

Peer conferences for literacy narrative development

ENG 108, Fall 2014, Bradley Dilger ~ <http://dtext.org/>

Experienced writers rely on others at nearly every stage of their writing processes. I want to highlight three forms of collaboration:

1. Sometimes, the best help is informal—turning to friends, co-workers, family, or acquaintances who simply listen and discuss a particular writing task.
2. Many writing tasks have explicitly articulated goals—assignments for school, or grant proposals with specific criteria. Genres also guide writers by establishing norms for form and content—we've seen this in Deans and our other sources on genre. This allows writers to create checklists which can guide their work.
3. In my field, technical communication, testing provides writers another way to get help. Whether formal or informal, the method is basically the same: a helper shares a document with a reader, who tries to use it and voices her reactions to it. The writer observes—*silently*—and notes when and how the use or reception of the document is different from that intended. This process is repeated for multiple readers.

I want you to imagine your engagement with each others' writing as a combination of these three roles: informal discussion, check-listing, and testing.

Process

1. Introduce yourself in class today. Exchange contact information.
2. Share your starter; make arrangements to get an email attachment, copy it, or scan it if you want. (I have many of them scanned; feel free to ask.)
3. Review quickly and share first reactions.
4. Make arrangements to read before Thursday—meet outside class if you need to.
5. On Thursday, test in class with others. (I'll offer a brief example at the start of class.) Discuss your work with peer partners. Share detailed feedback about the work.
6. On Friday, finalize your suggestions, reaction, and engagement in writing. Email a copy to your partner with cc: to me. Include necessary attachments.

Goals

Above all, your goal is to provide ***honest and productive reactions, in writing***, which will help others select the material they'll focus on in their literacy narratives, and write about that material in a manner which satisfies the demands of the writing task.

With this in mind, ***your work should approach not only the starters that your partner has created, but the writing task as a whole***—as expressed on our assignment sheet, in our class discussions, in the examples we've read, etc.

Invest time in conversation. How do you understand the events your partner is describing? What about the significance of the events makes sense? How do you understand the assignment

sheet? Try to see differences in interpretation as productive moments you can use to identify questions you can ask me.

Invest time in writing. Imagine doing this at a distance: it would be easier if you have written reactions to work with. You can create instruments you can use for your own work. Conversation is also more productive when you have writing to point to. Refer to texts as often as you can — and create them (and share them!) as necessary.

Focus on ideas. Correctness matters—but not now.

Be inquisitive, critical, and helpful. Ask questions. Challenge each other. Help each other get better. Don't be too nice; if you don't understand something, or you think it needs to be written better, say so. If you see things which you think are wrong, say so. Just try to talk and listen courteously and charitably. Better to identify things to improve now than later.

Partners

Here are the teams for today. If anyone is absent, I will make adjustments.

- Caroline Crockett, Michael Lock, Tom Golden
- Benjamin Goldschneider, Sam Mitchell
- Ryu Iwakami, Christine Konopa
- Spencer Beebe, Conner Farr
- Ralph McCoy, Danica Obradovic
- Sam Phares, Christina Martini
- Sam Shurina, Ariana Hernandez
- Kyle Van Hoeck, Heather Zawilla
- Ryan Weddle, Kristen Nicholls