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CONTENTS

Articles

Reviews

Graphic Writing: Visual Rhetoric, Student Production, and Graphic Novels

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"Comic books, in intent and effect, are demoralizing the morals of youth. They are sexually aggressive in an abnormal way. They make violence alluring and cruelty heroic. They are not educational but stultifying."
– Dr. Fredric Wertham (from a 1948 *Collier's* article)

In a culture saturated with images, it seems odd to think of images still viewed as guilty pleasures, but within some contexts, images are still anathema. This article focuses on images within a context where they are still viewed as suspect, sordid, and decadent—the typical writing classroom in higher education. In an age with access to more images (and ways to combine them into something meaningful) than ever before, analyzing and constructing image-heavy texts is just as necessary within academia, and even more so as visual genres continue to evolve. Comics, once considered a hallmark of illiteracy and a gateway to juvenile delinquency—or worse, as demonstrated in the quote above—provide a good example of the evolution of images because they have spawned one of the most vital genres of current expression, the graphic novel. I will argue that deeply interrogating a graphic novel necessitates close readings of images based on visual rhetoric, and I will also argue that student production of graphic texts—instead of traditional print-based reading responses and essays—helps students

improve their ability to craft and analyze writing in contemporary digital writing contexts.

Background

The spur for this article dug into me at a national conference when I attended a panel on graphic novels. The presenters did an impressive job analyzing and discussing a range of comics and graphic novels, and, at the conclusion of the presentation, I asked the panel whether they encouraged students to create comics/graphic novels as reading-responses or assignments linked to their in-class discussions. The panel members kind of smiled at each other, then one said something to the effect of, "Oh no, *my* students have to do *real* writing in their classes." The rest of the panel nodded in agreement, as did much of the audience, thus making it plain that *real* writing meant *traditional* compositions consisting of only words on a printed page. However, the irony within that response was vexing to me—how could it be that the same people who had spent an hour and a half extolling the virtues of graphic novels and demonstrating the complexity of their construction also believed they were unworthy intellectual pursuits for students? Or perhaps the panelists taught in a traditional program with a traditional administration where such a notion is just simply not on the radar? In some ways, the panel's position against considering graphic novels as *real* writing was simply another manifestation of what some scholars have termed print bias (discussed in more detail later), but at the heart of their response was an untruth—if the same idea applied to "regular" literature, that is, if no complex thought was involved in selecting and arranging words on the part of the creator, certainly a masterwork of literature could not result. Or, if the panel's objection was more on the grounds that students' writings had to be of the same intellectual level of what they were reading, i.e., their writings had to reach the exacting standards of literature, professors might wait a long time to collect student work that resembled literature. On the whole, though, professors assign traditional essays because they obviously believe in the transference and importance of writing and ideas from/in alphabetic-based

literatures, so why not the transference and importance of writing and ideas in graphic novels, which have the ability to transform the writing abilities of students in an age of multimodal writing?

A Rationale for the Seemingly Irrational

While I do not want to spend too much space discussing a rationale for graphic novels as worthy objects of scholarly contemplation, a case must be made before going further because the same attitudes I encountered at the national conference are probably indicative of many others as well. For that reason, not to mention I want to give readers who want to continue working with graphic novels an arsenal for the anti-graphic novel naysayers in their midst, I will touch on the main objections and provide additional sources to consult regarding these arguments. The following are some of the main points to consider and could prove capable of making people re-consider their stance on graphic novels as guilty pleasures: 1) All texts are images, though we have been made to forget that. 2) It's more important now than ever to discuss, analyze, and produce imagistic texts such as graphic novels. 3) Graphic novels have a rich history, and readers benefit from applying visual rhetoric to their analysis and production.

1) All texts are images whether they include images or not.
As Vilèm Flusser points out:

The alphanumeric code we have adopted for linear notation over the centuries is a mixture of various kinds of signs: letters (signs for sounds), numbers (signs for quantities), and an inexact number of signs for the rules of the writing game (e.g., stops, brackets, and quotation marks)… We are unaware of the mental leaps we are obliged to make when we read and write only because we meekly follow the apparently smooth lines. (23)

Take a long, hard look at your keyboard and revel in the images there, which include not only the odd images sharing space with the

number keys but also the visual symbols we call letters. So how exactly did we forget, or simply decide not to see, the visual aspects of writing? Lester Faigley attributes this dichotomy to what he called the grand narrative of alphabetic literacy, which, he argued, led to (and still tacitly supports, as my experience with the graphic novel panel at the conference suggests) print bias (see also Kress and Van Leeuwen 1-2). Rooted in scholarly and popular works alike, the grand narrative of alphabetic literacy posits that

> no less than the rise of science, the development of democracy, the celebration of the individual, the establishment of Protestantism, the codification of law, and the spread of capitalism were the result of a shift from an oral bias to a written bias for conveying information and ideas. This shift is claimed to have facilitated abstract thinking and deductive logic. (Faigley)

In short, the grand narrative lauds print for a host of significant cultural effects and, by extension, diminishes the effects and reputations of oral and visual literacy. As Flusser notes, "Only in the eighteenth century, after a three-thousand year struggle, did texts succeed in pushing images, with their magic and myth, into such corners as museums and the unconscious" (147). The role-reversal of privileging text was swift and stunning. One way this print bias was reinforced was by treating text as transparent—the widespread mechanization of printing and increased schooling of the young allowed text on a page to become naturalized. When a text is naturalized, readers do not look at the text so much as *through* it, as Richard Lanham argues; with regard to books, that would entail ignoring the interface of the book, i.e., its visual aspects, to see only the words as content. Faigley further elaborates on the effects of transparency:

> It took decades of critical and empirical studies to convince scholars that texts are not transparent and that reading and writing are situated acts, but the ideal of the transparent text

still persists in perceptions of literacy held by much of the public. The ideal of the transparent text entails several other presuppositions, foremost that "true" literacy is limited to the abstract representation of sounds, thus placing syllabic and logographic writing systems at a lower level and banishing pictograms and images to the status of illiterate.

The assumption that seeing is simple, that people can gaze upon an image and immediately grasp it, has also driven the idea that images within literary contexts are for children, as evidenced by the use of picture books in the first stages of reading. After all, the ability to read words must be taught, but the ability to see is, at its essence, a simple physical process, as Donis Dondis writes: "Primarily, the act of seeing involves a response to light" (21). However, as Dondis also reminds us, "The complexity of the visual mode does not allow the narrow range of interpretation of language" (37). Even the complex nature of images has been perceived as a drawback—a messiness and sloppiness compared to the perceived precision of words. In short, we are terrified of images, and by extension imagistic texts, because of what Roland Barthes called their polysemous nature, i.e., the ability of a single image to signify a vast array of meanings to an audience.

In addition to the uncertain horror that images provide because they can have multiple meanings instead of one fixed meaning, images are treated as intellectually suspicious because of ubiquity. Within capitalist societies, images are everywhere thanks to advertising. As Faigley put it: "No aspect of our culture is more thoroughly despised from the viewpoint of the academic humanities than advertising. Advertising is the discursive anti-Christ, doing everything that the tradition of academic literacy detests." Faigley also yokes part of the ill will toward advertising to its use of humor and parody, making it easy to see how comics could be caught up in the same ill will.

2) Why now? Why is it more important now than ever to discuss, analyze, and produce imagistic texts such as graphic novels?

Today, the perfect conditions for composing, consuming, and distributing imagistic texts have arrived with the continued penetration of the World Wide Web, where digital technologies give rise to texts that rely heavily on image and design no matter how many words are on the page. Thus, one factor for taking up graphic novels now is technology because increased access to technology facilitates increased possibilities for mixing meaning-making modes of communication.

Many scholars have challenged the monolithic notion of literacy as reading just words on a page over the years, but the New London Group's arguments, coupled with the increased number of networked people using systems that deliver image-heavy texts, has resonated most. A group of literacy scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia who came together in 1994 to discuss how technology was influencing literacy, the New London Group developed the concept of multiliteracies in 1994 because they noted "Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal—in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning" (5). Put another way, multiliteracies depends upon a multimodal work, which calls upon various symbol-producing systems to create meaning, with a system or mode being defined as "the resources that a culture makes available as the means for making representations and meaning—speech, writing, image, gesture, music, and others" (Kress and Jewitt 3-4). In making their argument for increased attention to multimodal works such as graphic novels, the New London Group implies society has already embraced mixed modes for creating meaning but educational institutions have not and must therefore keep up.

Further, the New London Group cited what they see as a fundamentally altered world, one where globalization and technology have fostered increased cultural and linguistic diversity that necessitates communicative flexibility. In looking deeper at the

reasons for expanding school literacy beyond text, the New London Group argues that the idea of multiliteracies, not simply alphabetic literacy in the sense of the grand narrative outlined above by Faigley, is critical for healthy citizenship in a globalized world of increased cultural and linguistic diversity: "When learners juxtapose different languages, discourses, styles, and approaches, they gain substantively in metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities and in their ability to reflect critically on complex systems and their interactions" (15). The New London Group also argued that, in order to fully participate in the increasingly complex and diverse societies of a globalized world, students need to be versed in multiliteracies.

In a nutshell, this is why attending to visuals and text in graphic novels for students is so key, and this is why I posed the question at the national conference: We should hope students live a long, productive life after we encounter them as professors, and for students to do so now and in the future means they will need to understand how to analyze and produce images and compose image-heavy texts. Therefore, literacy practices need to expand beyond text to include other modes, and those modes each have specific uses according to their cultural role in society. Other scholars have seconded such arguments, citing the increased importance of understanding works in multiple modes because modern social, economic, and technological developments have shifted perceptions and composing practices. To that end, many of those scholars expound upon the stakes involved when embracing/ignoring multimodality and multiliteracies (see Kress; Kress and van Leeuwen; Kress and Jewett; Lanham; Lankshear and Knobel; Wysocki 2001, 2004, 2007; The WIDE Research Collective; Selfe and Hawisher; Yancey; and Selber).

With regard to the importance of comics, Joseph Witek argues that

a critical analysis of the comic-book form is especially necessary now, when a growing number of contemporary American comic books are being written as literature aimed

at a general readership of adults and concerned, not with the
traditionally escapist themes of comics, but with issues such
as the clash of cultures in American history, the burdens of
guilt and suffering passed on within families, and the trials
and small triumphs of the daily workaday world. (3)

Though Witek wrote the preceding passage more than 20 years ago,
newer technologies have enabled new texts in the genre and grown
new communities around them, further increasing their popularity.
We connect to graphic novels because we connect to more than just
one mode—we live in a multimodal world and these are
multimodal works effective both in print and in digital versions
created to take advantages of particular screens such as that of the
iPad. Certainly some people will never believe that the genre that
once featured violent villains and copious advertisements for Sea
Monkeys and x-ray specs could spawn complex cousins worthy of
serious study, but the impact technology has had on literacy practices
and composing new texts should make naysayers reconsider that
prejudice.

3) What exactly are graphic novels and why use visual rhetoric to study them?

While I have spent some time arguing for increased attention to
highly imagistic texts, it is important to realize that graphic novels,
while still a guilty pleasure, have indeed made inroads within
certain academic contexts such as English departments. In fact,
there are now multiple journals dedicated to comics studies (e.g.,
ImageTexT, started in 2004 and affiliated with the University of
Florida, and *The International Journal of Comic Art*, published at
Temple University since 1999). With respect to academia, though,
as my conference example attests, people are still more accepting
of reading and discussing graphic novels and comics in classes rather
than approaching their production and relating it to contemporary
writing skills. The works that have penetrated academia tend to be
the classics of the genre, now almost 25 years old, from the late
1980s flowering of graphic novels—Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (first

collected and published in book form around that time) and Alan Moore's *Watchmen*. Some more recent works that have penetrated curricula are Allison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Just mentioning these four works shows the difficulty of defining the graphic novel because of how large of a genre the term encompasses. Three of the four graphic novels (*Maus*, *Persepolis*, and *Fun House*) are actually autobiography/memoirs (or "autographics," a term coined by Gillian Whitlock and Anna Poletti), while only one of the widespread four I mentioned could be looked at as including the traditional superhero genre (*Watchmen*).

As noted before, imagistic texts have long been part of human communication. The Lascoux cave drawings might be considered graphic novels by some, as could narratives composed in Native American petroglyphs and Egyptian hieroglyphics, as well as the visual narratives embedded in a Middle Ages stained glass window. Because of this longstanding image-narrative overlap, the exact origin of graphic novels is hard to pinpoint; moreover, many graphic novels consist of comics compilations, so it makes it difficult to configure that relationship as well, especially since some scholars (see Kunzle) trace comics as far back as European broadsheets from the 1400s.

However, in the American context, many trace the advent of the comic strip to "The Yellow Kid," first published in *The World* in 1895 (see Faigley), and the advent of the graphic novel to Will Eisner's *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*. Eisner admits he created the term "graphic novel" simply as a marketing tool. Taking an inclusive approach, Jessica Abel and Matt Madden provide a very loose definition: *comics* are a medium, a container for ideas (4). David Kunzle puts forth a more rigid definition: a *comic* contains "a sequence of separate images," includes "a preponderence of image over text," was published in a "mass medium," and relates a story that is "both moral and topical" (2). However, it is good to keep in mind that Kunzle's ideas center on his deep scholarship of early instances of comics, and many other scholars take issue with his claim that comics be moral. The distinction between comics and graphic novels is fraught with strife

in many quarters. Graphic novel is a slippery term, and I will not deign to define a genre that is still evolving and proliferating, except to say I view it as both fiction and non-fiction works where the narrative is aided and abetted by images and overt breaks in time and space. Scott McCloud, in attempting to differentiate comics from film, defines *comics* as "images juxtaposed in deliberate sequence in order to convey an idea and/or an aesthetic response" (7-9).

While McCloud focuses on the deliberation of sequence, it is equally clear that all elements of a panel, just as all elements of a sentence, are deliberate to some degree. When something is deliberate, rhetorical analysis can often be applied as an analytical tool, and the idea of a text is no different. As Anne Frances Wysocki argues: "All page- and screen-based texts are […] visual and their visual elements and arrangements can be analyzed" ("Opening New Media"). This is where visual rhetoric comes in. To see whether it applies to a written text formerly deemed "transparent," here's a good test: think of the most dour, boring book you ever read— now picture (what is most likely) its serif, traditional font and page after page of words disappearing and its font being replaced by Comic Sans, or each full page replaced by one that includes only an individual sentence written in giant letters. Is that truly the same book? Though the words are exactly the same, their presentation has changed so much as to alter the entire act of reading and making meaning. Visual rhetoric provides a means to question how design affects materiality and meaning, so it is a helpful and adaptable lens to view many types of works (see Arnheim; Dickinson and Maugh; Ehses; Elkins; Foss; Handa; Kasper; Rose; Kress; Kress and van Leeuwen; Tufte, 2006a, 2006b; Wysocki, 2001, 2007).

Comics, just as a written text, are as simple (or complex) as we want to make them. If you read only for plot, you get plot. When reading as literature opens up to cultural readings and all manner of additional elements, ideas mushroom from there. Mark Newgarden and Paul Karasik, for example, wrote "How to Read Nancy," arguing that a comic that many view as a horrifyingly simple comic (when, of course, viewed through the lens of print bias and perhaps

even more so than other comics since it often relies on few words, if any) is only deceptively simple: "Like architect Mies Van Der Rohe, the simplicity [of Nancy] is a carefully designed function of a complex amalgam of formal rules laid out by the designer" (1). In the next section, I'll examine some of the ways visual rhetoric allows readers to access some of those formal rules and enhance readings, which ultimately grows their writing and multimodal composing toolkits.

Visual Rhetoric and Graphic Novel Analysis

A deep interrogation of a graphic novel is a daunting prospect, especially since just analyzing textual elements has provided enough to ponder since the advent of modern English departments in the late 1800s. Yet graphic novels also provide images that include not just the representation of specific peoples, places, or things, but the shapes of panels and borders, the renderings of the words, and emanata, those squiggles of emotion drawn near a character's face to portray thoughts and feelings. All of these are choices on the part of the text's creator and reach an audience; therefore, they have the ability to be analyzed in terms of rhetoric because they are meant to connect with an audience and have an intended effect.

Take, for example, the issue of speech balloons, which carry a welter of meaning beyond the words they contain. Visual rhetoric provides a window into how genre, design, culture, and history contribute to meaning in graphic novels, and this can be illustrated with the examples of speech balloons. In an imagistic mode aware of its own materiality, every line and every mark can hold a potential meaning, so it is the reader's duty to unlock that. The speech bubble includes a genre expectation, built up over more than a hundred years—it contains inter- or intra-character communication, a signifier much like how quotation marks (or interior monologue italics) are used in traditional books. However, as Nate Piekos intimates, there are formal rules even for these well-established comic features: "[A] balloon tail should point to a character's mouth as if an invisible line continued on past the end of the tail to their face. Pointing it in the general area of the character (their hand, leg,

etc.) is never appropriate. A tail should terminate at roughly 50-60% of the distance between the balloon and the character's head." Such balloon tails often use smooth borders, nothing out of the ordinary, but what happens if the same border were jagged? Piekos explains some of the effects other borders can have: "Burst Balloons are used when someone is screaming their dialogue. They tend to be more irregular and chaotic…with a heavier stroke"; similarly, wavy lines surrounding the balloon denote a "weak balloon" used "when a character is in physical distress." In addition, there are three different ways to represent whispering, suggesting a need for readers to go beyond genre to grasp some of the conventions that are evolving: "Traditionally, whispered dialogue is indicated by a balloon with a dashed stroke. More recently accepted options are a balloon and dialogue in a muted tone (grayed-out), or with a lowercase font in conjunction with small dialogue/big balloon" (Piekos). Again, this is not to say that a written text could not approximate any of these techniques, but if we approach graphic novels by only privileging the text in the same way traditional literature is approached—simply viewing images as extraneous to the text or as background to supplement and ornament the words—we leave a lot of rich meaning on the table. Getting students to craft their own works in the graphic genre will allow them to discover that even the simple act of composing how speech balloons are rendered, and not just the words themselves, are deliberate choices that take on greater meaning.

Another key example of using visual rhetoric to aid analysis and production actually occurs in examining what amounts to white spaces—the gutter of the pages and the spaces in between panels. There is content within those spaces that readers must fill in, however subconsciously, almost as if whole paragraphs were contained within the blank spaces between the period and the capital letter of the next sentence of a written work. One way to start analyzing graphic novels, then, is to literally read between the lines, read inside the spatial transitions between panels. McCloud (1994, 2006) has published a series of books on understanding and making comics that are excellent resources for analyzing and

producing comics (see also Duncan and Smith; Wolk). McCloud draws his treatises as comic books, and he breaks down comic strategies that allow for rich classroom discussion and comics production. In one famous segment of *Understanding Comics*, McCloud, discussing the role of an active reader in the medium, points out how readers can become murderers by showing two panels: The first panel shows a person being chased by another holding an axe, and the second panel shows the outside of a building and a blood-curdling scream of "Eeyaa!!" echoing in the night. McCloud wrote: "I may have drawn an axe being raised in this example, but I'm not the one who let it drop or decided how hard the blow, or who screamed, or why. That, Dear Reader, was your special crime, each of you committing it in your own style." (68). Though some scholars take issue with this example, it helps to consider the panel and de-naturalize the reading practice of comics. In recalling the definitions of graphic novels from earlier, McCloud (*Understanding Comics*) makes an important distinction between comics and film that suggests the importance of interrogating these in-between spaces: "Each successive frame of a movie is projected on exactly the same space—the screen—while each frame of comics must occupy a different space. Space does for comics what time does for film!" (7).

Scott Kaufman provides an excellent example of visual rhetoric and the importance of the transitional spaces of graphic novels in his analysis of a page from *The Walking Dead*. The page in question consists of only five panels, and each panel only uses images. After fighting through the zombie madness that has engulfed his world, Rick is reunited with his family, and this page concerns Rick waking up in the tent after their first night together again. On the surface, not much happens, especially when viewing the page logocentrically—through the lens of print bias, some readers might simply skip along until the so-called important words come along, their eyes just barely grazing the page as they read with an eye to words only and not images. As Kaufman writes, "On the one hand, panels without textual components read more quickly…On the other hand, panels without textual components encourage readers

to linger on the images." A summation of the page might go something like this: Rick is sleeping with his son and wife, and Rick wakes up and smiles, happy to be back together with his family instead of cleaving zombies in the head with found objects out on the streets. However, a close reading of images yields more nuance and meaning for the work at hand. Unless lingering on the images, readers might think the first two panels are exactly the same: Rick's eyes are closed and they gradually open. However, upon closer inspection, while sleeping, Rick now has a furrowed brow. As Kaufman notes: "While brow-furrowing may not seem significant in and of itself, when combined with what the reader knows about what Rick went through to return to them—having to fight through hordes of zombies to escape Atlanta—the reader can infer, if not the precise content, at least the character of the nightmare that causes Rick's sleeping brow to furrow." We can only see one of Rick's eyes because he is sleeping on his side; the other eye is mashed into the pillow. In the next panel, the only change from the furrowed brow is an open eye, and the important take-away is to see where the gaze is directed—not at the wife and child next to him but where the reader can assume the opening of the tent must be. As Kaufman notes:

> Having been living and sleeping alone in a terrible world has taught him to sleep, as the saying goes, with one eye open. If something akin to what he was facing in his dreams is closing on him—if, that is, his unconscious mind was alerting to him to a present threat—he might catch it with a glance out of the door. He is sleeping the light sleep of the perpetually threatened.

That's a lot of character nuance being conveyed outside the realm of text. Further, Kaufman points out, "And only when he combines his realization that, on this occasion, his nightmare was only a dream with the fact that he is sleeping next to his wife and child in panel four can he experience the emotion displayed in panel five." Panel five shows Rick flashing a tight-lipped, woozy smile as he touches

his wife's arm. As Kaufman writes, "In narrative terms, it would have been more efficient to jump from panel one to panel five like so," using just panel one, Rick asleep, then panel five, Rick awake and happy to be with his family—but readers would not get Rick's character as richly.

In short, it's the same reason Cliff's Notes or SparkNotes aren't as satisfying as the real works they summarize. Kaufman argues the following would be lost if skipping from panel one to panel five: "the reader doesn't acquire the same knowledge of Rick's *attitude* to these events…what would be lost is the sense of interiority that the reader can acquire via a close study of a character's actions. A moment-to-moment sequence of word-free panels, then, can have the effect of pulling the reader into closer sympathy with the characters." Thus, this example shows how just harnessing the rhetorical power of images can make an argument about Rick's character and extend the overall meaning of the work: the point of the story is not to glorify the gore of massacring zombies but to peer into the psyches of regular people and see how they adjust to the changed reality a zombie outbreak entails. The central question of the graphic novel—how do you remain a real person, literally and figuratively, in such an atmosphere?—is pointed to in these panels. Rick is not an emotionless automaton who can switch between loving, protective family man and tense zombie killer in an instant. His safety in the present does not eclipse the horror he has experienced, and this sequence of images points to his being scared and vulnerable, which helps Rick's character connect with readers, most of whom would likely react in the same way. Simply skipping through this page while thinking, *Okay, now Rick's sleeping and he's happy to be back with the family*, then quickly searching for the next wordy part where it is assumed the next "important" exposition and story dynamism will occur (again, abetted by print bias), detracts from the reading experience and thus the richness of the work on the whole. Breaking down a sequence like this allows students to see what goes on between the panels is just as important as what is portrayed within them.

The Use of Visual Tropes and Figures in Visual Analysis

Another way to use visual rhetoric is to examine how other forms of rhetoric are remediated within the visual form. For example, the tropes and figures of rhetoric have a long history that originated in oral forms, and many of them proved to be equally as effective in writing and other forms such as visuals (see Corbett and Connors; Ehses). Additionally, many of these tropes and figures were used to amplify meaning, and thus they can find good usage within visuals in the context of comics, where amplification is used so frequently to carry meaning. As McCloud (*Understanding Comics*) states, comics are all about "amplification through simplification" (30). A good rule of thumb to figure out where tropes or figures might be employed—rather than having to memorize longs lists of Greek terms such as *prosopopoeia*—is to take notice where repetition is occurring because where there's a repetition of visuals, there's a fire of meaning. Again, if a reader does not attend to addressing the importance of visuals to the overall construction of the narrative, visual repetition might simply be seen as laziness on the part of the author and/or artist when viewed through the lens of print bias and ignored as a meaning-making element rather than seen as aiding it.

In this section, I'll discuss two examples of antanaclasis used in graphic novels to deepen the meaning. A great site for students to use for discerning the use of figures and tropes is *Silva Rhetoricae* (The Forest of Rhetoric), which defines *antanaclasis* as "The repetition of a word or phrase whose meaning changes in the second instance." A famous example they provide is Benjamin Franklin saying, "Your argument is sound…all sound," which relies on the twist of "sound" from compliment to put-down. The first use of visual antanaclasis is from Ed Piskor's *Wizzywig: Portrait of a Serial Hacker*, a graphic novel compiled from a series of strips about the criminal evolution of Kevin "Boingthump" Phenicle from childhood phone-phreaker to infamous computer hacker. The graphic novel skips around in time and space, but even early on, amidst strips that center on Phenicle's childhood antics, the reader knows that the

adult Phenicle has been caught and is awaiting sentencing. Pages 9-10 of *Wizzywig*, Figure 1, feature the first of a recurring segment, "Off the Rocker with your host Winston Smith | WABCD 108.3 on Your FM Dial," which focuses on the talk radio show of one of the childhood friends of Phenicle, Winston Smith.

The panel begins with what the readers can assume is Winston's voice beaming out on the airwaves to an audience that has grown because of his recently publicized ties to the apprehended hacker Phenicle. The words of Smith's voice appear in white on a black background at the top of each panel, and, unlike the smooth black border readers might expect to form the bottom of the black space, the bottom line is jagged and wavy; coupled with the fact readers know Smith's voice is spreading to the world on FM radio, it is quite natural to assume the jagged edge suggests radio waves as a way to further add this disembodied dimension to Smith's voice. However, one aspect of applying visual rhetorical analysis can relate to the actual physiological responses to images. Molly Bang suggests "we see pictures as extensions of the real world" (41) and thus we carry our embodied, real-life associations with particular shapes into the meanings of images. In the *Wizzywig* example, the contrast of the jagged line to the smooth sky and its rounded clouds is jarring. Bang argues this jarring feel results because "We feel more scared looking at pointed shapes; we feel more secure or comforted looking at rounded shapes or curves" (70). Sharp objects can tear flesh, which is something we've internalized. In the context of *Wizzywig*, though, why would radio waves be portrayed so ominously? Is it because that is simply their realistic shape? If so, the waves would probably be more rounded. As Smith's broadcast continues, a reason suggests itself as it builds to the end, and the jagged edge acquires a different meaning from the radio waves. After a series of images of "the public" living their lives while Smith's broadcast waves penetrate their realities, the jagged line continues until the penultimate panel featuring an old man drinking coffee beneath a crucifix. The old man is apparently in his living room and listening to Smith on an old radio. The segment ends on Kevin "Boingthump" Phenicle in a dark jail cell, his visage silhouetted in
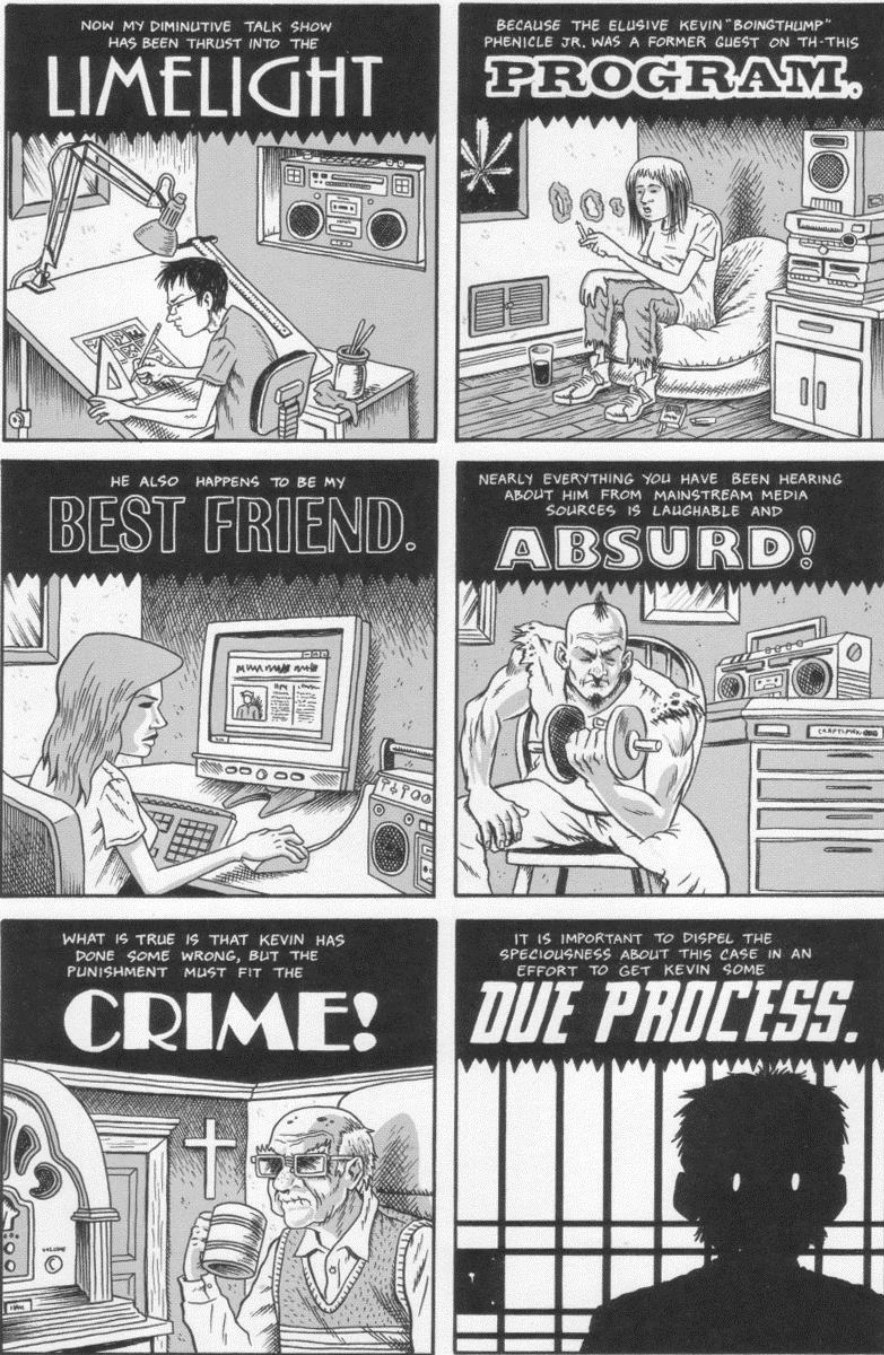
Figure 1: A section of Ed Piskor's *Wizzywig*

black, unlike the other panels where the public is illuminated in white. The jagged edge of the caption background now provides a different meaning from radio waves. In this context, the jagged edges can be seen as a hacksaw, which also alludes to the concept of hacking—the means by which Phenicle ended up in jail.

Moreover, the hacksaw suggests a possible means of escape based on his treacherous nature demonstrated so far—the sneaky, behind-the-scenes assaults perpetrated by hackers fit with the canard of escaping jail by uncovering a hacksaw blade hidden in a baked cake instead of a direct frontal assault on guards and such. Given the wild skills already attributed to him at this moment in the graphic novel—such as whistling into phones to start wars—there's nothing the reader would put past Phenicle, and the hacksaw edge also represents the craft powers he possesses, powers he might use at any moment to spring himself. The re-considered meaning of the jagged edge, from radio wave to hacksaw, provides visual antanaclasis that helps us to shed more light on both Smith and Phenicle, and thereby the graphic novel as a whole. The hacksaw aspect also helps us to re-conceptualize Smith's broadcast. He is, as he says, hoping to go against the grain of mainstream media reports about his best friend. Simply looking upon the edge of the caption background as a slight deviation for only artistic or ornamental purposes belies the richness of the passage. Even so, a close visual rhetoric reading of this segment would require much more work, since that would entail, among other things, analyzing the different fonts being used and the changing scale that highlights certain words similarly. I have focused on only one aspect of classical rhetoric being employed in visual terms in this segment.

A section of Daryl Cunningham's *Psychiatric Tales*, Figure 2, demonstrates another use of antanaclasis that enriches the meaning of the work and is uncovered by attending to the visual rhetoric of the page. The example Cunningham used occurs in the section called "People with Mental Illness Enrich our Lives" and concerns Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys (57-59). Cunningham capitalizes on the images of the Beach Boys that have resided in our cultural consciousness for some time: surfboards, smiles, and matching

clothing, especially their striped shirts, which this segment actually hinges upon for meaning. The sequence starts with background on Wilson and images from his current time period, then moves to historical views of the Beach Boys (not shown).

Panel three of the section shows a medium shot of the Beach Boys playing a concert, smiles on their faces as usual, but the
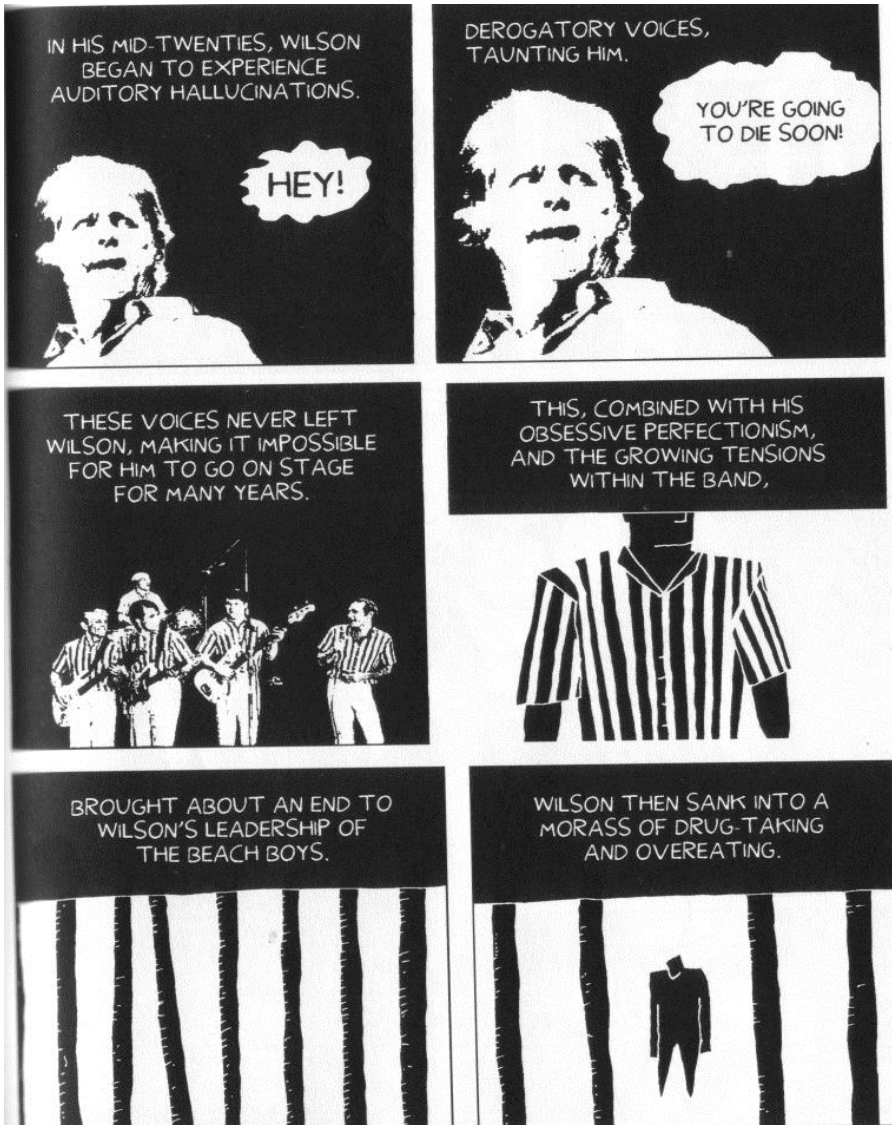
Figure 2: A section of Daryl Cunningham's *Psychiatric Tales*

caption above the band feels more ominous because we have just been given two panels that show how Wilson was tormented by auditory hallucinations; now the caption seems to float above the band like a disembodied voice. In this segment, the differences in

drawing style are important. The picture of the band playing is very realistic in style, almost as if it were a real picture that had been slightly tweaked in Photoshop. The panel caption says that Wilson's voices never left him, which made it impossible for him to perform for many years. Panel four moves to an isolated shot of a more "ragged" Wilson when compared to the realistic style of the photo of the band playing, as well as the other images of the older Wilson that have preceded the band. The words on the black background are superimposed on his head and blot out most of his facial features (most pronounced is the flat emotion of his mouth, which is antithetical to the image of the smiling Beach Boys in the preceding panel), and Wilson stands alone in the famous striped shirt while the caption relates how the voices and his obsessive perfectionism led to tensions within the band. In panel five, the focus on what we surmise is the striped shirt is now much closer, and the caption reads, "Brought about an end to Wilson's leadership of the Beach Boys." In the close-up view, we now see the stripes are not as solid as they appeared in the shots of the band performing from a distance. The edges are now torn and frayed, looking both fragile and jagged at the same time. Panel six focuses even closer, zooming in from the seven stripes shown in panel eight down to four. The caption states, "Wilson then sank into a morass of drug-taking and overeating," and an image of a headless body dressed in black appears within the stripes. This panel, in effect, portrays Wilson sinking into himself, collapsing under his problems, and even the depth of space makes it clear that the stripes of the infamous Beach Boys shirt now resemble the bars of a prison as well. Thus, in the space of a few panels, we see visual antanaclasis being employed as the meaning of the shirt changes from youthful exuberance and the marker of success and happiness into the cold, fragile, metallic bars of the prison cell of the mind.

This is driven home even further in the next panel by the caption "Reportedly spending weeks or months in bed" and the image of the four "bars" remains, now corralling a more representative drawing of an older Wilson's profile rather than the stick figure caricature we last saw (although the flat affect is the same). Additionally, the

black bars have now switched to white. The next page's caption reads, "A prisoner of his own tormented mind"; the bars are now gone, but the side visage remains. These panels help to illustrate the passage of time, which is demonstrated in the caption of panel seven, "Reportedly spending weeks or months in bed," and—to recall Bang—rendered in the actual switching of light and dark that physically recalls the cycles of night and day. Also, the reversal extends the antanaclasis of the shirt to show that light (freedom) was always at hand, but Wilson remained a prisoner inside himself due to mental illness. In the last panel, the bars are gone because they were never really there in the first place. He is free to do anything at any point, and we can now see his inability to do so from his point of view instead of ours. This segment of visuals depicts the struggles of Wilson in a way that the words can only hint at, and its effect is achieved in part through antanaclasis. The shirt that represents the happy-go-lucky surf band is also a jailer, the demands of fame and perfection helping to imprison Wilson alongside the auditory hallucinations.

The Grammar of Images

Joe Sacco provides another example of how visual rhetoric can benefit the analysis of graphic novels and aid writing skills. Sacco is, for lack of a better term, a graphic journalist who has submitted comics dispatches from strife-filled areas of the globe for almost twenty years. However, some have objected to Sacco using what they see as a non-serious genre to report on some of the most serious humanitarian crises of our time. Nonetheless, Sacco's comics provide an interesting test for applying visual rhetoric because, as journalism, they have an ostensible guide in the guise of journalist objectivity that other graphic novels, particularly those of fiction, do not have to answer to. If, for example, Sacco is just relaying exactly how something happened and nothing else, visual rhetoric would still be at work, but its use to unlock deeper meanings of the work might be mitigated. However, using visual rhetoric to examine Sacco's work reveals that strict objectivity is not adhered to—and

that is a good thing in the context of the narrative and the deeper meaning of his works.

His 2012 book *Journalism* is a compendium of journalistic comics. When viewed all together, it is clear that a particular point of view, a particular pattern of visual representation, is followed throughout his comics over the years. In this section, I'll go beyond the classical tropes and figures to include culturally determined ways of seeing articulated by other scholars. In their book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen argue that people are enculturated to view images in particular ways based on their societies. For example, people in societies that read from left to right tend to approach images that way and therefore privilege images and icons on the left of the page. In Sacco's work, what stands out is a preponderance of drawings that feature straight-on headshots, much like the talking heads that populate many news reports and documentaries. Unlike news reporters and the subjects of many documentaries, the people in Sacco's work who are directing their gaze at the viewers are often the weakest, most overlooked members of society, and, in many cases, their situation is precarious, populated more by the prospect of hopelessness rather than hope. In short, the situations of these subjects are not going to change without intermediation by another source, most likely an outside source. As Kress and van Leeuwen write in their grammar of visual design, whenever contact is established between an image and the viewer, no matter how imaginary the contact, it sets up "a visual form of address" that addresses viewers as a "visual you" and "constitutes an 'image act'" (117). Recalling Halliday, Kress and van Leeuwen refer to such an image as a "demand": by demanding the viewer's gaze, it also "demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relations with him or her" (118). Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that the actions and facial features of the image indicate the relationship that is intended to occur between viewer and object, i.e., the role the viewer is supposed to inhabit. However, in Sacco's work, the people are often simply talking—the viewer, by looking, is ironically asked to become something most of these people do

not have—a listener. This direct, face-on representation breaks bread between viewer and subject who, most likely, hail from inordinately different places.

The proximity of the people to the viewer is important as well because the spatial distance of personal depiction carries meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen (*Reading Images*) suggest, again using Western cultural standards that inform our reading of images, that the closer and the more direct the gaze, the more the image subject is considered as someone the viewer *could* have an imaginary social relation with, someone they could engage with as an equal. By contrast, exposure to a subject from far away and only sometimes directly suggests that the people are not social equals or someone with whom they could—or should—associate. Such people are depicted as "objects of contemplation" (120), not someone viewers could entertain having a meaningful social relationship with. Sacco's depictions demand that we look at his subjects as equals, and when we see them as equals, we realize that such injustices being perpetrated against us or others we consider equals would not be tolerated, so we should act on their behalf.

Sacco, by his choice of genre, repudiates the "tit-for-tat reporting [he'd] learned in journalism school" (26), which, at that time, was centered on print paradigms. As demonstrated by the visual rhetoric analysis of his panels, Sacco corroborated this when he wrote, "I chiefly concern myself with those who seldom get a hearing, and I don't feel it is incumbent on me to balance their voices with the well-crafted apologetics of the powerful" (27). Looking at specific pieces of *Journalism*, this idea is evident in his depiction of Chechen women vis-à-vis the Russians (Figure 3). We hear the story of one Chechen woman and her experiences in the war there, as well as in refugee camps. Her head is constantly at what readers could assume is their eye level. By contrast, Sacco ends the page on a long shot of the Sputnik refugee camp, relating that an outside organization has estimated the number of displaced persons as 110,000, whereas the Russian government has "frozen its tally" because "Russia pretends that people are no longer fleeing its 'anti-terrorist war' in Chechnya." Obviously the linguistic message is not

objective, but the choice of the long shot is not, either. Instead of providing a distant, objectifying look at the displaced persons, the long shot provides an argument as to the scale of what the Russians are ignoring. Sacco attempts to have readers empathize with the Chechen position by employing visual rhetoric.
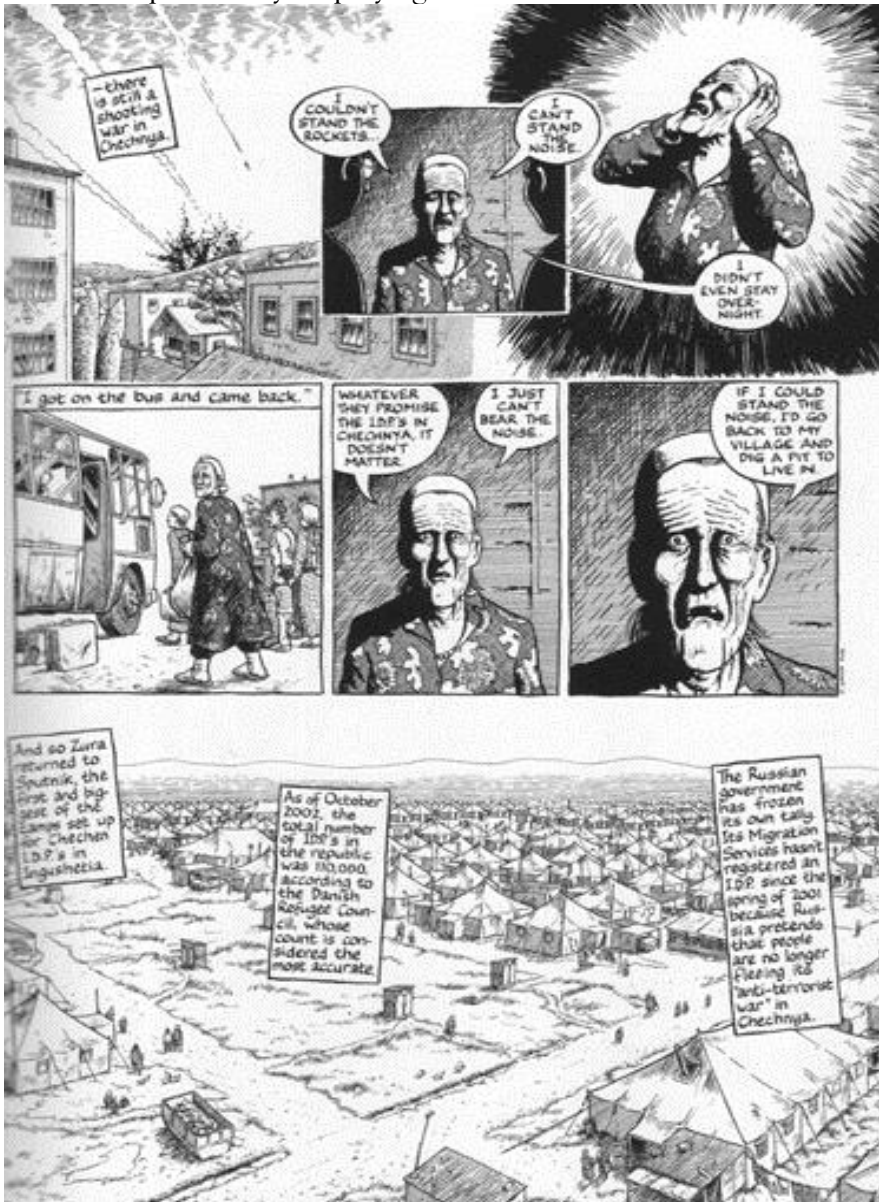
Figure 3: A selection from Joe Sacco's *Journalism*

Producing Graphic Novels in the Classroom

In bringing this article to a close, my hope is to provide helpful contexts for readers who may wish to teach graphic novels in a variety of classes in the future. Expertise is not groomed by remote viewing; instead, it is cultivated by deliberate practice (Ericsson et al.) in the field you are hoping to enter. In the case of analyzing graphic novels, the different circumstances of their production and the different realities of their spatial natures require a different approach from the more one-to-one relationship of using written text to comment on solely alphabetic literatures. The point of producing graphic novels in writing classes is not to produce a master artistic work that rivals the works of famous comic artists, but to gain a better understanding of the genre, its strategies, and its available choices in order to aid the analysis of works, which also reinforces further image-text production in other classes and the students' lifeworlds beyond academia as well. With such analysis and production centered on flexible rhetorical frameworks, students are able to summon a host of critical thinking abilities and deploy them in various, and increasingly multimodal, writing contexts.

To that end, I offer some brief notes on getting started in producing comics in the classroom. One thing to stress is flexibility. If, for example, you can draw well, that doesn't mean you need to make your students draw; conversely, if you're good with computer programs, don't ban students from hand-drawing comics. There's also no need to force students to use one program just because you know it. Students need to work through the process of selecting the type of production that will work based on their own drawing abilities and access to computer software. The subject matter (unless a topic is tied to a reading, obviously) should be flexible as well, meaning the topic could stem from fiction or non-fiction sources, not to mention images could emanate from the minds of the students or from found objects such as photographs.

In dealing with the hand-drawn dilemma, here are a few things to consider. Just as with writing, many people doubt their ability to write because error has always been pointed out instead of any

goodness within it, and the same goes with drawing—they see the mistakes and how their works don't stack up to those of famous artists just like their writing doesn't stack up to famous authors they encounter in their education. Second, it's important to stress that the idea is not to groom potential artists but to build better thinkers, creators, and analyzers. The point is thinking through narrative construction, literature, writing, and rhetoric, and connecting with an audience, not mimicking something in real life with a pen. As Abel and Madden put it, "The realism or flashiness of a drawing is nowhere near as important as its ability to convey information" (9). Using books (or even excerpts) from McCloud, Eisner, and Abel and Madden can help in providing terminology and techniques. Regardless of the final product, the act of producing comics and graphic novels allows students to see the choices that go into making such imagistic texts connect with readers, and a better understanding of that process allows us to analyze and deploy those rhetorical elements in the ever-growing range of contemporary multimodal texts. To that end, I provide a brief overview of a few digital programs that can be used for comic creation (keep in mind there are scores of programs, but I chose a few that would be easy to use and are free or very affordable).

Comic Life (http://comiclife.com/)

A robust platform for making quality comics, Comic Life is software that provides a wealth of options and effects to achieve professional-looking results. Because of that, the learning curve is steeper than some other programs, but many students would prefer to invest the time into something that's versatile and professional enough to be used again and again. The program costs $29.99, but a free trial is available (they offer much cheaper apps as well). Importantly, the program works with uploaded images and can handle long works, which is important for students doing any sort of memoir or argumentative writing. It offers tons of comic options and effects that students like to experiment with.

Pixton (http://www.pixton.com/)

A free program that resides in the cloud. It offers a very user-friendly interface that centers on drag-n-drop elements, and there are special features for educators, including the ability to make a private network where students and teachers can share and comment on all work. Educators can assess work (and make rubrics) directly inside Pixton. A great feature Pixton offers is the ability to pull from crowdsourced content, e.g., objects and props made by other people that can be used in your comic if people have elected to share them. The strips live online and can be shared as a link.

Bitstrips (http://www.bitstrips.com/)

Another free program that resides in the cloud. The program offers tons of options and pre-made objects, as well as a very easy-to-use and customizable interface. Although the site is free to use and share comics, the educator version costs $9.95 a month.

Conclusion

Though a range of writing and literature courses increasingly engage with graphic novels, many still do so primarily through the lens of traditional book-based practices, thus cutting students off from important interpretive, critical, and productive techniques derived from other modes of meaning-making such as the image. Graphic novels are not simply honey to use in order to make the vinegar of "real literacy" go down; they are an important source for discovering a range of analytical and writing techniques that can be applied to various contemporary digital writing contexts. Digital texts often rely on images, and as such texts increasingly form a dominant part of our students' professional, civic, and social worlds, writing teachers must grapple with the challenges that image-heavy texts provide in order to help students develop the slew of skills needed for contemporary invention and composing. Analyzing and producing graphic novels provide students an important range of skills that makes them more flexible, and thus more potent, twenty-first century writers.

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AUTHENTIC QUESTIONING AS A FORM OF INQUIRY: WRITING IN THE DIALOGIC CLASSROOM

Eamon Cunningham

As a student, I loved the readings in my English classes—from Plato to Postmodernism—even before I had much of a clue about what these writers really meant. It's taken ten years on the other side of the desk to understand something a teacher of mine once told me a long time ago: "If you think you have everything figured out on the first reading, something must be wrong. Either you are not reading good writing, or you are not reading carefully enough." As a student, I was too often taken by the hand to the "right" answer, thinking in ways that had been mapped out for me, and writing in ways that did little for my own curiosity and sense of investigation. It was only when I began teaching and designing my own assignments that I began to read, write, and think differently. For the first time, I felt that I had the authority to question, challenge, and expand on not only the texts from class, but also my own writing and thinking: where my responses came from, the process by which I constructed knowledge, and how these processes might be expanded, intensified, or challenged. Reading and writing turned from a matter of coming up with answers to questions about a text to learning what type of questions needed to be asked in the first place. "Is it possible to replicate this essential experience I had as a teacher/reader for my students by letting them construct the lines of inquiry *they* wish to pursue for a text?" I wondered. Over the last few years, I have put this question to the test in my classroom.

Composition theory, while grounded in empirical research and sound practice, is a double-edged sword for teachers of writing. On one hand, theory provides the paradigms and methods to understand

how one reads, *how* one builds knowledge, and *how* one makes sense of the mélange of ideas right before pen is put to paper. On the other hand, there is often a gap between the teaching of writing as conjectured by theorists and its actual practice. This gap is often filled by eager teachers' expostulations that seldom work to change students' ideas about themselves as writers. The further that practice drifts away from sound theory, the less likely it is that students will ever realize themselves as having a writerly identity. And while there is no single solution to the range of difficulties that students face in composition classrooms, deep reading—including deliberate work by students to form their own questions around a cluster of readings—is one way that students can begin to discover how inquiry leads to the construction of knowledge. In doing so, the composition classroom becomes a place where *learning how to know* assumes greater importance than *conveying what is known* (Farmer 16). What I propose is an approach to reading and writing that shifts away from class routines "where boundaries seem pre-set and whose work as a result too often consists almost entirely of teacher talk, discrete assignments, and individual assessments" (Roskelly 24). Instead, this approach privileges critical writing models as the focal point of student work where students construct, or co-construct, the lines of inquiry for a text. A scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* will be used as the running example in this article, but this process can be just as easily applied to historical documents, informational texts, essays, speeches, and various other forms of print and digital media found in high school and college classrooms. For a complete narrative of this process in action, please consult this article's appendix. Teachers may prefer to implement these strategies gradually—say, using Step One as an auxiliary activity to add focus and dimension to a class discussion—or go at it wholesale and utilize these steps as the super-structure of a course's entire writing program. Whatever the choice, if classroom teachers decide to challenge themselves and give it a go, these methods can be a useful tool in getting students to read with a writer's eye and write with a reader's sensibility about the

complex texts found in high school, college, and work environments.

This approach draws from the body of research around Writing-to-Learn (WTL) and dialogism (Peter Elbow, Joseph Harris, Julie Christoph, Martin Nystrand, and Paul Hielker, among others) as well as "the interactive pedagogy of Paulo Freire, the learning theory taught by Leo Vygostky, and the dynamic nature of interpretation outlined by Louise Rosenblatt into the framework of a classroom" (Roskelly 23-24). Teachers need not be familiar with these theorists to enact the approach's main drive: to introduce students to the inquiry process by having them take on the imagined role of question writer where they will construct a set of questions in response to a text, provide answers to those questions, and vet these inquiries through their peers in order to have a deeper understanding of how the source text works, its internal logic and governing ideas. What's also at stake here is how WTL—a mode of discourse that is traditionally underemphasized in many English classrooms—lets students meaningfully interact with a text while not assuming a falsely authoritative voice that plagues far too many Writing-to-Show-Learning (WTSL) or summative assignment compositions. Some teachers adhere to the notion that the more formal writing students are doing, the better. But the approach of writing described in this article addresses a slightly different issue: "Do students need more writing, or do they need better assignments?" (Zemelman and Daniels 73). Of course, formal writing has a defined space in composition classrooms, but undergirding these formative assessments with regularly occurring "self-sponsored" (WTL) compositions is one way to purposefully harness the power of informal writing as a scaffold to more formal writing projects (Zemelman and Daniels 71-73). To get here, three things need to happen. First, students need to learn the characteristics of an "authentic question;" second, students need to apply these authentic questions in the persona of assignment designer, the producer (rather than the recipient) of the inquiry; third, students need to transfer the learning from these WTL exercises to WTSL compositions, thus closing the loop in the WTL-WTSL continuum.

By using the processes described herein, "we end up teaching texts, teaching readers, and teaching writers simultaneously" (Goldschmidt 64).

For teachers, especially those with struggling readers, the question now becomes, "How can I get students to engage with a text in complex and sophisticated ways without force-feeding the important points?" Mary Goldschmidt's "Marginalia: Teaching Texts, Teaching Readers, Teaching Writers"—from which the term "authentic question" is drawn—is the foundational methodology upon which the approach to reading detailed in this article rests. Goldschmidt makes the case that "rhetorical" (Haas and Flower), "introspective" (Salvatori), or "practice-based" (Adler-Kassner and Estrem) reading strategies "[have] been an important undercurrent in the past three decades of composition scholarship" (Goldschmidt 51). Though most composition scholars agree about the fluid relationship between reading and writing, "it is precisely our own already-automatized expertise in reading that can often be the cause of our frustration with students, since we expect students to read *the way we read*" (Goldschmidt 57). She advocates teaching students to become "meta-readers," self-conscious, rhetorical readers who demonstrate the "very kinds of critical reading habits that [instructors] routinely use but too infrequently verbalize or model except through the kinds of questions we ask in class" (Goldschmidt 58). To launch this transformation, she suggests that as students read, they should keep marginal notes—"marginalia"—with four categories in mind: comprehension notes, interactive/ evaluative notes, rhetorical notes, and extending notes (Goldschmidt 66-67). As the titles of the notations indicate, Goldschmidt's system compartmentalizes these notes into "types" which are both multi-dimensional (reading with different purposes in mind) and scaffolded (where comprehension leads to evaluation, which leads to extension, which leads to rhetorical analysis). The virtue of these categories is just how straightforward and practical they are for helping student readers make clear distinctions between explicit, inferential, and synthetic observations of a text, while keeping things low-stakes, informal, and in the WTL realm.

Figure 1 lays out an adaptation of Goldschmidt's theory, which can be scaled up or down depending on student ability.

Students will likely need a few dry-runs before this process takes, but once some degree of confidence is attained, the imagined role of question writer can begin. Here, students will be the makers (and answerers) of their own close reading assignments and develop their early observations from the marginalia activity. Students will work within an easy-to-follow, four-step process to develop their questions from the ground up. Each stage is detailed under the subheadings below, along with an explanation of how these stages can be accomplished, and why we should do them at all.

Step One: Identify the Key Ideas of the Text to Give Direction

As in any good reverse engineering or "backwards design" process, students should start by explicitly identifying their key insights into a text by writing a "significant statement," an idea that follows designs from David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*. Significant statements are not merely a one-line precis or summary. Rather, this is an exercise that gets students thinking in rhetorical terms by asking them to consider how the main elements of written discourse—the author, the audience, the text itself—affect the way a reader makes meaning from a text (see Figure 2). Advanced students may not need much intervention here, but for struggling readers, some focused scaffolding may be in order, such as pre-teaching some paratextual information to help students to read with more focus and purpose. There's any number of places the teacher could nudge a student towards as a starting point. Notice that Shakespeare's troubled marriage to Anne Hathaway somehow underwrites the dynamics between the Macbeths? Start there. Wonder how Shakespeare's primary audience would understand this scene in live performance differently than a twenty-first century, mediated presentation? Start there. See that Lady Macbeth buries her intentions under thick layers of metaphor and analogy? Start there.

Read the assigned text, and as you read, rather than highlighting or underlining, write notes in the margins. Since the text is sufficiently ambiguous enough to invite many interpretations, make sure that you do at least two types of "marginalia" for each category. You'll want to revisit the text at least once for each note "type;" that is, read once for comprehension, a second for interactive/evaluative concerns, a third for extending observation, and a fourth for rhetorical analysis.			
On a <u>first</u> read, make	On a <u>second</u> read, using your comprehension notes make	On a <u>third</u> read, using your comprehension and interactive/evaluative notes make	On a <u>fourth</u> read, using your comprehension and interactive/evaluative, and extending notes make
Comprehension Notes are marginal comments that *summarize or paraphrase*:	**Interactive/ Evaluative Notes** are marginal comments that *question, analyze, criticize, praise, agree or disagree* with:	**Extending Notes** are marginal comments that *go beyond the text* and:	**Rhetorical Notes** are marginal comments that *examine*:
- The main argument/thesis - A new point - An example - Evidence used as a sub-point - Why the passage is important - A contradiction	- The author's idea(s) - The author's logic, examples, or evidence - The author's analysis - The author's assumptions - The author's methodology	- Offer an alternative explanation - Offer additional or contradictory evidence - Pose new questions - React emotionally to the author's style, tone, or substance - Make a connection with your extra-textual knowledge (experience)	- How the author attends to, or fails to attend to, the reader's needs - The effectiveness of how the author responds to other scholars in the field or perspectives on the issue - The scope of the author's knowledge on the issue - How the author establishes or undermines his/her own (or a character's) credibility - The author's implied political stance or ideological grounding

Figure 1: Marginalia Exercise for Student Readers

No reader can find everything in a text, but every reader can find one thing, and sometimes that's all it takes to get things going in the right direction. Significant statements provide focus to analysis, but more importantly, give space for students to ground their analysis in what they have found intriguing in a text. Teachers may need to nudge a bit, but once students connect with the text via their interests, the insights will unravel right along (Carter and Gradin 7). Since most good writing can address several of these concerns at once, students need not feel that they have to find the "right" direction. By having students respond in this way, passages that were silent now suddenly speak and each line of questioning allows a reader's wavering attention to be renamed and given priority as an act of attention (Bartholomae and Petrosky 21-22).

Difficulties to Anticipate in Step One

In Act III, scene iii of *Hamlet*, Claudius—overrun by his conflicting feelings of guilt and ambition—says, "I stand in pause where I shall first begin and both neglect," and students may feel similarly overwhelmed as they put pen to paper in this first step. Like any journey into an undiscovered country, my students who have shied away from Step One do so because they are intimidated by its new terminology and unfamiliar stances towards a text. If this is the case, it may be worthwhile to reframe what Step One is trying to do in terms of "prewriting," a familiar schema for most students who've been through other English courses. Because this step is interested in getting initial impressions down on paper, remind students that "not paying attention to your personal reactions may lead you to feel disconnected from the communication going on—as though some other people were arguing about something that you had no interest in" (Bazerman 119). To make explicit what you think about things *is* to involve yourself with the ongoing dialogue surrounding the issue. After reading, consider nudging students by asking, "How did you react?", "Why do feel that way?", "Did you react that way because of some experience in your life?", "Did you react that way from something you've learned in school?" Find out where students are coming from and pose a similar line of questioning to the one above

to encourage students that they will eventually find a way into the text.

Consider:
"What point strikes you as significant in what you've read?"
"How does the text influence the audience?"

Consider:
"What is the central point of the text?"
"What point is the author trying to make?"

Consider:
"How does the organization or style correspond to meaning?"
"What's the relationship between form and content?"

Significant statement about the reader:

Significant statement about the author:

Significant statement about the text:
The syntactical and grammatical patterns of Macbeth's prose in his soliloquy are reflective of his conflicted interiority as to whether or not he should kill King Duncan.

Title of text and portion of text:
Macbeth's soliloquy (Act I, scene vii)

Figure 2: Significant Statement Exercise for *Macbeth* (Act I, scene vii)

Step Two: Choose Passages to Focus On

Once students have clarified a text's "significant statement," they should hone in on specific lines and passages to expand upon these initial reactions. Having the student—not the teacher—select the important passages is the objective of this stage. By linking quotes to the insight generated from the significant statement (see Figure 3), students are doing what I would call "Quoting-to-Learn" since the quotes students choose should tell the teacher something about the way students have oriented themselves towards what can be extrapolated from the "significant statement." Most students tend to associate quotes with arcane rules of punctuation, citation, and integration, but quotations can't, and shouldn't, always be reduced to a simple matter of rules (Harris 28).

Significant Statement	What is my significant statement? *The syntactical and grammatical patterns of Macbeth's prose in his soliloquy are reflective of his conflicted interiority as to whether or not he should kill King Duncan.* Which category does my significant statement correspond to? (Circle one) Author Reader (Text)
Quotation	What is my question? (Rewrite it here): MACBETH *If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly.*
Early thinking of how I may develop this quotation	My potential question will be: (Circle one and jot some brief notes) Interactive: Extending: (Rhetorical:)*I want to look at the use of repetition in Macbeth's statement and investigate whether or not the parallelisms in word choice and syntax reflect his continued hesitance.*

Figure 3: Quote Selection Exercise for *Macbeth* (Act I, scene vii)

The quotes students choose, then, are essential to their developing inquiry since "quotation is the very act in which one voice creatively absorbs another and defines it in relation to that second voice. When we interrupt the quoted text, interrogate it, clarify its point, or expose its ambiguities, we make an opening for our own utterances and give it shape to our own roles in the 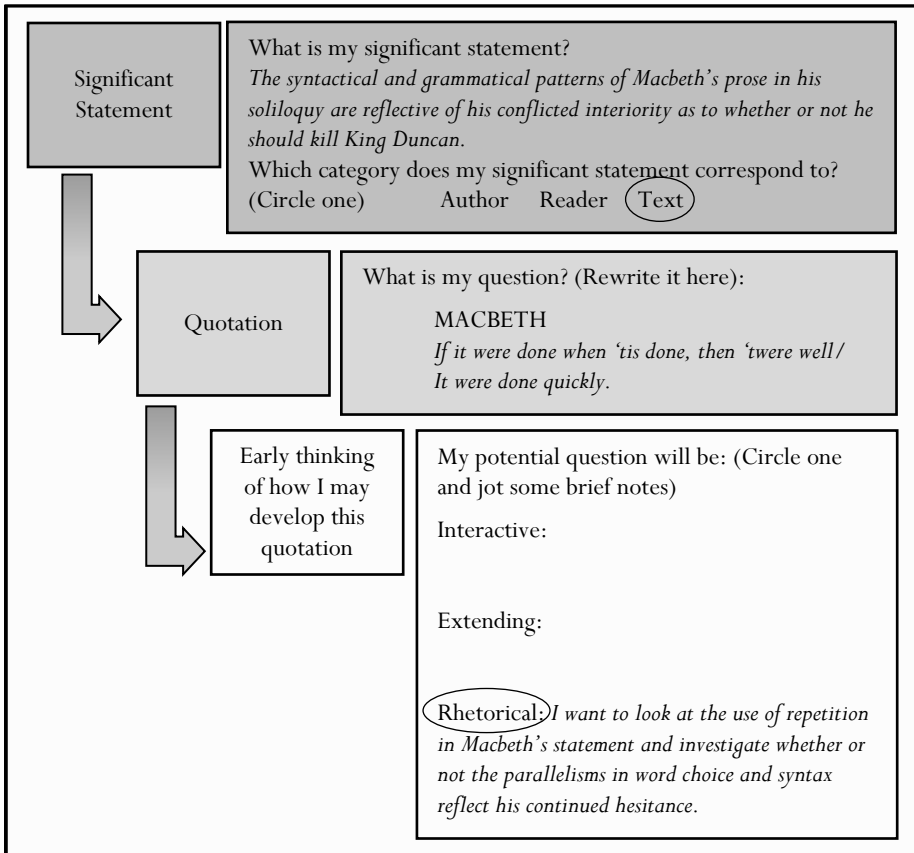conversation" (Bialostosky 18). Students likely discover meanings or allusions that other readers have missed—it happens all the time—and such a perception of oneself as a reader is empowering and contributes to how students may make up their mind about the text they hold in their hands.[1]

Difficulties to Anticipate in Step Two

Quoting is the salt and pepper of composition, and it's possible that teachers may become easily frustrated when students are reticent to work with quotes in the varied ways that Step Two calls for. I've found that many composition students tend to have a one-track mind when it comes to quotes, thinking of them as little more than backup for what's said in the paper and unable to work outside this paradigm. Since the handling of quotes in this process has only partly to do with quotes-as-proof models, not knowing other ways of how quotes can be put to use is a common roadblock. Perhaps encourage students to think of the quotes as a process of "recirculating the author's writing, highlighting parts of the texts for the consideration of others" (Harris 36) as a way to put a personal stamp on the ideas presented in the text. If more concrete intervention is required, perhaps suggest that students read the passage several times, each time with a different purpose in mind (Block and Duffy), as seen in Figure 4.

Strategy:	Question to pose to struggling student:
Predict	Were there any places in the reading where you thought the author was trying to foreshadow something? Did this come true? If it did, what tipped you off? If it didn't, why do you think the author made these suggestions of purpose?

Monitor	Were there places in the reading that were more difficult to understand than others? Why may the author have written that portion in a dense or tough-to-understand style?
Image	Were there any passages that were rich in imagery? What were the images that came to your mind? Can you connect these images to other places in the text?
Infer	Were there places in the reading that you understood because of your prior knowledge on the topic? Was it an allusion? A reference to a fact or anecdote? Do you think the author assumes the reader will know it?
Evaluate	Were there places in the reading that you made a judgement about? Do you think the author wants the reader to take a moral stance? Are they suggesting something here about the larger takeaways for the reader?
Synthesize	Were there places in the reading that you connected to things outside of the reading? How did this connection add depth and dimension to your understanding of the passage?

Figure 4: Suggestions for Struggling Readers on How to Choose Purposeful Questions

Step Three: Compose the Questions

Once students have selected a pool of quotes that link up to their significant statement, the real explication of the text can begin. Students, here, will formalize their inquiry of the text in the persona of an assessment designer tasked with developing a close-reading assignment that focuses on their selected passage. This imagined persona is certainly a bit odd, but its purpose is to help students break with the surface-level, and often predictable, handling of quotes reinforced by most standard WTSL compositions. Such a style of inquiry asks that students self-consciously identify and internalize the moves they have made while reading that will, in turn, help them to become more intentional, rhetorical readers (Goldschmidt 59). While students will certainly be encouraged to throw their thoughts and experiences into the mix as they write their questions, they should adhere to some general

guidelines as they put pen to paper. Each question they write should have two parts: a "where-in-the-text-do-I-see-this" part that ties the question to the text and a "why-does-this-observation-matter" part that extends the textual observation to an interpretive or evaluative inquiry. An example of this two-pronged approach to questioning is illustrated in the "Question" box of Figure 5. As questions begin to take shape, Goldschmidt's marginalia categories can be a useful storehouse for records of a student's early thinking as well.

	Example Question	**Modeled Thinking of Example Question**
Context statement (if needed)	In Act I, scene vii of Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* the title character considers the prospect and consequences of killing King Duncan, an action, if completed, that would result in him becoming King of Scotland. In his soliloquy, he weighs the extensive consequences of regicide (killing a king) and ultimately decides that his action is not for him.	I felt that it was important to provide a brief context setting statement here since to take any Shakespearean line out of context may misrepresent its function in the larger play. Also, in a play that is constructed around the public/private face dichotomy, it's important to note that this line is drawn from a soliloquy which, by dramatic convention, usually means that we are getting a character's true thoughts and feelings (his private face, so to speak).
Quote	MACBETH: *If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly.*	I chose the opening line of the soliloquy because it's Macbeth's lead-off idea and all that follows in the speech flows from this line. He may counter or affirm what he says here, but he can't escape it.
Question	In the first two lines, what word does Macbeth repeat several times? How does this foreshadow his reluctance to commit the deed?	The first question is the "where" part which asks readers to simply find repetition in a small amount of text. The second question is the "why" part which asks for inference out of the textual observation.

What's my question doing? Circle one and explain how your question is:	Comprehending	For clarity, I'll include the explanation in this box of how the question is rhetorically analyzing.
	Interacting/evaluating	Rhetoric is not solely the tool of the speech giver, the essay writer, or the filmmaker. Rhetorical moves are sometimes best illustrated through the mouths of invented characters in imaginative literature. The question that I have asked keys into the rhetoric of the fictional speaker Macbeth. The opening line establishes his implied stance of hesitance ("implied stance or ideological grounding" in marginalia terms) that is initially his source of strength for *not* killing the king. He announces the results of his deliberations to Lady Macbeth, and she responds to his remarks by pressing him to follow through with the murder of King Duncan. In doing so, this initial statement, which was once a source of strength, now becomes the very thing that undermines Macbeth's virtue (or how "the author establishes or undermines his/her own [or a character's] credibility" in marginalia terms) and shows him to be a hypocritical figure.
	Extending	
	(Rhetorically Analyzing)	

Figure 5: Question Writing Exercise for *Macbeth* (Act I, scene vii)

Difficulties to Anticipate in Step Three

Most students are adept at answering questions about a text, but few are expert at asking them. This tends to be the most difficult step for students because to ask probing questions "means making public what is private—a process dependent on explication, illustration, and critical examination of perception and ideas" (Petrosky 20). Asking good questions begs the student to engage

and explore both their own knowledge and the purposes of the text. This "participative pedagogy" brings to the forefront the generative effects of having students play with subject and form as a means of exploring the text they hold in their hands (Halasek 107). Consider Figure 6 as a resource for students who may think, "I don't know what to ask."

Generative Questions for the "Where" Question	Connecting "Why" Question
Where does the main point of the passage show up?	Why do you think it shows up at the beginning? Why does it delay until the middle? What's gained by waiting until the end?
Where does the author/character show us that he's worth listening to? Where does he connect with you emotionally? Where does he provide hard proof?	Why are these important to your understanding of what the author/character has to say? How do these either draw you in or push you away from what's said?
Where does the author/character's proof or examples appear in the passage?	Why do you think they're in the order they are? Why may it start with a shock and work back? Why may it begin with broad claims and follow with specifics?
Where do you see the author/character making an assumption?	Why does this assumption matter to what they are saying? Why is it bias? Why does it seem honest?
Where do you see any unusually long sentences? Short sentences? Fragments?	Why would the author place these sentences where she does? How do they emphasize, or de-emphasize, the point it's making?
Where do you think the author/character may not be telling us everything they know? Where do they seem genuinely confused?	Why would the author/character not be forthright? What is gained or lost by this move?
Where do you see patterns in the writing? Where does the author/character repeat things?	Why do you think these patterns are meaningful? What is the point of using the same verbs over and over again? Adjectives?

Figure 6: Suggestions for Struggling Readers on How to Write Purposeful Questions

Step Four: Extend the Inferences—Answer the Questions

The natural companion exercise to asking questions is to answer them, and here students will bring closure to their developing insight on the text. By asking students to fully write out their responses to the questions they pose, they must think even more deeply about the inquiries from Step Three and flesh out what they know, establish the limits of what they don't know, or open up new pathways for further inquiry. In other words, by answering their questions they are "making visible the thinking that is often invisible… as they grapple with the writer's writing, the reader's reading, and the mediating contexts that shape both. [By doing so], students are trained to be more intentional and rhetorically sophisticated writers themselves" (Goldschmidt 59). When answering their own lines of inquiry, students will step out of their persona from Steps One, Two, and Three and back into that of a student who is WTSL (see Figure 7). Though there will be varying levels of success and finesse with this switch, the hope is that students grasp the important ideas of the text more readily because they are translating these findings into a language they understand—their own (Davies 34).

Context Statement (if needed)	In Act I, scene vii of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the title character considers the prospect and consequence of killing King Duncan, an action, if completed, that would result in him becoming King of Scotland. In his soliloquy, he weighs the extensive consequences of regicide (killing a king) and ultimately decides that his action is not for him.
Quote	MACBETH *If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly.*
Question	In the first two lines, what word does Macbeth repeat several times? How does this foreshadow his reluctance to commit the deed?

| Answer | The neat thing about this line is that, depending on the way that the reader emphasizes the words in the mind's ear as they read, there are actually three plausible answers to the "where" component of the question. On first read, the repetition of "it" (and its related "'tis" and "'twere") was the first to catch my eye. On a second read, I noticed that the verb of each clause, "were," is also notably repeated. And yet, on a third read, the repetition of "done" is undeniably present, and its monosyllabic beat gives us the backing rhythm to the iambic line. So I guess now that we've noticed these repetitions we have to consider how each work in concert to foreshadow Macbeth's eventual reluctance.

Grammatically speaking, "it" is a pronoun, but in this syntax of this line, it is a pronoun that lacks its antecedent companion. Since this is the opening sentence of the soliloquy, we're given an ungrammatical line to start things off, and it's hard to believe that Shakespeare—so sensitive to the use of the English language—would unwittingly commit such a grammatical misstep. By obscuring the reference to the murder by proxy of the pronoun, the reader can see Macbeth's distant consideration of the deed, but he's so hesitant to consider it in "real terms" that he can't even bring himself to say the word. Likewise, the verb "were" contributes to his tone of hesitation. Every instance of this verb's appearance works to couch each of Macbeth's clauses into the conditional mode. He is flirting with the concept, but giving himself an out: if it *were* to happen, there's still an equal and opposite possibility that it *were not* to happen. The "done" repetition is an outgrowth of this effect. Never do we see a rundown of the grisly details, or even a mention of "murder." He wants the payoff of the action, but doesn't want to get his hand dirty to go through with it. He wants it to be "done," "done," "done." |
|--------|---|

Figure 7: Question Answering Exercise for *Macbeth* (Act I, scene vii)

Difficulties to Anticipate in Step Four

The most common misstep for students in this stage is to think that all the hard work has been done: the thinking through of significant statements, the selecting of quotations, the writing of the questions. All of those processes are what Anne Berthoff would call, "'forming activities' in which students should discard the faulty

notice that when you compose you 'figure out what you want to say before you write,' and accept instead this more helpful slogan: 'You can't know what you mean until you hear what you say'" (46). Once student have formed their thoughts, it's time to communicate their final insights. For students attuned to the distinctions between WTL and WTSL—and it may be useful to make this distinction to them at this point if they are not—tell them to think of Step Four in terms of a traditional WTSL exercise. This stance towards classwork is one that is undoubtedly familiar to all students, and by explaining this step as a re-entering to familiar territory (or, writing in ways they are normally accustomed to), students should be more easily able to communicate their ideas and not just let the question "speak for itself."

The approach to inquiry writing detailed in this article will no doubt come more naturally to "experienced readers [who understand] that both reading and writing are context-rich, situational, and constructive acts" (Haas and Flower 182). Though these more sophisticated readers already have in their mind's ear the "sounds" of thought, such a process can be both generative and constructive for inexperienced readers as well. In some ways, the very absence of precision, or "error," in the question writing and answering process can be just as productive for students. In David Bartholomae's "The Study of Error" he notes that, "basic writers…are not performing mechanically or randomly but making choices and forming strategies as they struggle to deal with the varied demands of a task, a language, and a rhetoric. Errors, then, are stylistic features, information about *this* writer and *this* language; they are not necessarily 'noise' in the system, accidents in composing, or malfunctions in the language process" (Bartholomae 257). Though Bartholomae's discussion of error focuses on student missteps at the sentence level, the spirit of his comments translate to the larger interpretive issues that are at stake in this article. In other words, though the final product produced in these WTL exercise may not be "teacher-quality," its words and thoughts are still performing a vital function for the developing

reader while giving feedback to the teacher about the student's present understanding and/or growth.

Whether students are "right" about a text is another thing; this process, if approached with an open mind and heart, will help students facilitate a dialogue between a text and their ideas. It can help students learn *how* to find a productive focus, craft an engaged response to class texts, develop a coherent and organized line of thought, work carefully with source materials, and support interpretations using apt examples and quotations. But more than this, it shows that complex texts are problems with which to engage; they're meant to be complex—not just a thing to demonstrate one's mastery or to declare ready-made opinions. What's produced is what the students see, and they see it because it is really there for them, and when a teacher reads what they've written, they should nod and say, "Yes, there is truth in that. It may not be the only truth, but these students have seen, and have told us honestly what they have seen."

Conclusion

It's worth acknowledging a number of questions that arise with an approach to inquiry like this: What kinds of instruction accompany this type of writing? How can this project extend into work with peer review? How does a teacher deal with the reality of giving feedback and grades for this type of writing? How much needs to be sacrificed in the existing curriculum to make space for such an involved approach to inquiry? What if students' writing "makes sense" to them but is incomprehensible to anyone else? What recourse is there if students intentionally write easy questions to reverse engineer easy answers? Each of these are important and relevant questions for teachers to consider should they choose to adopt some of this article's methodology to the teaching of reading and writing. There's not space in this article to address each one, though I will say that this process bears benefits whether it's done in full or scattered piecemeal among existing class exercises. John Locke once said, "Reading furnishes the mind only with *materials* of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours" (Locke

quoted in Mann 371). The approach to reading and writing detailed in this article tries to make good on both parts of what Locke says. As students expand, intensify, or challenge their own thinking, they are doing something quite special in an English classroom: they are self-generating the insight into a text through a process in which *they* must come up with the main insights and *they* must develop these insights in light of the evidence that they've gathered. But more than this: it's a way for students to take their first steps in the direction of a dialogic stance toward writing—a stance that acknowledges that everything is prompted by and preparing for some other utterance—in a non-threatening way. Once my students leave the borders of my classroom, they're on their own as readers, writers, and thinkers. The mountain stands in front of them, so to speak, and all I have given them here is a pickaxe and a small wheelbarrow, but moving any mountain begins by carrying away a few small stones.

Note

[1] Readers especially attuned to concerns of dialogism may recognize this "making up of one's mind" as a key idea that runs through the work of Mikhail Bahktin ("ideological becoming") and Kay Halasek. Such an experience is crucial for burgeoning independent readers who, as they struggle to find and claim an orientation towards their text, will experience a liberation (however small) "from the authority of other's discourses" (Baktin quoted in Halasek 109).

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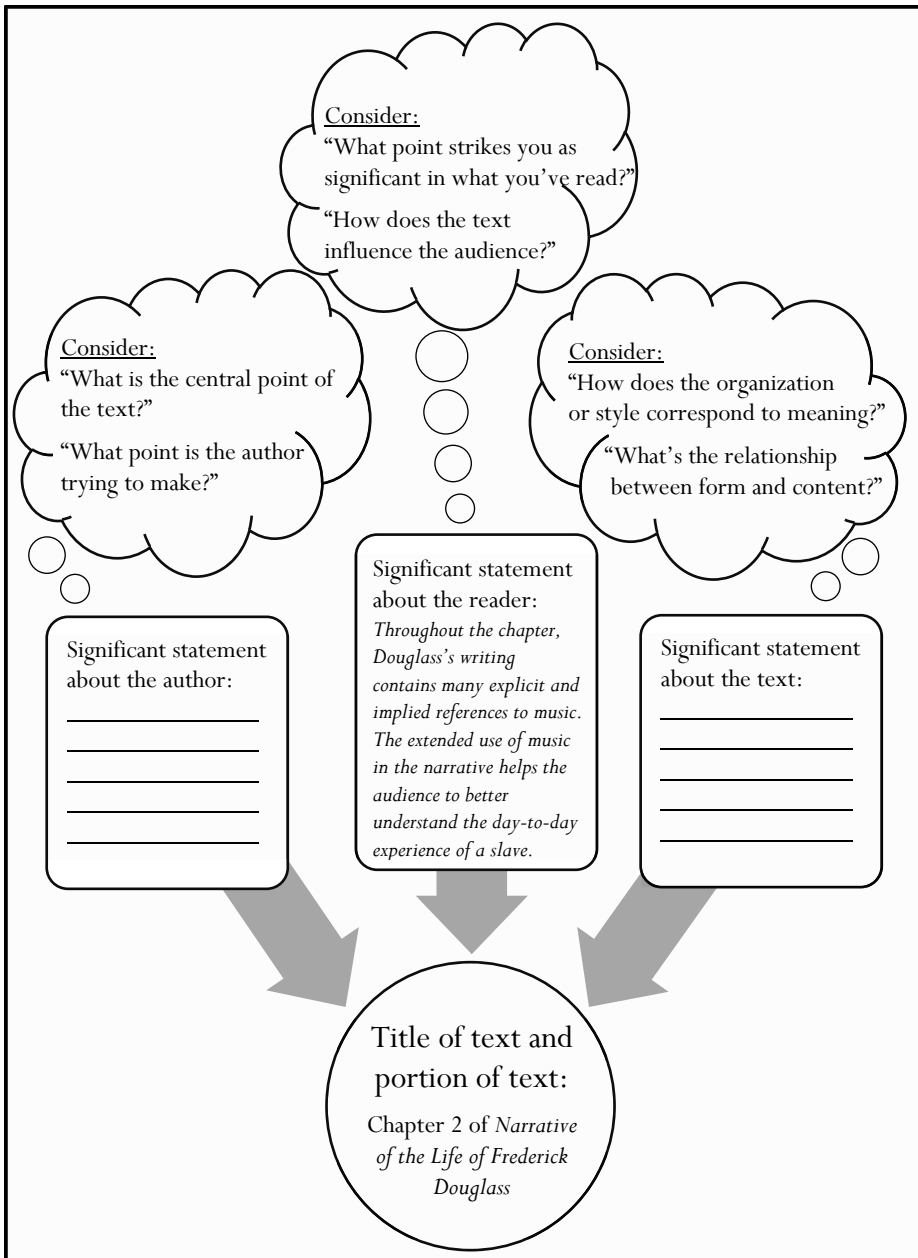
APPENDIX
EXAMPLE OF STUDENT WRITING OUTPUT FOR *NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS*

What follows is a recreated example of student writing based on Chapter 2 of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.* Each of the four steps are accompanied by the student's writing output as well as my own semi-narrative reflections that detail points to difficulty, success, and intervention. The student, "Nick," whose interests gravitated towards music and performing arts, was enrolled in my upper-level composition class, a course that focused primarily on rhetoric and composition, in the fall of 2014. The examples/reflections contained in this appendix are intended to concretize some of the article's broad goals, namely to show:
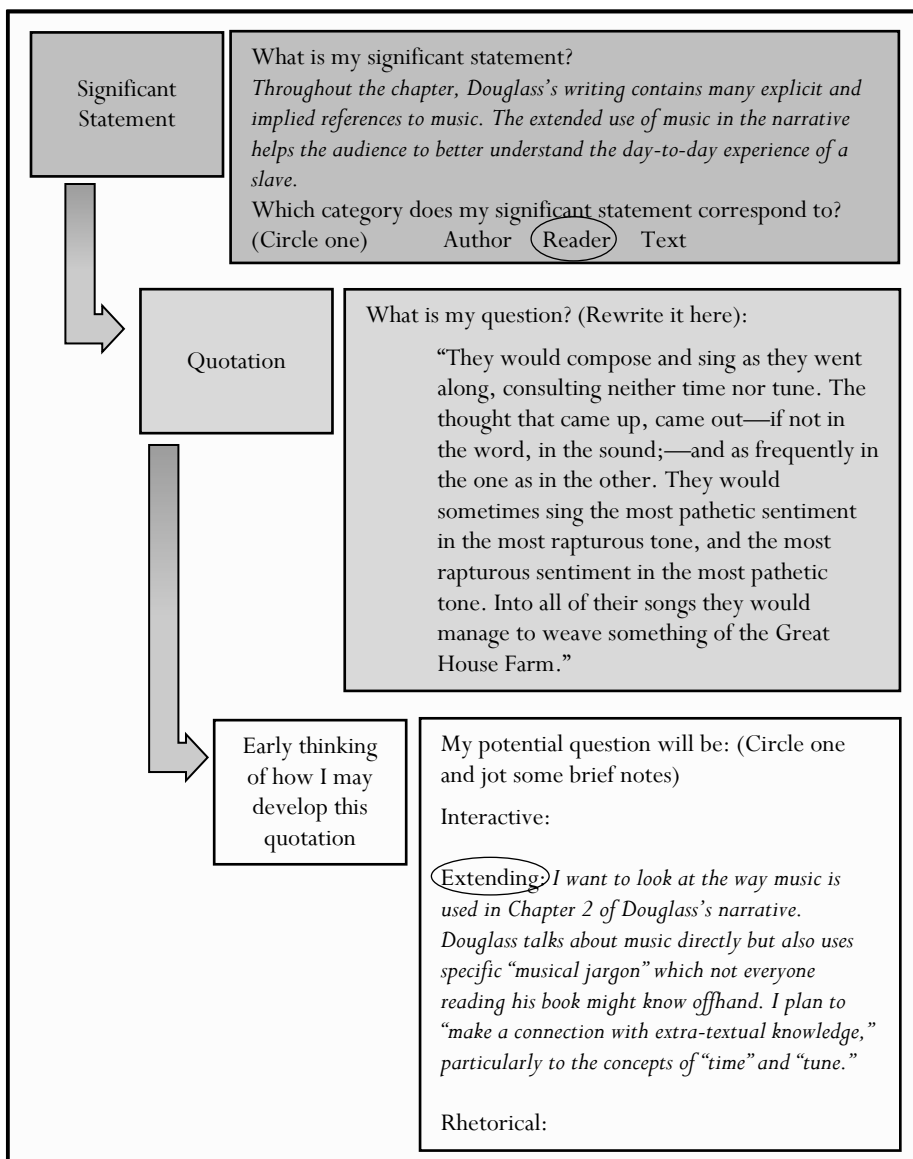
- How students may build their own scaffolding for inquiry to construct a full set of authentic questions in response to a text—and provide answers to those questions —in order to have a deeper understanding of how the source text works, as well as understanding its internal logic and governing ideas.
- How students can develop a thoughtful and patient approach to critical reading that allows them to appreciate the multiple forms, viewpoints, and tactics present in complex texts, and to gather perspective prior to arriving at their own writing, writing that is now more situated in the discourse of the subject.
- How teachers can emphasize the formative role of WTL as a meaningful stage in the construction of knowledge that lets students interact with a text while not assuming a falsely authoritative voice that plagues far too many WTSL compositions. WTL is not just about the act of writing; this type of writing here is really about inquiring, and it's this type of inquiring that facilitates the learning.

Students were first asked to read and annotate the opening paragraphs of Chapter 2 of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* along the lines of the marginalia exercise (Figure 1). After recording their initial impressions, I gave students about 20 minutes to re-read and re-consider their annotations to see if any patterns emerged and organized their lines of thinking. Nick immediately honed in on Douglass's discussion of music that appears in the passage, particularly the use of technical language in the sentence, "They would *compose* and sing as they went along, consulting neither *time* nor *tune*." I wasn't surprised that Nick was drawn to this concept, and I encouraged him to see if there were other discussions of music (or suggestions of musicality) elsewhere in the chapter. He was able to locate a few but became a bit frustrated with how to stitch all of these observations together into a "significant statement." I intervened, as I did with several other students in the class, by saying, "Given that this chapter is largely an exposition on the hardships of slave life, why may Douglass have deliberately included a running discussion of music? What is *that* doing *there*?" I let the question bubble and stew with Nick as I checked in with other students. I returned a bit later to see that he had begun to make some early breakthroughs with his initial observation about music and its rhetorical function in the text. He wrote down his "significant statement" and though his word choice of "better understand" and "day-to-day experience" I felt were a bit vague, I allowed the ambiguity to remain. I told Nick that leaving things thoughtfully unresolved is sometimes a mark of maturity and sophistication as a reader

and leaving some degree of fruitful ambiguity will allow for flexibility in the coming steps.

Consider:
"What point strikes you as significant in what you've read?"

"How does the text influence the audience?"

Consider:
"What is the central point of the text?"

"What point is the author trying to make?"

Consider:
"How does the organization or style correspond to meaning?"

"What's the relationship between form and content?"

Significant statement about the reader:
Throughout the chapter, Douglass's writing contains many explicit and implied references to music. The extended use of music in the narrative helps the audience to better understand the day-to-day experience of a slave.

Significant statement about the author:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Significant statement about the text:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Title of text and portion of text:

Chapter 2 of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Step One: Significant Statement

Significant Statement	What is my significant statement? *Throughout the chapter, Douglass's writing contains many explicit and implied references to music. The extended use of music in the narrative helps the audience to better understand the day-to-day experience of a slave.* Which category does my significant statement correspond to? (Circle one) Author (Reader) Text
Quotation	What is my question? (Rewrite it here): "They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound;—and as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm."
Early thinking of how I may develop this quotation	My potential question will be: (Circle one and jot some brief notes) Interactive: (Extending:) *I want to look at the way music is used in Chapter 2 of Douglass's narrative. Douglass talks about music directly but also uses specific "musical jargon" which not everyone reading his book might know offhand. I plan to "make a connection with extra-textual knowledge," particularly to the concepts of "time" and "tune."* Rhetorical:

Step Two: Quotation Selection

    Since Nick was drawn to Douglass's use of musical jargon in his initial reading, the quotation selection stage seemed like a no-brainer to him. He initially decided to quote, "They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune." I agreed with him that this was an apt choice, but as students were given some time to make their final decisions, I circled back to Nick to discuss how he planned to develop this brief quotation with a close reading question that he must provide a detailed answer

for. He seemed a bit fixated on his prior knowledge about "time" and "tune," and I worried that his extra-textual knowledge may end up causing him to digress. So, we looked again at the text. We discussed the "So What?" question of the musical terms, and I suggested possibly expanding the range of the quotation so as to give himself a little more to work with. "He talks about the lack of 'time' and 'tune,'" I said, "Do you see the prose equivalents of these concepts elsewhere in his writing?" I wasn't really sure myself what this question would yield as I asked it. When I introduced *Narrative* to the class a few days prior, I spent some time discussing how Douglass, despite being wholly self-educated, was one of the consummate prose stylists of 19th century American Literature. His style, Nick noted, is one of order and precision (or "time" and "tune," I clarified). Nick read some of the surrounding sentences in Chapter 2, looking for moments of eloquence and refinement in the style. Nick was surprised, but not entirely surprised, to find that the very next sentence which followed his initial quotation was quite difficult to read. Knowing Nick was a strong rhetorical reader, I suggested that he parse the sentence to see if he could generate some question based on the interplay of Douglass's description of the slave songs and the prose style found here in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. He thought for a while, and then put pen to paper.

Both Nick and I were encouraged by the insight that began to emerge. He had a substantial quote upon which to base his question and his early inquiry about the relationship of "time" and "tune" to Douglass's prose style had great potential for development. As Nick began to write his question, I reminded him (and the class) of some key considerations. I said, "The writing of the question is another stage in the clarification of *your* insights on the text. The question must urge a would-be responder to make some inference based on the quotation that you've made to be the focal point. Don't be too leading, but don't be too vague. Picture a friend in your mind's eye and write the question for him or her: someone with intelligent interests but who hasn't thought about this topic as you have." He drafted a few proto-type questions which I felt were a bit heavy on the "where-in-the-text-do-I see-this" concern. I redirected Nick to the questions from Figure 6 to help. After some trial-and-error, he felt he had found his way as he planned to ask how the lack of "time" and "tune" in the slave songs is replicated in the style of the subsequent sentence. I loved the connection, but I had to push him a bit further since this insight, on its own, felt like an unsatisfactory conclusion. "Is this merely a showing off of his rhetorical skill or is there some reason Douglass's narrative temporarily adopts the cadence of the slave songs?" I asked. I felt this was a big question that had to be accounted for, but I approached this discussion with care in order to leave Nick in control of the ultimate direction of the inquiry. After some back and forth, Nick drew the conclusion that by adopting the speech patterns of the slave songs, Douglass demonstrates an unquestionable ethos for his criticisms of the Great House Farm, and the institution of slavery, in Chapter 2. All the insights had fallen into place. Now it was up to Nick to provide some final clarification as he explained the answer to the question he successfully posed.

"By asking you to fully write out the responses to the questions you have posed," I said to the class, "you not only are asked to think critically about the inquiries you have initially presented in the questions from Step Three, but to also self-consciously identify, label, and give voice to these concerns." Nick, like most students in the class by Step Four, was excited to put the finishing touches on the self-generated insights that

had been built over the last few class periods. I could see a very justified sense of satisfaction as the students began to write, despite the intellectual challenges and creative demands of what I was asking them to do. They felt like active participants in the writing who were able to put whatever thoughts and experiences they had into dialogue with the world of the text. I was thrilled to see this experience draw to a close as I observed a very justifiable sense of accomplishment and an increased "sense of writerly agency in the academy" (Goldschmidt 64). For Nick, in particular, he learned that he didn't have to check his personal passion for music at the door. He was able to see these interests as a space of possibility and potential to let knowledge flow in new directions and link into a text as never before. As a teacher, I can't think of anything more powerful than that.

Context statement (if needed)	Chapter 2 of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* details the experiences of slaves surrounding promotion to the Great House Farm. Douglass specifically focuses on the use of music in the slave community in this chapter.
Quote	"They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound;—and as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm."
Question	How does Douglass describe the songs of the slaves? Where else in Chapter 2 are there sentences composed with "neither time nor tune" and how do these sentences influence the reader's perception of the narrator?
What's my question doing? Circle one and explain how your question is:	Comprehending: Interacting/evaluating: (Extending:) My question will first ask readers to identify what Douglass literally says about music in the passage. I then plan on having responders to my question take this idea and apply it to the way Douglass himself writes. The ideas of "time" and "tune" will be a big factor of my question since I want to show how Douglass raises his ethos as a credible narrator by speaking in the same manner as the slave songs he describes. Rhetorically Analyzing:

Step Three: Question Writing Activity

Context statement (if needed)	Chapter 2 of *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* details the experiences of slaves surrounding promotion to the Great House Farm. Douglass specifically focuses on the use of music in the slave community in this chapter.
Quote	"They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound;—and as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm."
Question	How does Douglass describe the songs of the slaves? Where else in Chapter 2 are there sentences composed with "neither time nor tune" and how does this influence the reader's perception of the narrator?
Answer	Douglass says, "They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune." To fully get what Douglass is saying, a reader needs to know the definitions of two words: "time" and "tune." "Time," or time signature, represents a uniform number of beats in each measure and "tune" refers to the correct musical pitch or key. Songs lacking these things will not be pleasing to the ear and are generally considered to be poor songwriting. Douglass is obviously not a composer, so his writing doesn't literally have time or tune. However, the question asks readers to closely analyze Douglass's syntax choices to find where the writing sounds like the slave songs he's describing. The lines "The thought…House Farm" is written like a song with "neither time not tune." Instead of having a clear flow, the sentence has several stops and pauses which make it hard to read smoothly. The phrase "came up, came out" is the first example of this. It sounds like Douglass is missing a word but the fact that it sounds like he made an error is a perfect illustration of writing that lacks "tune." Right after this first phrase is another example when he says "—if not in the word, in the sound;—". The way Douglass uses punctuation is unusual. He puts a semicolon just before the second dash. Since both dashes and semicolons make a reader stop when they are reading, having two of them makes an extra-long pause in the middle of the sentence. This is an example of Douglass writing without "time." In addition, despite its length of 25 words, this quotation is actually a sentence fragment. The main subject, "thought," is just followed by a bunch of things that describe it which can be seen as another example of the sentence lacking both "time" and "tune."

	By having Douglass's sentence reflect the music of slave songs, he is building his ethos as a speaker. He speaks in a way that seems authentic to the reader. Since he has been a slave from birth, he may be doing this unconsciously, but slave life is so much a part of who he is that he can't help but speak this way.

Step Four: Question Answering Activity

THE CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PRACTICE OF METACOGNITIVE STUDENT-TEACHER EXCHANGES

Ah-Young Song

Imagine stepping inside a typical classroom of an American middle or secondary school. You might see rows of beige chairs facing the whiteboard at the front of the classroom and a series of pristine posters situated along the walls. These might enumerate essential characteristics of essay writing and hang above neat stacks of grammar workbooks that feature techniques for clear and effective compositions. Such a tidy and well-resourced classroom, one might think, would be indicative of a prepared and thoughtful teacher.

Yet would there also be sufficient space for students' personal dialects rather than imposed grammar structures, as proposed by the participants at the 1974 Conference on College Composition and Communication? Would the teacher be inviting authentic speech rather than singular modes of conventional communication? Would writers be producing sufficient *expressive* (Britton et al. 141) or *reflexive self-sponsored* writing (Emig 3), rather than traditional five-paragraph analytical essays, which have been defended by scholars like Byung-In Seo and Edward White?

Schools too often demand students' compliance rather than focus on what Django Paris terms *culturally sustaining pedagogies*. This approach goes beyond *culturally relevant* or *culturally responsive pedagogies*—terms popularized respectively by Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay—in that educators even more actively affirm students' home identities and invite multiple discourses, rather than simply respond to them. Such acts deliberately integrate

student voice and multicultural dimensions of knowledge embedded in home communities, including the often silenced everyday discourses and preferred languages of students.

This piece urges for a bold disruption to outmoded pedagogical models that predetermine assessments, which should more precisely reflect students' true strengths rather than their anxieties or assumptions about teachers' wishes. Educators should expand opportunities for metacognitive reflections in order to better understand writers' needs and encourage a more participatory composition process. Metacognition and culturally sustaining pedagogies activate student reflections, to which teachers can respond directly. Rather than presuming deficits in young writers, teachers should instead employ metacognitive strategies to acknowledge diverse authorial voices, various writerly motivations, and distinct modes of expression.

First, I will begin by outlining important developments in metacognitive pedagogy, building on several writers who have commented on the need for metacognition in composition studies, connecting this line of inquiry to culturally sustaining pedagogy. I then discuss the significance of meta-awareness during writing conferences, offering pragmatic suggestions for practicing teachers. Finally, I elaborate on the use of metalinguistic written reflections as a co-generative practice, supplementing this commentary with an example of a classroom scenario.

Meaning–Making with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

In the past few decades, student demographics have shifted dramatically. According to the 2015 United States Census Bureau, over half of babies under the age of one in the U.S. are racial or ethnic minorities, and figures for non-white populations continue to grow (Pew Research Center). At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education has noted recently that eighty-two percent of elementary and secondary public school teachers in 2016 were white. In light of this disjuncture, I propose that schools

emphasize more spoken and written exchanges between students and teachers to uncover metacognitive processes that reveal writers' authorial intentions and empower them to become self-aware learners.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Metacognitive Discourse

James Paul Gee has argued that meaning-making depends on fluctuating practices, diverse contexts, and competing interests (43). Cultural norms are constantly negotiated and contested in discursive spaces, and although they may appear fixed, words also reflect complex and changing meanings that require nuanced evaluations. However, if teachers do not share the same cultural backgrounds as their students or if they undervalue learners' capacities, educators may be missing greater subtleties in their writings. Metacognitive conversations can thereby help expose deeply encoded systems of meaning and expose greater agentive possibilities for students.

A careful "contemplation" of one's own composition (Emig 44) can help reposition students as critical reviewers of their own work. It is important for writers to engage in dialogical exchanges about their visions and aims with teachers, who then address individual questions and ideas accordingly. Rather than requiring writers to make corrections based on instructors' own beliefs about conventional writing, schools should include metacognitive dialogue to disrupt a transmission model of education, in which red markings drive student corrections but do not require extensive thought or analytical reflections. By encouraging students to identify issues of personal importance, take bold risks without the fear of suppression, and argue for unconventional choices, teachers truly actuate culturally sustaining practices.

Scholars such as Donald Murray, Timothy Lensmire, Muriel Harris, and Judy Parr have commented on the need to value students' voices throughout the composition process. I intend to build on this tradition by connecting a form of radical democracy to the act of honoring students' artistic and personal identities. However, it is no longer enough for a teacher to listen without

judgment, ask open-ended questions, observe progress, model strategies, and explain principles, as Muriel Harris suggests (55-69), but also to accommodate students' own language preferences and rhetorical styles in the evaluation process. Through culturally sustaining pedagogies, teachers value students' contributions and communicate feedback that incorporates writers' own communicative norms and creative visions.

Admittedly, Harris has referred to a number of writers on culture and education, such as Edward Hall and Robert Kaplan, who have respectively claimed that Arab students tend to use over-exaggerated prose and that "Oriental" students often write tangentially rather than directly (Harris 89-90). While her aim to emphasize the existence of communicative differences between cultures is well-intentioned, it is dangerous to categorize students as certain kinds of learners because of the identity groupings to which teachers perceive they belong. Individuals are complex beings with fluctuating and intersecting social identities, and those who share ethnic affiliations cannot be assembled into a monolithic group. For instance, as a Korean-American who grew up in Delaware, I am a different kind of learner from my mother, who immigrated to America at the age of 34 with a high school degree, and from my grandmother, who passed away in South Korea after the Japanese occupation and the Korean War. We have had distinct experiences as Korean women in the world, and no teacher committed to culturally sustaining pedagogies could anticipate the kind of writing we would produce simply based on our ethnicities.

Through metacognitive exchanges, teachers better understand students' unique voices, backgrounds, and sets of knowledge. To be anti-essentialist is not to oppose affiliations entirely, but simply to be vigilant about how the act of categorizing can be (ab)used by those with and without power (Narayan 92). Ultimately, greater agency in student writers can arise from hospitable conferences, which allow student compositions to be assessed with greater personalization, humanity, and respect, as Glynda Hull and her colleagues have argued. During conventional one-on-one meetings, teachers often direct the revision process and enforce formal

conventions, whereas a hospitable conference, in contrast, inspires genuine and active partnership between teachers and students to identify areas of concern and potential strategies together.

Meta-Talk in Student-Teacher Conferences

Having taught English literature at American schools in New York, New England, and international contexts, I have been able to work with diverse populations whose needs have varied. Through my experiences with these students, I have increasingly oriented my instruction around a culturally sustaining approach and supported pluralistic identity expressions in the classroom. Specifically, metacognitive exchanges have allowed me to better understand and respect students' individual motivations, unique sociocultural realities, and creative strengths as artists.

In a large metropolitan city on the east coast of the United States, I recently coordinated a middle-school writing project over the course of several months. Nineteen students' poetry pieces, personal narratives, and short fiction were drafted, refined, and distributed in a print publication. One student in particular, Adrianna (a pseudonym), was reluctant to start a poem modeled after George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From." I saw that she had not started her draft after some time, and I kneeled next to her and asked her for a chat. Our conversation quickly revealed that she was not a reluctant or struggling learner but in fact a widely-read individual who aspired to be an artist. Adrianna expressed that she had done a similar writing project before, and so we settled on creating a new, special prompt that she could help develop instead.

What hobbies did she have? What were her ambitions? What did she love to do, and what did she enjoy most about it? She shared that she had dreams of becoming an R&B singer, and we tailored the assignment to fit her interests in songwriting. After discussing what she wanted to highlight, she worked diligently to write a beautiful poem about her envisioned future as a performer on the stage. Literary elements such as anaphora, assonance, repetitive diction, sensory imagery, and personification emerged from her work organically, and she demonstrated a natural sense of flow,

rhythm, language, emotion, and playfulness. By having a two-way exchange informed by culturally sustaining practices, she was able to redirect her energies into a sophisticated artistic production.

Questions that teachers could ask students during hospitable conferences include the following:

- What do you hope to get across to readers?
- What particular questions are you working through as a writer?
- How does x detail add to your central aims, rather than distract the reader?
- How can x phrase be restructured to be even clearer or more effective?
- How does your unique voice and style come through in x section?
- How do your choices as a writer create a certain kind of effect? Consider literary devices such as controlling idea, purpose, details, organization, tone, style, diction, etc.

Such questions restore students' sense of agency, for rather than enforcing a single method of academic writing, teachers aligned with culturally responsive practices dialogue with writers to investigate structural designs, rhetorical elements, and conceptual aspects of the work together. By allowing students to communicate metacognitive reflections and personal aims, instructors enhance students' capacity for self-expression, advocacy, and imaginative creations.

This argument supports a type of powerful, egalitarian communication between student and teacher advocated by Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, in that both the reader and author can be right. There is no one perfect way to write, no ideal way to utter a thought. Rather, it is the discussion between two skilled readers and writers—the negotiation of linguistic, rhetorical, and artistic choices—that is most pivotal. Students are the most knowledgeable about their own ideas, and once the teacher is positioned as one of many well-educated readers, the act of composing becomes more about informed choices and ongoing processes rather than prescriptive

or rigid standards determined by supposedly all-knowing assessment designers.

Adrianna did not end up writing about singing because I, as an instructor, presumed that this young African-American girl loved to sing. Such essentialist moves may reflect good intentions but in reality perpetuate damaging microaggressions and harmful assumptions that continue to subjugate our most marginalized youth. Instead, Adrianna wrote about singing because she was a lover of music who knew all of Beyonce's songs, sang gospel at church every Sunday, and possessed multiple identities that drew her to music early in life. Through intentional student-teacher dialogue about her personal interests, this passion for music could be translated onto the page.

Critical Consciousness through Written Reflection

While I value discursive exchanges in the context of one-on-one conferences, I also recognize that there are some students who are more comfortable in nonverbal learning situations. When encouraged to participate in written reflections throughout the composition process, writers can have meaningful exchanges with instructors, who then view them as legitimate artists with valuable insights and important concerns.

Last spring, I taught at a large high school in New Hampshire, where I worked with English students on personal narratives. One student, Donna (a pseudonym), wrote a narrative about a family member's medical condition and the ways in which it had deeply affected her as a child. I reviewed her working draft and provided extensive in-line commentary, offering particular suggestions, but also invited her to defend any artistic choices in the final draft. My feedback spurred metacognitive reflection, as Donna was able to revisit her piece to experiment with alternative versions but also make executive decisions as to what would remain in the final essay.

In her rough draft, Donna had devoted one long passage to articulating an inner conflict that arose while attempting to

reconcile her feelings of sympathy and anger towards a loved one. In my written feedback, I had questioned the inclusion of this section and pointed out that she had shown, rather than told, these very sentiments earlier in the narrative through illustrative dialogue and scenes. I had written, "I wonder about the inclusion of this passage, as your earlier descriptions and direct quotations already seem to express your sense of internal conflict beautifully. This lengthy section feels a bit reiterative to me—does it advance your primary aims as a writer?" In her follow-up to my written feedback, Donna added supplementary author's notes at the end of her final draft, at my invitation. She mentioned, "I edited carefully for wordiness and repetition, and while I'm still not completely sure about the shift between action and reflection, I decided to keep the long passage because it helped convey my sense of internal stress that I felt wasn't portrayed explicitly enough in the earlier scenes." Here, she shared that she made several corrections based on my comments, such as condensing the opening scene and selecting more powerful diction at crucial moments, but she also stated that she felt compelled to retain the long passage in question because of the way the narrative segments worked in conversation with one another.

She used her creative license to defend her decision to include a passage I had initially questioned, and when assessing her work, I respected her prerogative to do so. Honoring her decision to organize her essay in this way, I instead directed my final comments to other edits and commented on the extent to which I felt she had been able to convey her intended themes of familial love and coming-of-age in distinct ways.

Donna demonstrated that she had thoughtfully considered not only the *what* but the *why* in her writing; in other words, through the metacognitive process of written student-teacher exchanges, she conveyed her ability to think deeply about the composition process and to address my feedback appropriately while preserving her artistic voice. As a result, I did not penalize her for taking the initiative to keep certain components, and I instead commented on

other aspects, such as characterization and tone, and how they functioned in the final piece.

Scholars like Peggy O'Neill have commented on the need for conversational feedback, and I would extend this recommendation to add that instructors not only allow for self-reflection but also recognize the fullness of students' personal experiences and capacities. By adopting a culturally sustaining pedagogical stance, instructors respect the intersecting identities of individual students and their continually repositioning writerly gazes. I use the term "writerly gazes" to indicate that student writers are required not only to compose their work from their own perspectives but also to respond to it as critical readers. They digest comments provided by instructors or peers, then re-examine their own work from the position of another reader. If they still wish to preserve certain stylistic, rhetorical, or compositional elements after thoughtfully reflecting on their work, teachers should support students in their efforts to carve authentic artistic voices and provide helpful commentary that elevates the impact of their writing overall.

While it is never easy for learners to articulate their intentions, participating in written metacognitive exchanges allows for culturally sustaining pedagogies, for teachers can appreciate students' choices and make appropriate assessments around authorial justifications. This practice promotes greater student accountability during the construction of final assignments, which should incorporate "multiple forms of excellence" (Ladson-Billings 481). Once students develop the habit of critical self-evaluations instead of unthinking compliance, their intentional contributions can be more explicitly underscored and respected.

Composition and Identity Formation

In her research on developing writers, Cheryl Smith has noted that the act of meta-talk might be an imperfect and arduous one, but it is a worthwhile endeavor, especially if teachers are given the institutional support that affords time and space for these activities (674-75). Structural investment is crucial, for large class sizes and the pressure to prepare for state tests limit the efficacy of these

pedagogies. Teachers must be afforded the ability to give personalized attention to students and see them as individual writers, not just standardized test-takers or monolithic groups.

By encouraging metacognitive exchanges, students gain experience as generative and reflective writers, and schools are able to integrate multiple perspectives into curricula in place of teacher-determined content, standardized grammar conventions, and fixed rubrics. There is no single correct way to write, and students cannot be expected to discard their vast and complex identities when composing in academic environments. To accommodate more culturally sustaining pedagogies, teachers should encourage metacognitive practices and critical reflections of drafts as well as feedback.

Writing can have a humanizing purpose, one that transgresses notions of a generalized subject—such as the English Language Learner, the struggling writer, the disadvantaged student—and imagines multiple impulses and positions. Rather than viewing students as "receptacles" trained to deposit information upon passive absorption, effective teachers value learners as self-constituting agents with the capacity to co-generate curricular content and name their own truths (Freire 72).

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Reviewed by Jena L. Hawk

It is no secret today that hundreds of thousands of students graduate from high school and enter college unprepared or without the skills they need to write successfully. After their college graduation, many of these same individuals continue their education as they matriculate in graduate or law schools across the country where their writing skills are often again criticized: "It's lamented by colleagues in the law school halls. It's lamented in faculty lounges. Incoming law students aren't 'what they used to be'" (Flanagan 135). Clearly, many employers, as well as graduate school faculty and law school professors, feel that "[u]ndergraduate education has changed over the last fifty years," with others suggesting that "the quality of student writing is worse than ever before…" (Flanagan 135). Scholars also debate the nature and causes of this perceived decline. Michael Carter and Heather Harper, for example, contend that education has changed as a result of "budget cuts, an increasing emphasis on national standards, and the influence of market-based logic in education" (286). Noting education standards have decreased, Richard Aruru and Josipa Roksa assert that the writing abilities of today's students suggest that students are not held to rigorous educational standards, particularly those related to reading and writing.

Although there is a variety of explanations as to why students and/or professionals do not demonstrate an understanding of basic writing principles, the fact is that people who lack sound writing skills will often continue to struggle when faced with any sort of writing task, let alone a writing-intensive course or career. Individuals will continue to have problems with any number of elements of writing—from subject/verb agreement and correct usage to formulating sound arguments and integrating secondary

sources. How can teachers help individuals develop effective writing skills, or how can people help themselves to improve their writing skills?

Jean Reynolds, author of *What Your English Teacher Didn't Tell You: How to Showcase Yourself through Writing*, offers a comprehensive and useful resource for both students and professionals, regardless of age or ability, that will assist them in improving their writing skills. From explaining the various rhetorical modes to developing sound and logical arguments, Reynolds simplifies this information in direct, easy-to-understand lessons while incorporating exercises for readers to complete that reinforce her lessons. Her ultimate objective is to teach her readers "how to produce thoughtful, intelligent writing without befuddling … readers" (Reynolds 11).

A Professor Emerita of English at Polk State College and a former instructor at a correctional facility as well as an internationally recognized Shaw Scholar, Reynolds draws upon her experience in the classroom to address common issues that are troublesome for writers who possess various levels of experience. The author realized that her students were becoming increasingly frustrated with their writing skills, and this served as the impetus for her book. She writes that she simply answered the question, "What didn't your English teacher tell you?", ultimately phrasing the question as a statement to form the book's title. Expounding upon her motivation to write this text, Reynolds writes, "Quite simply, the curriculums, textbooks, and teaching software found in many school systems aren't always designed to prepare students for real-world writing" (ii). Noting that many writing textbooks only address writing for academic purposes, she stresses the importance of maintaining a professional tone when writing for business (i.e., composing emails, memos, letters, reports, etc.) as well as for academia.

Her 288-page book is divided into seven parts, each of which is composed of several chapters designed to teach real-world practical writing. In the first part of her book, she emphasizes the importance of effective writing, as she contends, "This epidemic of bad writing creates confusion and inefficiency that waste a great deal

of time and money" (Reynolds 2). Seeing a need for effective writing as it benefits everyone from students to employers to governmental agencies, Reynolds emphasizes that the "purpose of this book is, very simply, to teach you how to think like a *writer*" (4). Part of thinking as a writer for Reynolds involves thinking critically, which ultimately allows an individual to communicate effectively, thus saving time and money both at work and in school. After explaining the importance of effective writing and critical thinking, Reynolds encourages her readers to make a writing plan, which keeps them focused and motivated. She suggests that the writing plan consists of goals and challenges that one will encounter during the writing process as well as the strategies one will use to improve one's writing.

As the goal is to become a better writer, Reynolds, in part two of her text, outlines a three stage writing process, which consists of preparing, drafting, and revising, to help writers effectively plan and compose an essay. Reynolds explains that when individuals are preparing to write, they should gather information and generate ideas, while writers in the drafting stage should develop a thesis statement as well as ideas that support the thesis. Finally, in stage three, Reynolds discusses that writers during the revision process should examine the organization of their paragraphs, as well as edit the content of their essays. Certainly, this advice will be familiar to K-12 writing teachers and compositionists as firmly situated in the writing process movement. However, Reynolds' advice is intended for lay readers seeking sound and accessible advice for tackling writing tasks and enhancing their strategies for approaching those tasks.

In part three of her text, Reynolds offers writers another set of familiar strategies for developing their introductions and incorporating examples and narratives to improve their essays. She also focuses on using closure to end paragraphs and transitions to establish flow between each paragraph. Although the information presented in parts one through three is geared toward any writer of any level, part four is geared solely toward high school and college students. Here, Reynolds directs her advice to students writing essays. She

advises them to be mindful of the basics: Remember to follow the assignment instructions and to manage time wisely. Reynolds also encourages students to seek outside help on their essays from a writing lab, if one is accessible at their campus, and to write on topics that are somewhat stimulating to their audiences.

After offering this advice, Reynolds provides a detailed explanation of the various modes of development, including comparison/contrast, classification, process, cause and effect, narratives, and informative/research. She introduces the various rhetorical modes, noting that they may be unfamiliar to students but also acknowledging that the strategies behind the modes are those they use frequently in their writing and speaking. Although this information concerning the writing modes is not new information to teachers and scholars, Reynolds has found a way to make this information more practical for student writers. She emphasizes the importance for students to incorporate the modes in their writing, which allow them productive means of arranging and communicating their ideas. Instead of just offering a string of ideas, she uses examples that help students see the benefits, for example, of using a comparison/contrast structure to examine and assess the specific formats of classes over listing ideas about the differences between online and face-to-face classes in a less systematic fashion. Not only does Reynolds present examples in her book that incorporate the modes, but she also encourages students to use the rhetorical modes as strategies for structuring their own thinking and writing.

After she addresses writing issues as they pertain to students, she moves to parts five and six, discussing sentence, grammar, and writing issues that prove troublesome for many writers of various levels. Moving to part seven, Reynolds includes a section that focuses on the mistakes that professional writers often make. She explains advanced grammatical issues, including indefinite pronoun references, misplaced modifiers, parallel construction, citation mistakes, and advanced punctuation. Also, included in part seven is a chapter that focuses on business writing and the importance of using an appropriate tone in workplace correspondence. The last section of

part seven is geared toward professional writers who want to publish as well as developing writers who wish to become professional writers. Reynolds' guidance on business writing and self-publishing are two of the commendable aspects of her book that set it apart from traditional writing textbooks or writing manuals. For example, for those interested in self-publishing, Reynolds explains the step-by-step process of how individuals can publish and market their own books.

While a great deal of the information that Reynolds presents is not innovative, as much of the information she presents has previously been taught in classrooms and included in textbooks, she presents information in a simplified manner, allowing students and professionals to easily understand and digest the information. Her book does not include any jargon or technical language that confuses her readers. When she does include terminology pertaining to writing, she explains those terms clearly and completely. For example, Reynolds defines the process essay as a rhetorical mode that "refers to something that happens the same way, step-by-step, over and over" (131). She also then explains how the process essay differs from a narrative essay, as it focuses on an event that occurred one time only.

Not only does she thoroughly explain the concepts she presents in her text, but she also uses examples that further illustrate her points and discusses how individuals will use the skills acquired from her book in the workplace. For example, she suggests that process writing can be used to explain to others how to cook a meal in a remote location or expose a questionable process in society. In addition to her examples, she presents practice exercises that readers can complete, and she includes the answers to the exercises. For instance, she presents a practice exercise on writing effective paragraphs. The practice exercise involves reading a short paragraph and then answering questions concerning her purpose for writing, points that support her purpose, and examples that illustrate her purpose for writing. Reynolds also includes the answers to her questions so that her readers can receive immediate feedback, ensuring they understand the previous concepts. Another aspect

that sets her text apart from most writing texts is that it is applicable to a wide audience, including professionals and students. She spends one part of her book directly addressing students, yet any professional needing a refresher on writing will find her text useful.

Framing much of Reynolds' approach to writing instruction is what Barack Rosenshine originally referred to as guided practice, which has evolved into the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. This model suggests that learning slowly transitions from the teacher to the student or the reader, in this case (Duke and Pearson; Pearson and Gallagher; Rosenshine). The teacher initially is responsible for all learning that occurs, but after being exposed to the lesson, the idea is that the responsibility for learning and understanding the material shifts to the student. This shift in responsibility occurs when students begin using model paragraphs, guided examples, or practice exercises, all of which are included in Reynolds' book.

While some writing teachers will appreciate the structured approach that Reynolds suggests, writing scholars, theorists, and instructors may find it troubling or problematic or resist the informality that Reynolds encourages her readers to incorporate into their writing. In fact, many writing teachers may—as an example—disagree with Reynolds' advice to use contractions and not avoid split infinitives. As far as contemporary pedagogical approaches are concerned, those who subscribe to a current traditionalist approach to writing will support many of Reynolds' ideas, although she includes theories from various pedagogical approaches. After all, she offers a very structured approach to writing that is driven by a thesis, supported by main ideas and related details, which are characteristic of a current traditionalist approach to writing (Connors). In a number of chapters in her text, she presents outline templates that her readers can use to arrange their ideas, which helps them organize their ideas into a manageable format. At other points, Reynolds departs from a current traditionalist approach and incorporates other pedagogical

approaches in order to offer her readers the most useful and beneficial writing advice she can.

Jean Reynolds' *What Your English Teacher Didn't Tell You* is a valuable and informative resource that is of service to a diverse readership. It offers a practical approach to writing and grammar that both novice and professional writers can reference. Reynolds' years of expertise in the classroom are compiled in this text and inform the advice she offers her readers. She knows the problematic issues that students struggle with as writers. She clearly and succinctly addresses common writing problems and offers writing advice that will help students overcome these challenges and become more confident writers.

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Alexander, Jonathan, and Jacqueline Rhodes, editors. *Sexual Rhetorics: Methods, Identities, Publics.* **New York, NY: Routledge, 2016. 274 pages. ISBN 978-1-138-90687-7.**

Reviewed by Kristin LaFollette

Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes are scholars of queer theory in the fields of rhetoric and writing and gender and sexuality studies. Alexander, a professor at the University of California, Irvine, and Rhodes, a professor at Michigan State University, are known for their collaborative works that examine the intersections of queerness, sexuality, rhetoric, and pedagogy. *Sexual Rhetorics: Methods, Identities, Publics* continues the conversation on the rhetorical as "always already sexualized" (1). "Queer" can refer to LGBTQ people and perspectives, but can also refer to valuing diversity and different perspectives, and "queered" as a verb encompasses that which is normative made non-normative or non-traditional. In the spirit of "queering" this review so as to discuss this collection most effectively and move away from the traditional review format, I'd like to take a moment to talk about my personal interactions with Alexander and Rhodes as authors/editors and scholars in the field. I'm a Ph.D. student pursuing a degree in Rhetoric & Writing and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. As a result, these disciplines often intersect in my studies, and Alexander and Rhodes always seem to be at the forefront of this intersection. I first encountered *Sexual Rhetorics* when developing a reading list for an independent study on Queer Theory in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, and this text proved to be an extremely valuable tool in orienting myself to queer theory and sexuality studies. This text also oriented me to Alexander and Rhodes' other scholarship on queer theory and sexuality studies, including their "queer" multimodal e-book *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self. Sexual Rhetorics* served as a starting point for me in this independent study, and it has helped me to think of ways to develop a course curriculum focused on queer theory and writing.

In addition, the text helps me to think of ways to teach my students different perspectives, to appreciate the role that sexuality has in rhetoric and writing, and that "queerness is always already in the making" (*Techne*).

Sexual Rhetorics is Alexander and Rhodes' edited collection of essays which is focused on the complexities of sexuality and the diversity of experiences. Sexuality is often discussed with a heteronormative perspective in mind, but this text discusses "the self-conscious and critical engagement with discourses of sexuality that exposes both their naturalization and their queering, their torqueing to create different or counterdiscourses, giving voice and agency to multiple and complex sexual experiences" (*Sexual Rhetorics* 1). The collection opens with an introduction from the editors discussing sexual rhetorics, including the ways that power contributes to and categorizes sexuality and identity. The introduction itself sets up the ways that sexuality is rhetorical, as the editors ask "What's Sexual about Rhetoric?" and "What's Rhetorical about Sex?" Alexander and Rhodes "assert that the discourses, identities, affects, and embodied practices clustered under the rubric of 'sexuality' are all themselves inherently rhetorical in the sense that they carry and vector the weight of ideological pressures on bodies and minds" (*Sexual Rhetorics* 1). This claim that sexuality is always rhetorical is thoroughly communicated throughout the essays contained in this collection as they focus on the ways that ideologies, social conventions, and expectations speak to and limit "queer" identities or those identities that don't fit within heteronormative or "socially accepted" categories. In this way, the essays in this collection seek to dismantle many of these social conventions by exposing the ways they restrict identity, encourage homophobia, and promote other potentially harmful ideologies while also pointing to the problematic ways that society is making public that which is private. Alexander and Rhodes' introduction works to summarize the three sections of the collection and the individual essays contained in each of those sections. They wrap-up by writing, "Taken together, these chapters speak not only to the diversity of methods and objects of

study available in the study of sexual rhetorics, but also to the saturation of public discourses and sexual appeals" (*Sexual Rhetorics* 12). Ultimately, the essays in this collection work toward embracing difference, encouraging and appreciating diversity, and asking readers to challenge their thinking through an examination of sexuality as a valuable area of study.

   "Part I: Sexed Methods" is the first section of this collection, which contains six individual essays. The essays focus on methods for studying and examining sexuality and ways to expand the discipline of sexual rhetorics. The section starts out with an essay by Heather Lee Branstetter, "Promiscuous Approaches to Reorienting Rhetorical Research." This essay focuses on an expansion of the term "queer" to include a study in sexual rhetorics of identities that don't necessarily fit into the LGBTQ category. As Branstetter suggests in the title of her essay, there is value in the study of "promiscuity" and she claims that "our field would benefit from a more sustained engagement with the perspectives, people, and acts often seen as sexually deviant but not necessarily LGBTIA. To be more specific, I'm thinking of slutty women, sex workers, interracial sex, or fetish, kink, or polyamorous orientations" (18). Branstetter's essay challenges what is thought of and what is categorized as "queer"; the term is typically associated with those identities that are not heterosexual, but, however, Branstetter asks for an expansion of that definition to include that which is outside "mainstream sexual values and ideas about what sexuality should be" (18). In this way, "queer" and "queering" seem to take on a different persona, and this essay lends to an increased and expanded understanding of what queer can be and mean, which makes it a good choice as the first essay not only in this section, but in the collection as a whole. A second essay, "Hard-Core Rhetoric: Gender, Genre, and the Image in Neuroscience" by Jordynn Jack, discusses visual rhetoric in reference to neuroscience and argues that some methodologies in science need to change when it comes to studying sexuality. Jack writes that "authors often use neuroscience as factual evidence to support their claims" (58). She goes on to say that this "scientific research

remains uninterrogated…and by failing to examine it more closely, we risk an oversimplified understanding of sexuality, one that glosses over sexual differences and naturalizes culturally specific patterns as universal and biologically determined" (Jack 58). Her essay focuses "on how research on genre and visual rhetoric can help us to better understand the kinds of responses images evoke" (Jack 59). Jack points to the importance of including multiple perspectives in studies on sexuality, including queer individuals, and understanding that sexuality is culturally influenced. Unfortunately, she claims, many scientific studies lack this understanding, and are falling short as a result. According to Jack, sexuality is culturally influenced and humanistic, and studies in neuroscience need to better reflect this diversity.

The second section of the book, "Part II: Troubling Identity," focuses on a diverse array of identities relating to sexuality. Some essays focus on underrepresented LGBTQ identities, while others focus on the ways culture, race, and religion impact one's identity as a sexual being. The first essay in this section, "The Trope of the Closet" by David L. Wallace, talks about "coming out" as an event that is not only experienced by those of the LGBTQ community. Wallace refers to the "secularization" of academia and that someone in academia "coming out" as religious can be just as traumatizing of an experience as a gay or lesbian person coming out to their friends and family. Wallace summarizes the purpose of his essay when he writes,

> The trope of the closet is critical to an exploration of sexual rhetorics most obviously because it is the one of the dominant ways that homosexuality has a different rhetorical function from heterosexuality. However, the trope of the closet is also more generally useful as a tool to bring other aspects of identity to awareness—some of which may be sexual and some of which may not be. Because the trope of the closet exists only when liminality is invoked to some degree, it is a natural tool for exploring anything—but particularly anything sexual—that falls outside usual expectations and

must be actively articulated to have presence in discourse. (96)

Here, Wallace is using "the trope of the closet" as a tool to expose and challenge power dynamics and discusses the "closet" as something that can be negative and harmful because it encourages adherence to societal norms and expectations. Also discussing power dynamics, the fourth essay in this section is G Patterson's "The Unbearable Weight of Pedagogical Neutrality: Religion and LGBTQ Issues in the English Studies Classroom." This essay examines "pedagogical neutrality," and Patterson presents this concept as something that "limits the intellectual and political reach of English Studies, [encourages] uncritical thinking on LGBTQ topics, and unquestioningly centralizes the needs of students from privileged social groups while putting queer and trans students and teachers at risk" (134). This essay focuses on the hegemony that Wallace discusses, as well, and argues that instructors of English need to be aware of dominant groups in a classroom (ex. Christian, cisgender, heterosexual) that may tailor the class to their needs, desires, and beliefs. Ultimately, this section speaks to the many different factors that contribute to a person's whole identity, including gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, etc., and that those with traditionally underrepresented identities deserve an equal voice and platform. Specifically, Patterson's essay points to knowledge construction as something that is possible through listening to and examining multiple voices, backgrounds, and experiences.

"Part III: (Counter)Publics," the final section of the collection, discusses issues that extend beyond individual identity to encompass the public sphere. Erin J. Rand's "'Gay Boys Kill Themselves': The Queer Figuration of the Suicidal Gay Teen" talks about high incidence of suicide among gay teenagers. In the introduction to her essay, Rand cites several tragic examples of young men who have committed suicide, seemingly as a result of their queer identity. However, the focus of Rand's piece is not to draw attention to

these teenagers and their suicides, but what is happening in society to cause tragedies like this to happen. Rand claims that

> we need to consider the ways in which we imagine the gay teen who is at risk for bullying and suicide, for whose benefit these prevention efforts are developed. In the background of the public attention to the gay youth suicides, I want to suggest, hover the 'gay boys [who] kill themselves,' or what I will call the rhetorical and affective figure of the 'suicidal gay teen.' This figure, produced through public discourse, tells us more about the collective affective investments of US culture than it does about queer youth, and demonstrates the underlying cultural violence wrought by heteronormativity. (175)

According to Rand, the issue of the "suicidal gay teen" is not a problem with sexual orientation, but is rather an issue stemming from a society still centered around heteronormativity, the notion that heterosexuality is "normal" and other sexual orientations and identities are "other." This ideology encourages misunderstanding, violence, and aggression toward LGBTQ individuals, and maybe even especially LGBTQ youth. Rand writes that, in order to work toward eliminating "suicidal gay teens," this heteronormative ideology needs to be dismantled.

Another essay in this section that discusses gender performance, Luke Winslow's "Presidential Masculinity: George W. Bush's Rhetorical Conquest," focuses on the ways Bush was able to "outman" and ultimately win against Al Gore and John Kerry in the presidential elections. This essay focuses "on the interconnectedness of gender, sexuality, and style in US political discourse…[and illuminates] the meaning-making and exchange process in traditional, formal corridors of power" (232). Winslow discusses the ways in which Bush's "masculine credentials" appealed to the traditional gender expectations of men in American society and that Bush took on the "image of the ideal American male" (233). This "presidential masculinity," as Winslow refers to it,

helped Bush to dominate Gore and Kerry in presidential elections and come out on top by meeting the "sexualized expectations" of the media and the public (234). This essay seems particularly relevant given our recent presidential election, and it seems Donald J. Trump exhibits this same "presidential masculinity" that Winslow talks about in reference to Bush which, if following Winslow's argument, may have contributed to his win over Hillary Clinton.

I also see Winslow's essay working toward uniting the chapters in this collection as a cohesive whole. Winslow notes, "the primary purpose of this book is to trace the emergence and unacknowledged presence of sexual rhetorical practices into the public sphere in order to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dense and complicated ways sexuality constitutes nexuses of power, constructs identity, and carries the weight of ideological pressure" (232). He continues by saying that "several of the chapters in this book explore this process by analyzing the meaning-making and exchange process where historically underrepresented and marginalized sexual identities are constructed, affirmed, and struggled over" (232). Here, Winslow narrows down the ways the essays within this collection relate to one another and illuminates the unique focus of his essay as being political discourse. While each of the essays might have a unique focus, they come together under the sexual rhetorics "umbrella" with their shared concentration on the ways power impacts sexuality and sexual identity, as Winslow suggests. In this way, the chapters work together to give the reader valuable insight into sexual rhetorics, especially by bringing in and discussing important and pertinent social issues (like gay teen suicide, gender and politics, HIV/AIDS, etc.), and each essay illuminates different issues while still falling under the broad category of sexual rhetorics (and, more narrowly, the individual section headings). Alexander and Rhodes bring breadth and diversity to the collection with these varied essays and show how sexuality is an integral part of humanity while also revealing the ways that we can study sexuality

and understand queer identities and diverse and underrepresented voices.

This book is unique in that it is relevant to the field of rhetoric while also focusing on sexuality and queering, something that is rare in the discipline and that certainly deserves further attention and work. In their introduction, Alexander and Rhodes point to this by saying that "scholarship on the potent intersections of queer theory and rhetoric/writing 'remains relatively sparse and under-read'" (4). The editors go on to discuss how queer theory has been informing literary studies for some time, but has not "created significant movements in the field of rhetoric and compositions studies" (4-5). In this way, this collection works toward paving the way for LGBTQ studies to have a place in rhetoric and composition and clarifies the ways that queer theory and an understanding of LGBTQ studies can inform writing and writing pedagogy in the composition classroom. This collection of essays is an important and necessary step toward bridging the gap between queer theory and rhetoric and composition studies and can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool for teachers of writing. The text connects sexuality and LGBTQ issues with rhetoric and composition in a way that hasn't been done previously, and the editors write in their introduction that they have hope that the collection will demonstrate "the necessity of considering sexual rhetorics as a fundamental part of understanding rhetorical action in contemporary public spheres" (12). The essays in this collection point to sexuality as an important area of study and an inherent part of humanity as a whole, further highlighting that it deserves greater attention in rhetoric/writing and beyond.

The independent study where I read this text was taking place at the same time I was teaching a first-year writing course, and I've been able to queer several of our classroom practices this semester, including rearranging our classroom space and remixing traditional alphabetic assignments. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to take these experiences and develop a course focused on queer theory and writing where I can continue to queer

traditional practices and incorporate sexuality as a valuable, always rhetorical area of study.

This collection of essays can serve as a valuable resource for graduate students studying rhetoric and writing. The introduction of this book notes that

> queer compositionists have contributed important essays that prod us to think critically about the importance of LGBT content in our writing curricula, to be attentive to the particular literacy and instructional concerns of LGBT students, and even to consider the potential implications of queer theory for the teaching of writing. However, while comparable work in feminist thinking, critical pedagogies, and postmodernity in general have created significant movements within the field of rhetoric and composition studies, queerness and queer theory have not. (*Sexual Rhetorics* 4-5)

While it is important to consider LGBTQ content, students with queer identities, and queer theory in writing, this text moves beyond those concerns to address specifically the place of queer theory and sexuality in rhetoric and composition. This makes this collection a great tool for a graduate rhetorical theory course that is attempting to further the conversation about sexuality and give rhetoric students a foundation for discussing and understanding the importance of sexuality and queering in the discipline. Further, this collection can also serve as a pedagogical tool for teachers of composition. Many of these essays help to outline the ways that our identities impact how we write and interact with the world and how composition teachers can create a classroom environment that fosters diversity and gives students an equal voice to discuss and write about issues that are important to them. In addition, this volume draws attention to issues and concepts that are at the center of many conversations in our culture and society ("coming out," sexual freedom for women, sex trafficking, etc.), making it a poignant collection for classroom use. Ultimately,

Alexander and Rhodes have compiled a collection that is opening doors for further examination of queer and sexuality studies in rhetoric, and can help students and instructors alike develop a more thorough understanding of the rhetorical as "always already sexualized" (1). I recently attended the Cultural Rhetorics Conference at Michigan State University where I had the opportunity to meet Jaqueline Rhodes and talk to her about my research and coursework in queer theory. We talked a bit about accessibility, and she pointed to the medium of *Techne* and said that it was published as an open-access e-book so that anyone, anywhere could use it. This is a failure of the *Sexual Rhetorics* text; it is a valuable source in queer, sexuality, and rhetoric and composition studies, but it's so expensive that I wonder how many people have access to read it and use it. I struggled to find a copy in my library or through Inter-Library Loan, and ultimately had to obtain a review copy directly from the publisher. The text is available online for $160 new, $123.89 on sale, $54.95 on Kindle, and $80.94 used. The unreasonable price makes using the text in a course unrealistic, but the collection as a whole has so much to add to queer theory, sexuality studies, and rhetoric and composition and deserves attention; increasing the accessibility of the collection is an important first step in making it visible and usable in the field.

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Wizner, Jake. *Worth Writing About: Exploring Memoir with Adolescents.* **Stenhouse Publishers, 2015. 171 pages. ISBN 978-1-62531-048-4.**

Reviewed by Melissa Nivens

Jake Wizner is best known for his hilarious young adult novels, *Castration Celebration* (2009) and *Spanking Shakespeare* (2007). Shakespeare Shapiro, the title character in *Spanking Shakespeare*, spends the novel pondering the miserable details of his young life for a memoir assignment that all high school seniors must complete. After reading Wizner's new instructional text, *Worth Writing About* (2015), it is clear that Mr. Wizner's own students must have inspired his debut novel. Wizner, a middle school teacher turned novelist, has assigned a memoir unit to his eighth graders for almost twenty years; therefore, he knows first-hand the struggles of teenagers as they explore who they are and where they have been. *Worth Writing About* offers a master class for middle school instructors in teaching the memoir genre to young writers. This latest text uses Wizner's classroom experience in New York City's Salk's School of Science to share concrete strategies and models for teaching memoir. His instructional text engagingly explores the value, challenge, and reward of teaching memoir to young writers.

Wizner begins by addressing the nay-sayers because he was once one himself. Prior to creating this memoir unit for his eighth grade classroom he questioned, "Was it possible that thirteen-year-old children had had enough meaningful experiences and the necessary distance from those experiences to be able to write reflectively about them? What would I have written about at that age?"(9). But now, after almost twenty years of teaching his memoir unit, he introduces the assignment by telling his skeptical students, "that at the end of the unit most of them will have produced the best piece of writing they have ever produced, and many of them will have come to see themselves and their lives in

new ways" (9). With certainty he promises his students and his readers, "I know it…because it happens every year" (9).

I admit, as a former middle school teacher, I was skeptical too. Sure, students can write those quick personal narratives that state standardized tests often require. After some practice with hooks and sensory details, students can crank out a page or two about a time they learned a lesson or had a change of heart. But a ten-page, full-out memoir? I wasn't so sure. After reading Wizner's text, especially the words of his students, I am now a believer in the power of memoir writing in the middle grades. The student samples that he includes in his text prove that eighth graders really can write beautiful and meaningful memoirs.

Wizner understands that teachers are bound by the state-mandated objectives for language arts, so he begins by clearly showing how memoir writing fits into the Common Core State Standards. ELA-Literacy Objective W8.3 requires that students "write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences." The subsequent areas under this key objective call on students to "engage and orient the reader by establishing a context" (W8.3A) and "use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection" (W8.3B). Certainly, it is easy to see how a memoir unit would fit nicely into the standards set forth by our state legislatures. However, Wizner does not rely solely on these standards to justify his memoir unit. In fact, he smartly argues that while the Common Core Standards are important, they should not "eclipse all other ideas about the purposes of education and the many objectives we have as teachers" (10). And with that reminder, he sets out with the rest of the book to reveal how much more memoir writing can bring to middle school classrooms than just meeting the narrative writing objectives.

First off, he outlines five reasons why he teaches memoir. One of his key reasons is that middle school students are often already struggling to answer the question, "Who am I?" The memoir unit allows students to "look back, take stock, and think deeply about

the choices they have made, the identities they have tried on, and the young adults they are becoming" (11). This perhaps sounds romantic, but Wizner is not alone in seeing the value of reflective writing from students. Kathleen Blake Yancey writes, "reflection is dialectical, putting multiple perspectives into play with each other in order to produce insight…reflection entails *looking forward* to goals we might attain, as well as a *casting backward* to see where we have been" (6). A unit such as Wizner's allows students to do just this: look where they have been in order to consider where they want to go.

Further, Wizner also explains that memoir writing is accessible to most students and builds community in the classroom. He finds that students are comfortable writing about something that they know: themselves. They find satisfaction in learning more about themselves and their classmates. By the end of the unit when the students share their stories, classmates begin to see each other in different and often more positive ways. He illustrates this discovery by including not only student memoirs but also their reflections on the process of writing such a personal piece.

Beyond those first two important points, he shows how memoir encourages students to read more nonfiction texts. Wizner shares excerpts from Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Adam Bagdasarian's *First French Kiss*, Tobias Wolff's *This Boy's Life*, and several others in his text and in his classroom. He notes that his students begin picking up memoirs to read for pleasure rather than the typical YA fantasy novels (13). Even so, I was somehow surprised at the titles he suggests for his students. Some memoirs like Tina Fey's *Bossy Pants* or Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* might involve themes that are a little sophisticated for some middle school students. However, Wizner's use of these texts seems to encourage authentic voice from his students. They do not shy away from difficult topics like drugs, divorce, race, or abuse, and they discuss them with an uncensored perspective that might include foul language or coarse descriptions. Using both professional mentor texts and outstanding student models are key to his memoir instruction. This practice is so much a part of his

pedagogy that he not only includes a list of mentor texts but also an entire appendix devoted to several student excerpts. He invites his readers to share these models with their own students as they begin memoir units in their classrooms.

Undoubtedly, through the use of literary examples, Wizner is able to provide evidence for his students that they are completing a writing task that could occur outside of school. So many school writing assignments are based in made-up situations and audiences that end up silencing students or producing artificial responses. Seth A. Parsons and Allison E. Ward argue that students should complete assignments that mimic tasks that are completed outside of school. They write that these "authentic activities contextualize students' learning, which promotes motivation" (463). The memoir unit is one such authentic writing task that reflects a real world activity and illustrates the value of literacy beyond the school classroom. The honest responses from his students reveal an ownership and investment in the assignment that is not always present from young writers.

Finally, Wizner proclaims that, "memoir writing changes lives" (14). Once more, this might sound idealistic, but again the memoirs themselves and Wizner's observations of his students make this bold claim undeniable. When describing a reluctant writer, Ryan, Wizner says:

> The memoir unit did not transform Ryan into a model student, but when he was working on his memoir, I witnessed a level of focus and engagement that I had not previously seen. I watched him writing and rewriting, reading things he had written out loud to hear how they sounded…wanting to talk to me about things he was struggling with. (117)

Later Ryan himself reflects on his memoir and says, "the feelings are real so even if the student isn't a good writer you can still understand what the person is trying to make the reader see" (119). Ultimately, "Ryan embraced his memoir as a vehicle to grapple with his own identity and sense of self, and he emerged

from the writing process with feelings of pride and academic accomplishment that had been in short supply throughout his middle school years" (119). Such an experience sounds life changing, indeed.

After offering justification for memoir writing in the middle school classroom, as expected, Wizner offers insight into how to teach the craft of memoir writing. He includes chapters on combating the reluctant writer by offering thought-provoking prompts. He explores teaching inventive figurative language and the importance of perspective. He gives sound advice on how to write a compelling lead or thoughtful conclusion. He gives guidance on holding constructive one-on-one conferences. He recommends assessment and evaluation approaches and confronts the challenges of differentiating instruction. All of these smart strategies are grounded in recent research from the likes of Kelly Gallagher's *Write Like This*, Kirby and Kirby's *New Directions in Teaching Memoir: A Studio Workshop Approach*, and Katherine Bomer's *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning—and Triumph over Tests*. Wizner offers prompts, activities, and even a rubric that teachers could take straight to their own classrooms. However, as previously mentioned, the most compelling part of Wizner's text is not his nuts-and-bolts of teaching but his incorporation of professional model texts and the powerful and often raw words of his own students.

Truly, the model essays are the strength of this book. With each writing strategy, Wizner offers professional mentor texts and student examples that use the techniques he describes. In Chapter 5, Wizner introduces the term *understory* (57). Essentially, this term refers to the underlying meaning of the story similar to theme when discussing fiction writing. Toward the end of the chapter he shares Vincent's story, *Bumper Cars*, in its entirety. On the surface this story is about a four-year-old boy spending the day at Coney Island with his mom. It contains predictable memories of the train ride, the hot dogs, the roller coasters, the bumper cars, and even a tense run-in with a lady on the way home. But the story is more than hot dogs dripping with ketchup or the thrill of

ramming one bumper car into another. The students recognize that this eighth grade boy really writes a story of a mother's love and her fierce protection as illustrated with its final image, "On the ride home, I fell asleep, my cotton candy plastered cheeks resting lightly on my mother's shoulder, her hands resting lightly on mine" (71).

In her new book *Story: Still the Heart of Literacy Learning*, Katie Egan Cunningham explores why stories matter and whose stories count. She says:

> We live in a time where stories exist where they always have: inside the walls of our homes, outside our front doors, in our backyards, on our playgrounds, in the pages of books, in the brushstrokes on canvas, in the imaginative play of children, and in the lyrics and rhythms of songs. Yet, today we are free to tap into and curate stories in new ways. (1-2)

Jake Wizner has found these powerful stories in his students, and his memoir unit convinces his students that their voices and stories matter. He has found a way to get reluctant students motivated to write. He gets teenagers writing in ways that help them see how their experiences matter and shape the adults they are becoming. What's more is that he presents their stories and his classroom strategies in a practical way. His suggested lessons and ideas are easily transferrable to any classroom. Undoubtedly many teachers are already teaching the personal narrative; however, this text challenges its readers to dig deeper and get students to go beyond a page or two of superficial details about ordinary events. *Worth Writing About* gives teachers the tools they need to begin a memoir unit and persuades them to find the real stories hidden within their young writers as they approach the brink of adulthood.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Forthcoming: *JTW*'s New Guest-Edited Section on K-12 Classroom Practices

In the spring 2018 issue of *JTW* we will launch a new section devoted to K-12 reflections written by and for K-12 teachers. This new section will be guest edited by Brandie Bohney, a former Carmel High School teacher (Carmel, IN) who is now completing her Ph.D. at Bowling Green State University. The theme for the spring 2018 issue is failure in the writing classroom. As writing instructors, we struggle semester after semester to help students understand that first drafts are never final drafts, that it's okay to take risks in their writing, that expression of meaning is their primary goal, and that expression usually takes several tries. Yet in a time where student success is measured in terms of testing proficiency rather than academic growth, there seems to be little room to allow students to fail or to make them feel safe in doing so.

Guest Editor Brandie Bohney invites K-12 teachers to reflect on their own classroom activities, policies, or practices that create space for failure in their writing classrooms.

- How do you allow students to fail?
- How do you encourage them to do so?
- How do you work failure into curricula often centered entirely on success?
- How do you share your own failures with your students?
- How do you make failure safe in your classroom and in their writing?
- How do you encourage students who feel they are failures because of past experiences?
- How do you balance students' concerns about failure with the necessity of failure?

Brief submissions (roughly 750-1200 words) that reflect on this theme should be sent as a Word document to jtw@iupui.edu with the subject heading "K-12 Reflection." The deadline for submissions for our spring 2018 issue is November 15, 2017. All submissions will be reviewed by the Guest Editor in consultation with the *JTW* Editor. Contributors will be notified of the Editors' decisions by the end of January 2018.

INDIANA TEACHERS OF WRITING
37TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

EVERY STUDENTS' VOICE:
HONORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES
IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

SEPTEMBER 23, 2017
SOUTHPORT HIGH SCHOOL, INDIANAPOLIS

8:00am to Noon
Opening session to include students reading and sharing their voices.

Presentations and roundtable discussions
by K-16 writing teachers addressing:
- *What do emerging student voices sound/look like?*
- *How do we teach students to recognize, respect, and appreciate multiple and different perspectives?*
- *How do we help students add their voice to other conversations?*
- *How can we encourage original interpretations when other people's perspectives are so easily obtainable?*

1:00pm – 2:30pm
Framing the Argument Based on ELA Standards:
Where to Begin Helping Students Respond to Informational Text
Due to the high demand for our Spring Conference topic,
we are repeating it with additional content for primary teachers.

Conference registration includes annual ITW membership
and a year subscription to *The Journal of Teaching Writing*.
Professional Growth Points available.

For more information and to register, visit indianateachersofwriting.org
or contact Tracy Donhardt at tdonhard@iupui.edu.

Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy
Georgia Southern University

Join us for the Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy, September 15-16, 2017, in Savannah, Georgia! The mission of the Conference is to provide the opportunity to share research and best methods related to teaching, learning, and assessing essential lifelong information literacy skills for K-20 faculty, librarians, and media specialists across the curriculum. To register, email jwalker@georgiasouthern.edu or visit our website at http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ce/conferences/infolit/.

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W509 Introduction to Writing and Literacy Studies (Buchenot), Wednesdays, 6:00-8:40 P.M. Aug. 21 — Dec. 17.

W600 Topics in Rhetoric and Composition (Ene), Tuesdays, 4:30-7:15 P.M. Aug. 21 — Dec. 17.

W600 Topics in Rhetoric and Composition (Brooks-Gilles), Mondays and Tuesdays, 12:00-1:15 P.M. Aug. 21 — Dec. 17.

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For more information contact Professor Jane E. Schultz, jschult@iupui.edu.