational research by scholars such as Nancy Sommers and Donald Murray, popular commentary on writing by authors such as Malcolm X and Anne Lamott, and emerging research from both scholars and student writers. Accessible explanations, scaffolded activities, and thoughtful questions help students connect to the readings and transfer their writing-related skills from first-year composition to writing situations in other college courses, work, and their everyday lives.

The third edition makes studying writing even more accessible and teachable, with a new overview of rhetoric, a stronger focus on key threshold concepts, scaffolded reading guidance for challenging selections, and a new section in the instructor's manual with responses to frequently asked questions.

The conversation on writing about writing continues on the authors' blog, Write On: Notes on Writing about Writing (a channel on Bedford Bits, the Bedford/St. Martin's blog for teachers of writing). Go to community.macmillan.com.

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Michael Avery says

Wow, that was a long one, but I finally finished. I had been wanting to read this book for a while since I am a teacher of writing composition. The concept is that first year writing courses can be about writing rather than some other imposed content. Some of the essays in this anthology are graduate level, but quite a few would be good for a community college audience. I particularly like the selections by Donald Murray, Peter Elbow, and the excerpt from Malcolm X, "How I Learned to Read and Write." This book makes me want to revise my college composition course. I really want my students to have authentic and meaningful writing experiences, and this book supports that idea. I recommend it to any college writing professor, especially those who teach first year writing.

Chris Friend says

Disclaimer: I am required to teach from this text, as I work in a department lead by its lead author.

That said, I drank the Kool-Aid and appreciate this approach to composition. It's challenging for teachers, and even more challenging for students, but in a way that respects both them and the field in which they are working.

The text provides a helpful tone when addressing the student directly and works to make the articles within more accessible. The teacher's edition supplements (written by my coordinator, to continue the disclaimer) balance a sense of teacher independence with a determination to emphasize and achieve important outcomes. It, like the surrounding text, is helpful yet respectful of the intelligence of the teacher.

I recommend this text for college-level composition courses that want to go from "what did you do over summer vacation?" to "here's how we study things in the field of Writing Studies." It gets the job done and helps you do the same.

Margaret says

The university I teach at uses this textbook for their Writing 2 course. This was the first time I've taught Writing 2 or used this textbook, and I found the articles refreshingly academic. As opposed to textbooks that "talk down" to students, the articles in Writing About Writing address issues and debates within the composition community; these are peer-reviewed, academic articles about writing, written in the language we as teachers are trying to get our students to emulate.

That being said, I relied too heavily on the textbook and the students became bogged down in the academic writing. This was my first time teaching this course, and only the second time I've ever taught, so this was undoubtedly my fault. I think students need to be interested in the subject they're writing about in order to produce good writing, and most students aren't interested in writing as a subject. Next semester, I'm going to combine readings from the textbook with student-generated texts and research, and in that way address the technical aspect of writing while also, hopefully, engaging student interest.

Nerdread says

I was not the target audience for this book due to that I did not found it as helpful as I have hoped. Still I have learned great things from it.

My opinion - Not a good book for freshman college students

Emily says

First-year comp reader built around selections of composition theory. Great assignment sequences. Challenging reading for students but very do-able assignments. My current fave FYC textbook.
