

THE SOUNDING BOARD

the newsletter of the writing colleagues program

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STRATEGIES FOR READING

Why do students have difficulty reading? There are a number of possibilities. For instance, some students do not know or understand the academic jargon for a particular text and/or topic. They have not yet developed a specific “cultural literacy.” Other students may have trouble detecting the structure of an argument. And in some cases, students do not adjust their reading strategies for different purposes (close scrutiny or skimming) or for different academic discourses. Below are some strategies you might try:

Annotation

- Mark the text: circle words to be defined; underline key words and phrases; use lines and arrows to connect important ideas.
- Note responses and questions in the text.
- Identify interesting passages.
- Point out patterns.

Take Inventory

- Examine annotations to find patterns or repetitions (such as recurring images, stylistic features, repeated words and/or ideas, repeated examples).
- List and group the items in the inventory.
- Decide what patterns indicate about the text.

Scratch Outline

- Reread each paragraph systematically, identifying the topic and what is said about it.

Paraphrase

- Reread the passage to be paraphrased, looking up unfamiliar words.
- Translate the passage into your own words, using quotation marks whenever you use the exact words from the original.

Summarize

- Make a scratch outline.
- Write a paragraph or more that presents the writer’s main idea in your own words, and then explains how the main idea is supported.
- Continue to summarize the whole reading.

Synthesize

- Do summaries (from scratch outlines) for more than one source on your topic.
- Look for patterns among the sources.

Look for Patterns of Opposition

- Annotate the passages indicating opposition.
- List the pairs of opposition.
- Note the term in each pair that seems to be preferred by the writer.
- Study the patterns of opposition to help your understanding of the essay. What do they tell you about what the author wants you to believe?

Challenges to Readers’ Beliefs

- Mark the text where you feel your beliefs/values are being opposed, criticized or unfairly characterized.
- Reflect in writing how it feels to be so challenged.
- Ask students to play the “believing and doubting” game: first walk in the author’s shoes and trust the author; respond to the author with empathy; then play the devil’s advocate and raise objections to the author’s argument or purpose.

Evaluate the Logic of an Argument

- Use the ABC test:
 - A. Test for appropriateness by checking that the reason and support are clearly and directly related to the thesis.
 - B. Test for believability by deciding whether you can accept the reason and support as true.
 - C. Test for consistency and completeness by ascertaining whether there are any contradictions in the argument and whether any important objections or opposing arguments have been ignored.

- Write “what it says” and “what it does” statements to understand the structural function of a text.

Judge Writer’s Credibility

- Does the writer have knowledge of the subject?
- Does the writer establish common ground with readers?
- Does the writer deal fairly with opposing arguments?

Material paraphrased from Axelrod and Cooper, *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing* (2001) and Vacca and Vacca, *Content Area Reading* (2002)

THANK YOU, WRITING COLLEAGUES 2006-2007

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Caitlin Caron ‘08
Holly Clark ‘07
Rachael Claudio ‘07
Felipe Estefan ‘08
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Interested in a Writing Colleague for your course next semester? Interested in becoming a Writing Colleague? Please contact us:

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Check out *The Sounding Board* online:
www.hws.edu/academics/enrichment/writingcolleagues.asp

WRITING COLLEAGUE GRADUATES: LESSONS, INSIGHTS AND GENERAL SAAVY

We would like to honor our Writing Colleagues in the Class of 2007. As you will see, their majors and field placements represent a very interdisciplinary approach to writing and the writing process.

Below they have each shared a bit of wisdom they have gained during their field placements.

Stephanie Bishop

Major: Writing & Rhetoric

Placements: GEO 150: Geology of New York with David Kendrick

FSEM 042: Mirrored Histories with James McCorkle

The most rewarding aspect of being a Writing Colleague is the facilitative discussion during individual meetings. My communication skills have improved, and I've learned to better organize things within my own writing.

Holly Clark

Major: Political Science

Placements: ART 101: Ancient to Medieval Art History with Michael Tinkler

ART 103: East Asian Art Survey with Lara Blanchard

My first placement prepared me for my second, and I feel that I have been able to help the students more. Also, it provided me with a chance to take classes that I would have otherwise never taken.

Rachael Claudio

Major: Political Science

Placements: FSEM 104: Lost in Translation with Kanate Dahouda

WRRH 100: Writer's Seminar with Gary Mattassin

ART 103: East Asian Art Survey with Lara Blanchard

The most rewarding aspect of being a Writing Colleague was knowing that I really made a difference in how well students did on their papers. Also, it was nice to be able to take a course and learn and not have to take exams!

Erin Giantomasi

Major: Media & Society

Placements: FSEM 042: Mirrored Histories with Thelma Pinto

ALST 203: African Voices with James McCorkle

By the time students are upperclassmen they are much more set in their ways in terms of writing papers, and are thus more likely to not open up to a Writing Colleague. I think classes could perhaps improve by constantly stressing to all students that writing is a process that can constantly be improved and worked upon.

Emily Gordon

Major: Sociology

Placements: ENV 110: Biodiversity with Nan Arens

FSEM 104: Lost in Translation with Kanate Dahouda

I learned that the quietest students often have the most to say in their writing. I enjoyed watching these students flourish.

Sep Levatic

Major: Psychology

Placement: PHIL 195: The Good Life with Eva Cadavid

Being a writing colleague has taught me how to analyze different learning styles and people. I no longer just sit in class. I find myself looking at the angles and, because of that, it's much easier to connect with people.

Kate Ustach

Individual Major: Diversity in the Workplace

Placements: FSEM 189: Knowledge and the Moral Experience with John Burns

FSEM 044: Faces in Mathematics with Paul Kehle

The Writing Colleague Program is so important because it provides the bridge between professor and student. In each placement I had I discovered that the first-year students had real concerns and opinions about being in college and the curriculum. They were too unsure of themselves to go to the professor, and I often became a mentor to my student colleagues, as well as their "writing tutor."

Thank you! Congratulations!

Good luck, Class of 2007.

"Write as often as possible—not with the idea of once getting into print, but as if you were learning an instrument."

J. B. Priestly, novelist, playwright, essayist

CONGRATULATIONS! NEW WRITING COLLEAGUES 2007

Jamie Billington '10

"I enjoy writing and working with my peers. The Program will give me the opportunity to do both while developing my own writing."

Molly DiStefano '10

"I feel that this program will allow me to not only improve my own writing, but will also give me the opportunity to work with my peers on writing and developing new ideas."

Michael Ellis '10

"I can't wait to help others with their writing because I know I'll end up learning as much as I teach."

Corey Gallagher '09

"Working with students helps me develop as a writer and discover other learning styles."

Libby Greene '10

"I love writing--essays, reaction papers, critiques, analyses... I'm especially intrigued by the ways writing is used across the disciplines."

Julie Isaacson '10

"I look forward to collaborating with students and discovering their viewpoints."

Sam Koval '09

"I want to help students connect their lives to their academics. Writing is the best tool for this task."

Jonathan Shaker '10

"Not only will I be given the chance to help other students develop their ideas, but I will improve as a writer and communicator."

Shane Simon '10

"I enjoy working with others and getting to know my peers through writing."

Margaret Stirling '10

"I love writing and enjoy working with others."

Deana Stuart '09

"I want to be able to bridge the gap between students and professors as well as help students understand the importance of writing."

Maria Trainor '10

"I enjoy writing and working with others."

Regina Triplett '10

"I want to work more closely with my peers and professors while helping to improve the writing program at HWS."

Michele Viterise '09

"I like people and writing, so why not help people with their writing?! Plus, it's an amazing learning opportunity for both the student and writing colleague."