# Through Students' Eyes: Writing, Ownership, and the Manuscript Process

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While peer-review has been universally adopted in process pedagogy since 1970s, its efficacy in writing workshops remains a murky concept existing between a noble intention on the teacher's part and a simplistic question-and-answer algorithm on the student's. Key to the challenge found in student workshops are two essential issues—ownership and audience, or the lack of such. Despite the noblest of intentions, many student writers seem to misconceive peer editing or reviewing as opportunities for grammatical correction and their teacher as the only reliable source of helpful comments.

Acquiring timely "teacher" comments, some students admit, means getting "real" assistance in doing "relevant" revision leading to good grades. According to our experience and the field's research, however, these students have not fully developed concepts of audience, of drafts as works-in-progress, and most importantly of ownership as academic and professional writers do. In other words, what is real, relevant, and teacherly has to be made clear to student-writers and in turn embraced by them. When brief lectures, one-on-one conferences, and examples of past papers don't seem to work, I would suggest a show-and-tell process by bringing the concept of manuscript work to the center of the class and to encourage teachers and students treat their own works as manuscripts for potential, real-world publication. After all, effective revision means clarifying authorial intentions and addressing audience needs—both are indeed important curriculum concepts shared by all writing classes. This article, therefore, attempts to explain a crucial link among student papers, ownership, and the manuscript process in the context of a two-part lesson plan applicable in different writing courses.

*The Question of Audience: Good Intentions and Bad Reviews*[1]

If students fail to pursue genuine, constructive peer-editing, some of their teachers are not doing a good job either, according to Brannon and Knoblauch in their classic article "On Students' Right to Their Own Texts: A Model of Teacher Response." Many instructors, for instance, believe there is a platonic, ideal text to emerge in every student draft. This perspective, then, leads to an inevitable imposing of a fixed style, with no regard to a particular text under a particular writer's intention (159).

Pursuing the problem mainly as a teacher's responsibility, Brannon and Knoblauch suggest a model response for approaching drafts in the classroom context. By requiring student writers first to describe their intentions in the margins of a draft, the teacher then approaches the text with attention drawn to communicative effectiveness in a rhetorical situation. Such an approach, accordingly, tackles teacher's preconceptions about form or content as stipulated by an ideal text (159-65). While this practice is also encouraged in peer-review among students themselves (165-66), I remain skeptical if the experience is as constructive as the teacher faithfully expects. Critical to the problem of unsuccessful peer-editing, I believe, is students' inability to treat peer-editing as a negotiating, rather than a dictating, process. What students need to recognize first is exactly why their peer-editing is not helpful, or, in fact, whether they have done any real peer-editing at all. To help students truly benefit from workshopping, we might pursue a manuscript approach in order to demonstrate editing problems, leading eventually to the two-part lesson modeling a real-world writing process.

Among the many pedagogical uses, manuscripts by famous authors functionally serve as a demystification of how published works evolve through the drafting process. The demonstration of the marked, or even crossed-out, manuscript pages to students, essentially reconstructs a struggling picture—the hesitation, the thinking, and often the confusion or frustration writers have to go through in order to fully articulate their intentions. Among the many manuscripts with editing comments frequently in conflict with the author's intentions is Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, and the helpful material available is James West's *A* Sister Carrie *Portfolio* available in most academic libraries.



According to West, Dreiser's narrative had been censored and cut in 1990 before publication in order to suppress its blunt treatment of sex and soften its deterministic philosophy. Throughout the composition of the novel, Dreiser had worked closely with his wife Jug and his friend Arthur Henry. These two made or suggested most changes in the manuscript and typescript. Jug and Henry meant well in response to the genteel readership of that time, but the cumulative effect of their efforts was to change *Sister Carrie*, says West, to "damage" it as a literary work (v).

***. . . Jug's editing reflects more of a school teacher's view than a recognition of the author's original description . . .***

Containing facsimiles and photographs, the *Portfolio* explores the making of Dreiser's work. Reproduced are interesting leaves from the original manuscript and typescript, together with the facsimiles of other documents—correspondence, contracts, title pages, and miscellaneous item (v-vii).

In order to give us as composition instructors an idea of how some manuscript pages could be used to help students visualize the complex aspects in editing, the following offers some examples applicable to class workshops:

1. Unsuccessful peer-editing as rewording for minor grammatical concerns (*Portfolio* 30):

*Original*: . . . it looked as if she was certain to be a wretched failure . . . Drouet looked away from the stage at the people.

*Jug's correction*: . . . it looked as if she were certain to be a wretched failure . . . Drouet looked away from the stage at the audience . . .

*Original*: "Fine," he said, and then seized by a sudden impulse, jumped up and went about to the stage door . . .
"You said Charlie was hurt," said Carrie savagely. "You lied to me. You've been lying all the time and now you want to force me to run away with you."

*Jug's correction*: "Fine," he said, and then seized by a sudden impulse, arose and went about to the stage door . . .
"You deceived me. You have been deceiving me all the time and now you want to force me to run away with you."

Noted by West, Jug's editing reflects more of a school teacher's view than a recognition of the author's original description of the intensity of Carrie's rage.

Further, on page 31 of the *Portfolio*:

*Original*: "Would you mind loaning me the twenty-five dollars you spoke of?"

*Jug's correction*: "Would you mind lending me the twenty-five dollars you spoke of?"

*Original*: "Not me," he answered, just as he had years before. "I got my hands full now."

*Jug's correction*: "got" is changed to "have."

2. Rewording for editor's own ethical standard: (*Portfolio* 18)

*Original*: She used her feet less heavily, a thing that was brought about by her attempting to imitate the sway of the hips of the treasurer's daughter . . .

*Jug's*: . . . to imitate the treasurer's daughter's graceful carriage...

*Original*: On her feet were yellow shoes and in her hands her gloves. Hurstwood looked up at her with delight.

*Jug's*: Her brown shoes peeped occasionally from beneath her skirt. She carried her gloves in her hand.

The stylistic revision only aims at toning down some of the profanity considered inappropriate at the time. The crossings for censorship are even more obvious in another section: The line "she kept her body sweet" is deleted.

3. Unsuccessful peer-editing as removing details while ignoring author's context: (*Portfolio* 71):

*Original*: . . . He was charmed by the pale face, made so by a touch of blue under the eyes, the lissome figure, draped in pearl gray, with a coiled string of imitation pearls at the throat. Carrie had the air of one who was weary and in need of protection, and, under the fascinating make-believe of the moment, he rose in feeling until he was ready in spirit to go to her and ease her of her misery by adding to his own delight.

In the edited version, Arthur Henry crossed out details emphasizing the artificiality of Carrie's appearance. Such artificiality, nevertheless, is a fact meant to be stressed by Dreiser so that Hurstwood reacts to "a false image of Carrie," says West, "heightened by makeup, costume jewelry, and the 'make believe of the moment'" (West 71). "The touch of blue under the eyes" is in essence a contextual demand.

The above examples show a destruction because they not only ignore the author's intention but also tend to be dictative, rather than



negotiative. As class demonstration, the manuscript facsimiles give students an exciting task of examination, engaging them, as well, in the comparison between professionals' editing work and their own. Through these examinations and guided discussions, students are given the reviewing experience necessary to stimulate more effective responding skills. Parallel to their growing competence in manuscript review, as writing instructors or facilitators we should write with them regularly as NCTE recommends in the larger context of teacher-modeling.

***"I may be a writer, but I am not a Writer."***

*The Question of Ownership: Teachers as Writers and Students as Writers*

Since the 1970s, composition researchers and practitioners have generally agreed that, as effective "facilitators" in the process classroom, writing teachers need to engage themselves in writing activities for two reasons. First, as teachers of writing, they should practice what they preach, among others, the rhetorical, cognitive, and mechanical skills required in different writing situations. Second, if they seek opportunities of writing with their students, they will, logically, develop better insights into the "processes"—including challenges and values—individual students find within the context of a particular writing assignment in a composition class. The teacher-writer idea, however, remains a call with few responses.

Mark Steiner, an English teacher in Idaho, complains about the phrase "We should be writers" because 'should' is a heavy word and 'writer' is always defined as 'Writer'" (1998, p. 9). His conundrum seems to deal with what constitutes the teacher-writer: "I may be a writer, but I am not a Writer. There is a substantial difference, and when I hear or read one of the [Teachers as Writers advocates], I hear or see that W slide into the upper case.... One thing that our professional lives lack is anything outside of ourselves that might encourage us to continue writing... (p. 10). At the college level, many hesitate to adopt the teacher-writer's position because, like Steiner, they seem to have a narrow definition of what a teacher-writer can write or write about. One has to wonder how this perspective might affect how we view writing workshops altogether. First, teachers of all levels write frequently; we have to create

assignments, compose memos, communicate through e-mail, and some indeed write professionally. Second, composition students certainly do not write creatively all the time; non-fiction prose in fact is the focal genre of the typical college composition class. If we couldn't imagine ourselves as teacher-writers, might we have problems with the term "student-writers?" Further, if students were not "writers," might we have troubles conceiving how rigorous or real a "student" writing workshop could be? Might the idea of publication be equally foreign to the student as it is restrictive to the teacher?

Instead of emphasizing whether writing creatively (i.e. poetry, fiction, etc.) or non-creatively (i.e. memos, newsletter or professional articles, etc.), I would suggest we underscore the opportunity or occasion in which we can write. The same, we have heard, are already emphasized to our students. As teacher-writer-facilitators during these occasions, we will become more sensitized by the process of doing what students do at the same time. The teacher-writer, therefore, can be a very appropriate and general identity for us to acquire, since anyone who cares to write and to do so regularly with one's students should be a teacher-writer. Their writings may of course include the already scheduled activities commonly found in a writing class, including creating assignments, brainstorming, discovering and arranging ideas, and reviewing and revising. Publication, especially conceived in the context of real-world writing markets, would finally offer the class opportunities for discussions on specific forums and conventions.

As teacher-models, compositionists could write alongside their students as follows:

1. Getting the class started during brainstorming and/or free-writing periods.
2. Responding to class texts, including conversation, writing, and reading, by writing in hard-copy journals or through e-mail and/or Internet forums.
3. Writing and sharing class assignments.
4. Writing and sharing personal stories.
5. Sharing professional drafts and editorial correspondence leading to publication.
6. Writing as a humanist teacher.
7. Identifying possible forums/publications for student writers.

These and many similar strategies seem to work well in my classes across the board, from first-year composition to upper-division



expository writing classes, and even to graduate-level classes in several occasions. Regarding publication for student-writers, learning to view drafts as works-in-progress, or manuscripts in particular, has made many turning points for my students who become further engaged by investing more in their own writings and by situating them beyond the immediate classroom. Likewise, as their instructor I have learned more about students' processes, markets, and styles and voices.

***. . . teacher-writers should seek to discover (or even to create as founding editors) possible local and national markets for their students and for themselves.***

Publication and its process, being the ultimate goal of most academic and professional writings, is also a most challenging concept new to many students. It would be important to suggest potential markets for specific class levels, class discussion, and possible student contributions. The challenge in a conventional class setting, it seems, lies in the discovery of relevant forums. The *Writer's Market* would be a great source of finding specific information for submission to many consumer-type markets useful for lower-division composition students—a few of my former students have actually published their class papers following the published guidelines. (In addition, NCTE's *Chronicle* routinely issues calls for papers on behalf of various state newsletters and language arts journals; these would be very appropriate for practicing or in-serve teachers, upper-division, and graduate writers. Among others, Chris Anson and Bruce Maylath's annotated list of journals would be a good place to start for first-time academic contributors; Richard Haswell's CompPile available at http://comppile.taumcc.edu would be great for more experienced academic writers.) While I may have lists of particular journals to consider for different classes, based on my experience, teacher-writers should seek to discover (or even to create as founding editors) possible local and national markets for their students and for themselves.

*Lesson Plan: Part I*
(Applicable for both undergraduate and graduate courses)

*The Instructor Portfolio: Use of Professional Manuscripts*

Recently in my composition and research courses, I have, in

addition to writing with my students on assignments of variable lengths, shown them a portfolio of manuscript drafts tailored for a professional journal.

I began by retrieving all phases of my writing leading to a recent manuscript submission by reproducing copies of pieces from freewrites to later drafts, to be finally sorted out as a portfolio of manuscript facsimiles. As an author's work in progress, these facsimiles were copies of original drafts with revisional or editorial markings of every kind. In a sense, it was a systematic collection of otherwise messy papers documenting tentative decisions typical of a writer's.

Gradually, and more importantly, as the draft became a potential manuscript responding to a certain call for papers, the folder reflected collectively a navigation of thoughts throughout the transactive, negotiative process of addressing a professional audience not traditionally found in a classroom. Quite strategically and interestingly, the instructor's portfolio presents a discursive picture rarely made available for student writers.

In order to maximize the opportunity of a show-and-tell, the portfolio I bring to classes now contains various materials regarding the drafting, revising, and professional editing processes. As a pedagogy, the drafts, correspondence, and final versions of my writing together explain and explore the stages of completing a professional research project by scheduling—on the course calendar—writing, showing, and telling sessions throughout the term.

The demonstration, ideally, should be done during the weeks when students pursue their own research topics. For instance, I made public my topic of choice and freewrote on it. I would then show them what I had produced impromptu (if possible) and discuss with them my thoughts and intentions as a preliminary attempt for a research paper. Small group discussion on portfolio contents could logically springboard further writing or revision as each student developed his or her own research project based on specific forums or publications.

By focusing on the variations they identified as manuscript changes, students had the opportunity to visualize my revising as a negotiative, decision-making process; among others, they discussed about the drafting process as rhetorical inquiry, discourse convention as forum analysis, and evaluation as professional reviews. In addition to peer reviews commonly done in class workshops, my students seem to be able to develop a more critical and crucial sense of research by examining the changes I make between drafts, the process of getting accepted (or rejected sometimes) in a writing forum, and the nature of academic and professional discourse. And, finally, almost all of them have admitted finding the research writing class an exciting, eye-opening experience especially when the instructor writes with them and discusses publication regularly.



***Be a professional writer! For this paper you will write an article . . .***

In this scenario, the instructor seeks to adopt multiple roles of an active teacher-writer who treats all works, student's or teacher's, systematically and seriously as professional manuscripts and who writes and shares his or her writing as a major class agenda.

*Lesson Plan: Part II*
(Applicable to all composition courses)

*The Writing-to-Publish Assignment:*

At this point, it would be important to introduce the idea of publication as real-world writing. Simply, students need to begin thinking how an article gets read or accepted beyond the classroom, within the context of a writing-to-publish assignment. They will then learn to tailor their drafts as works-in-progress, targeting a particular market. As a mission with a purpose, class workshops then provide a great opportunity for focused feedback based on students' announced markets and intentions. The assignment includes the task itself and an audience analysis. Following provides an example of each:

The Assignment Sheet and An Audience Analysis Worksheet

English 101:
Exposition and Argumentation

Major Assignment III:
Feature Article

Be a professional writer! For this paper you will write an article explaining a particular issue, topic, consumer product, or process to a specific audience. As we have discussed in class, one way to consider audience is to think of it as a target readership of a certain publication. As a feature article your essay may inform as well as entertain; but, your primary goal is explanatory, which is to be pursued

in clear, effective language, supported with good examples appealing to your target readers. You might consider your drafts as manuscripts for potential publication; information about real-world publications can be found in the annual edition of Writer's Market (from which I have prepared a couple of handouts today). We will discuss more on the publication process as you finish your first draft. Following are some topics and their target readerships students attempted last quarter:

1. "The Fine Blue Line" targeting *Show-Up*, an Official Publication of The Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis. Published copies available for your review.

2. "A Song of Happiness" targeting *Around The River Region*, a newsletter about the members of River Region Health Services. Published copies available.

3. "Building A Home Theater System under $300" for *Popular Mechanics*, a consumer magazine. Manuscript copies available.

4. "Coping with School, Jobs, and Children: Confessions of An Overworked Parent" targeting *Family Life*, a consumer magazine. Manuscript copies available. Attached also find the latest call for papers— "Share your best advice."

Your own ideas are just as good as the above, especially when you start thinking what you are saying might be particularly meaningful or helpful for a specific audience.

When you consider who should read your essay, you might want to remember things such as their prior knowledge or attitude towards the subject matter, the technicality of your language, your style of writing in general, etc. We should also look up a couple of published articles in your target magazine or professional journal. An Audience Analysis sheet is also attached.

Specific Instructions and Process:

1. Freewrite today on topical possibilities—results of freewrite will be shared with group members.

2. Develop a rough draft on a topic of your choice, with a tentative target readership in mind.

3. Workshop on Monday, be prepared with a copy of a sample article from your target publication.

4. Based on your Audience Analysis, share some thoughts about your draft and any revision needed.

5. A second draft is due for peer review, with Audience Analysis and Sample attached.

6. A third draft is due for instructor feedback, with all required materials attached.

7. A final draft is due for Portfolio evaluation by .....

We will begin the process today. Please let me know if you have any question. E-mail me at —. Good luck and have fun.

Audience Analysis of Sample Article: A Worksheet to be attached to your draft

The Concept of Audience as a Forum:

1. Target readership
2. Discourse Convention
3. Editorial/ Manuscript Policies, where applicable

Your name:

Title of your sample article (for language style, formatting, etc., this could also be one of your secondary sources):

Instructions: Fill out this form (both sides) as completely as you can by answering the following questions. Cite examples from your Sample to support your observations.

1. Target readership of your Sample: Which pop-cultural/ academic/professional field? Who exactly are they? (E.g. academic discipline, profession, expertise level, etc.)

2. What should be their specific knowledge background—in order to understand what your Sample is saying? What might be the attitude or assumption this readership has regarding the topic?

3. What is the Author's relation (based on your Sample) to the reader? Check one:

i. expert to expert
ii. peer to equals
iii. expert to novice
iv. novice to expert

4. What are the target reader's needs? Circle all applicable.

i. information
ii. understanding
iii. evaluation
iv. guidance
v. entertainment
vi. other (specify)

5. Does the Sample have a secondary readership? Is so, describe it.

6. Discourse/ Language Convention—Describe all, based on your Sample article, features of language convention such as level of vocabulary, language style, formatting issues:

As explained on the assignment sheet, students complete this paper by first developing a draft, and then tailoring it based on a study of its target readership. Workshops will then focus on efforts made by

student-reviewers who are in turn informed by the market information provided by student-writers.

The instructor, in this practice, adjusts his or her grading criteria while attending to the forums or discourse communities chosen by individual students. While this assignment might complicate assessment practices, it is indeed a paper worth assigning for the apparent challenges which foster the role of audience, the concept of student ownership, and the ideal of teacher expectation.

*Conclusion*

Incorporating manuscript analysis, writing and sharing writing with students, and the writing-for-publication paper, I believe, will augment Brannon and Knoblauch's scheme which only emphasizes the teacher response. Engaging students in all three components foregrounds the student author's right and intention, thus enhancing the dynamics among the discourse, the peer-editor, and the writer within the classroom and beyond.

## Notes

[1]This subsection is adapted from "The Sister Carrie Manuscript and Authorial Intentions," published in *Exercise Exchange*, fall 1992, by Joseph Eng.

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