

## Transfer and Engagement: From Theory to Enhanced Practice

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Before teaching the Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC), asking yourself two questions may be helpful: “What do I want to achieve *for myself* or *for my curriculum* in teaching these materials?” and “What do I want *for my students* in teaching these materials?” Although the ERWC was designed with a particular purpose—to help students develop the strategies and habits of mind to support success in college reading and writing and lifelong learning—it incorporates a great deal of flexibility, rather than asking instructors to teach directly from the printed materials and follow a prescriptive program. Each of the modules includes a series of activities and suggestions for additional support; however, the authors deliberately left to instructors’ professional judgment the choice of which readings and activities to include, how to present those activities, how to prepare students for them, and how to follow up on them. Because of this freedom, *how* instructors approach the modules matters as much as the design and content of the modules. We have learned, through the years of experience teachers have had teaching these modules, that how instructors frame activities can have profound consequences in terms of students’ engagement and their ability to transfer their learning to new reading and writing situations. We have also learned that instructors must modify these modules for their particular students—adding scaffolding for those students who need more support to complete the activities and removing scaffolds that are present in the modules for more advanced students.

This essay addresses these issues first by discussing the principles of teaching for transfer, then by discussing principles of scaffolding and formative assessment that help us decide appropriate levels of scaffolding for our individual students, and finally by discussing applications of these principles to each of the cells in the Assignment Template. Having read Theoretical Foundations in the front of the semester one binder, you know the principles that underlie the *design* of these modules. This essay attempts to lay out the practices and principles behind the most effective *planning* and *teaching* of these modules.

### Teaching for Transfer

As noted in Theoretical Foundations, “The ERWC aims to facilitate access to higher education through a substantive inquiry-oriented curriculum that helps high school students develop the high-level literacies they need to succeed in college and beyond ” (i). In short, that means teaching students reading and writing strategies that they can *transfer* to future occasions for reading and writing. While such transfer can happen naturally with sufficient experience and practice in a variety of contexts, teachers using the ERWC materials have found that they can facilitate transfer by addressing it specifically in their planning and teaching of the materials. According to Smith and Wilhelm, summarizing Haskell, four aspects of teaching make it more likely that students will transfer their learning:

1. Students have a command of the knowledge that is to be transferred.
2. Students have a theoretical understanding of the principles to be transferred.
3. The classroom culture cultivates a spirit of transfer.
4. Students get plenty of practice. (26)

Halpern and Hakel, in “Applying the Science of Learning to the University and Beyond,” emphasize that for best results students must practice over time and in a variety of situations. For this reason, ERWC modules return to applying the same strategies across modules.

### ***Two Kinds of Transfer—Low Road and High Road***

Educators use the term *transfer* to refer to the application of knowledge and skills learned in one context to tasks attempted in another context. When teaching students vocabulary, we hope that they will do more than score well on a vocabulary test. We want them to recognize new vocabulary words when they encounter them in the future and perhaps even use them in their speech and writing. When teaching them strategies for annotating texts, we hope that students will use those techniques when they encounter challenging texts in the future, including those in non-school related contexts.

How readily knowledge and skills learned in one context are applied to problems in a new context, however, depends upon a variety of factors, including our motivation and the similarity between the tasks. Because, as discussed above, explicit attention to transfer can improve motivation, this approach promotes transfer indirectly as well as directly. Our recognition of similarities matters because the knowledge and strategies we have learned apply in the new situation. To use a simple example, students may or may not realize that in some cases they punctuate quotations the same way whether they are composing dialogue or quoting from a text.

Knowledge and skills transfer most readily when we practice in a situation that resembles closely the task and situation in which we will ultimately be using our skills. Perkins and Salomon describe transfer between very similar situations as “low-road transfer.” Taking the example of quotation marks, if we practice writing dialogue as a class and then ask students to compose dialogue on their own for homework, we are setting them up for low-road transfer. When we directly teach students to answer the kinds of questions they will see on high-stakes tests and regularly practice those skills, we again prepare students for low-road transfer. Students can likely apply what they have learned in test-like conditions to the actual test. For instance, a few of the modules (Into the Wild and Juvenile Justice) end with students writing an on-demand assignment modeled on the English Placement Test (EPT) prompts. Practicing writing such essays in a timed situation makes it more likely students will write effectively when they take the EPT.

Ideally, we also hope that students apply what they learn in situations that differ significantly from the conditions in which they have learned them. Perkins and Salomon describe this as “high-road transfer.” We most effectively learn skills well enough to transfer them to new situations by practicing those skills in a variety of ways and contexts, internalizing both the skills themselves and a sense of how to use the skills in different contexts. You see this principle in the design of the ERWC in that techniques that match the practices of skilled readers and writers repeat across modules. As we note in the Theoretical Foundations, “Like all complex sets of skills, learning to read and write in these multifaceted ways—in English, Science, History, and Math—takes time and repeated opportunities with guidance, and indeed,

for many students, particularly English learners, these skills must be explicitly taught” (ii). By practicing rhetorical reading and answering critical thinking questions repeatedly with a variety of texts across a long period of time, we make it more likely that students will be able to approach new texts critically.

Education theorists identify three kinds of knowledge required for high-road transfer—*declarative*, *procedural*, and *conditional* (Olson and Land). When referring to *declarative* knowledge (knowledge of *what*), we mean, essentially, content—the listing of facts, the naming of names. *Procedural* knowledge (knowledge of *how*) includes knowing how to find those facts and what to do with them. *Conditional* knowledge (knowledge of *why, when, under what circumstances*) refers to the knowledge of which procedures to apply in which circumstances. Grammar provides a simple example—declarative knowledge of grammar may include the ability to list parts of speech or recite a list of prepositions. Having procedural knowledge of grammar means knowing where to find those parts of speech and how to arrange them into a variety of sentence structures. Finally, conditional knowledge of grammar means knowing in which situations one should use which kinds of sentences.

Grammar provides an excellent example as well for considering another aspect of knowledge—that it may be either tacit or explicit. Many students enter high school with a great deal of tacit knowledge of grammar—they can form comprehensible sentences in speech and writing in whatever native language or dialect they use most. They also come with some tacit conditional knowledge—they know how to shift their language choices when they are addressing different audiences in different contexts (for instance, text messaging versus school essays). Helping students make their knowledge of grammar explicit, however, enables them to make more conscious and strategic choices about language use. According to Hillocks, describing writing instruction, instructional “treatments with the largest gains . . . all focus on teaching procedural knowledge, knowledge of how to do things” (320). For high-road transfer, students need to learn the explicit procedural and conditional knowledge that will help them decide which skills to apply to problems in new situations. The activities in the ERWC foster procedural knowledge through students’ repeated engagement in strategic activities; in order to help them develop the necessary conditional knowledge to support transfer, we need to explicitly frame activities, describing the elements of the situation that call for particular approaches to text and inviting students to reflect upon their use of strategies.

### ***The Importance of High-Road Transfer***

Some students come to us with a variety of school-like reading and writing experiences. For those students, applying their tacit procedural and conditional knowledge to “struggle successfully” as Beers describes, with difficult school texts requires only low-road transfer because they have a great deal of practice in situations like those they see in school. Most of our students, however, although they may do a great deal of reading and writing, do so in circumstances very different from school—reading Web sites or popular magazines, interacting through text messages or in social networking communities. In order to prepare students to succeed in the many different academic situations they will encounter, we need to help them make explicit what they know about reading and writing and then explicitly teach them new strategies, including when and how to use them. This reflection on what students know and how they use what they know is called metacognition—thinking about thinking.

## ***Approaches to Teaching the ERWC Modules that Support High-Road Transfer***

Most of our students, whether they come to us with school-like literacy experiences or primarily out-of-school literacies, can improve their facility with reading and writing by making their knowledge about their own thinking explicit—developing *metacognition*—and sharing that explicit knowledge with each other. Specifically, they can share both *how* they read and write and *why* they do so, which we can do as well, as the most skilled readers and writers in the classroom. Through metacognitive conversations with our students about what goes on inside our minds as we are reading content-area texts, we can help novice readers of academic literacies begin to develop some of the skillful approaches to text that proficient readers regularly and systematically employ.” Even more importantly, we can help students see the ways that they can use their learning in college and out-of-school contexts. Smit argues that in order for writers to transfer skills between contexts, they must understand what similarities between the contexts call for those skills. The most skillful instructors using the ERWC modules make this metacognitive conversation a regular (and repeated) part of their instruction. Later in this essay are particular examples of ways such teachers do so at each stage of the reading/writing process.

### ***Strategies—Not Just Activities***

Essentially, instructors who find the ERWC modules most helpful remember that they are doing more than leading students through a series of activities around a particular set of texts. As described in the theoretical background essay, “The ERWC supports young people’s development of deep literacies and literate identities—the skills, dispositions, and habits of mind that will expand their opportunities to engage fully and meaningfully in the 21st century” (vii-viii). The most effective instructors using the ERWC framework are constantly asking themselves—and encouraging their students to ask themselves—How does this activity help me compose meaning? Why does it help? What have I learned about reading/writing that I can use for other reading and writing tasks? In what other contexts can I use a similar approach?

### **Teaching for Engagement**

Not coincidentally, this specific attention to transfer also improves student engagement and motivation and helps students sustain their attention in the face of what might otherwise seem to be redundancy of activities across modules. Repeated practice and reflection ensures that students “have command of the knowledge . . . and theoretical understanding” of the strategies and skills we want them to transfer to future encounters with reading and writing; in this way, we help them build and feel “a sense of control and competence,” a factor Smith and Wilhelm, drawing from research by Csikszentmihalyi, emphasize contributes to “flow experiences,” the sense of being completely involved in an activity. Research on intrinsic motivation by Deci also suggests the importance of a sense of competence to help students feel autonomous in their participation. When individuals feel competent or confident that they can build competence (think of adolescents’ engagement with video games that build skill through increasingly challenging levels), that feeling can support a sense of autonomy. While a sense of competence can help students feel autonomous, it is not itself enough to build that autonomy. Students feel a sense of control or autonomy when they decide for their own purposes to engage in an activity. That sense of autonomy is promoted when students have a theoretical understanding of the principles to be transferred. If students understand *why* they are doing what they are doing, they are more likely to choose to engage in the activities for their own purposes, improving their motivation and learning.

The example of adolescents' engagement with video games helps us see other ways that teaching the ERWC modules can promote student engagement and “flow” experiences. Repeated practice of strategies with different reading and writing tasks keeps the level of challenge appropriate for students. As students practice familiar strategies with new and more challenging texts or in pursuit of more sophisticated tasks (for instance, synthesizing ideas from a variety of readings), the additional challenge keeps them engaged. The sequence of activities before, during, and after reading and writing also provides frequent opportunities for feedback, both from the teacher and from other students. Both frequent feedback and the social interaction involved in feedback keep students engaged in the immediate experience of learning. Helping students remain mindful of the skilled reading/writing practices that they are developing also strengthens students' sense of themselves as readers and writers and helps them see themselves as making purposeful choices to engage in those activities.

### **Scaffolding, Gradual Release of Responsibility, and Formative Assessment**

Instructors who have the most success with the ERWC modules not only focus attention specifically on transfer of learning but also take a long-term view of student competence, planning across the year for students to become independent users of the skills and strategies they learn in the modules. Thus, these instructors are scaffolding the activities to support transfer of learning. This often requires explicitly teaching students how to engage productively in the variety of activities in the ERWC modules (especially for use with younger students) and gradually removing support, so that students take greater and greater control of their reading and writing practices. In this section, a particular pattern of scaffolding called the gradual release of responsibility model and the formative assessment that guides it are discussed.

#### ***Scaffolding***

Helping students develop new skills always involves meeting them at their current level of skill and supporting them until they can practice the new skills on their own. The authors designed the ERWC to carefully scaffold students' reading and writing; however, only you, the instructor, can know whether the modules provide appropriate support and challenge for your students. Providing scaffolding helps to ensure that students feel the sense of competence that promotes intrinsic motivation and flow experiences; assuring that the scaffolding is *appropriate* helps to keep the level of challenge sufficient to engage students without frustrating them. Take annotation, for instance. Our directions for annotating ask students to “write comments in the left margin about the main ideas, questions or objections, and connections between the ideas.” For students who have already learned how to identify main ideas, this provides enough information. For those who have not, you may need to add modeling, think alouds, or other kinds of support to teach students how to identify the main idea, so they can successfully annotate.

#### ***Gradual Release of Responsibility***

Fisher and Frey describe a gradual-release-of responsibility model of teaching that moves from teacher modeling to student-supported activity to independent practice—I do, we do, you do together, you do alone. This model works both within individual lessons and across the year. As noted in the introduction to the Assignment Template, “This template presents a process for helping your students read, comprehend, and respond to nonfiction texts. We recommend that, at the beginning of the semester, you guide your students through each step of the process. As they become familiar with the reading and

writing strategies and internalize some of the basic processes, they will be able to complete some of the steps on their own.” If our goal is to improve students’ independent competence, we must ask them to apply the skills/strategies they learn with our guidance to reading and composing new texts on their own. You will notice as you read the modules in order that later modules reduce the number of supports offered for students (and instructors). As students internalize the mindset of rhetorical reading and writing and develop greater competence with reading and writing strategies, the most successful teachers of these modules give students greater freedom to decide which of the strategies to use while they read and write. In that way, students take increasing control of their learning and exercise their conditional knowledge in a supportive environment.

### ***Formative Assessment***

At the heart of our decision making as instructors is assessment. In order to teach our students effectively—to choose how much scaffolding they need, to determine how much responsibility we can release—we must determine what our students know and can do. Just as the modules follow a predictable pattern—meaning-making strategies for before, during, and after reading and writing—the modules afford opportunities for instructors to assess student knowledge and competence before, during, and after instruction. Formative assessment is as much an approach to examining student work as it is a particular set of strategies—if we look at student talk and writing as providing us opportunities to collect information about what they know and can do in order to shape our instruction appropriately, we are practicing formative assessment. Practicing formative assessment also encourages us to give students the immediate feedback they need to remain “in the moment” of learning (Smith and Wilhelm). While not all of the feedback students receive must come from us (hence the value of group activities in which students provide immediate feedback to each other), feedback from instructors can help shape students’ developing understanding and sense of control and competence. Such feedback also helps students strengthen their ability to assess their own deepening understanding. As with other types of performance, our goal with formative assessment is to help students develop metacognitive skills that allow them to take increasing responsibility for their own formative assessment, gradually releasing the responsibility for tracking their learning to the students themselves.

### **Applying the Principles to the Assignment Template**

By building a culture of transfer and helping students develop knowledge of the strategies to be transferred (declarative, procedural, and especially conditional), some teachers have developed techniques they use across activities on the template. For instance, one teacher guides her students in becoming metacognitive about their reading strategies during and after her teaching of the ERWC modules. She posts butcher paper on the walls with three columns—Before Reading, During Reading, After Reading—and asks students to add strategies to the chart as they practice them while they go through the modules. This chart then becomes a reference point for students; when they read new texts, the teacher asks students which reading strategies would be appropriate to use (or which ones they have recently used).

What follows proceeds through the cells of the template, providing some guidance in applying these teaching principles at particular stages of the processes described in the template. We encourage you to include techniques like these in your teaching of all of the modules in the ERWC.

## READING RHETORICALLY

### *Prereading*

#### Getting Ready to Read

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Activities such as quickwrites, ranking and rating scales, and role-playing provide important opportunities for formative assessment. When you ask students to write and talk, before reading, about the topic of the module, you can find out what relevant background knowledge they have about the subject. What you learn can help you shape your teaching—for instance, if you find that your students have knowledge of particular fast food restaurants, you can make reference to those restaurants in your discussions; if you find that your students have little explicit knowledge about nutrition (or a great deal, if you have athletes in your class), you may want to add readings or discussions about that topic to the Good Food/Bad Food module.
- ***Teaching for transfer.*** Activities such as initial quickwrites, discussions, or brainstorms about the issue of the module in students' lives also contribute to fostering a spirit of transfer and student motivation because they cultivate what Brell (cited in Haskell) calls “an inquiring disposition” (117). By focusing the modules on topics of interest to adolescents, the authors have created the structure and activities to enable instructors to approach the reading and writing activities as central to investigating the issue of the module. These prereading activities provide important opportunities to open that inquiry.

#### Exploring Key Concepts

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Assessing your students' relevant prior knowledge of key concepts for the reading and writing they will be doing in the module allows you to tailor your instruction to your own students. If you know, for instance, that students know little about gender norms in the United States, it may be worth using the optional videotapes suggested in the module to build students' background knowledge before you proceed with the readings in Language, Gender, and Culture. If, on the other hand, you have been focusing on gender norms for several units, you may wish to omit those videos and draw on the previous work students have done at this stage in the prereading process.
- ***Teaching for transfer.*** Making connections to knowledge students acquire outside of the school setting helps to cultivate a spirit of transfer, enabling students to see connections between their work in school and their lives outside of school. Exploring key concepts in this way also helps students build identities as participants in academic conversations around issues, an essential component of participation in college and civic literacy activities. As importantly, ensuring that students have the background knowledge to access the content of the module helps them feel competent, an essential element of motivation.

#### Surveying the Text

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Asking students to survey texts helps alert you to what their responses tell you about their knowledge about text structure; their ability to summarize sections of text; and their ability to draw inferences about purposes, audiences, and stance. Not all students know

what subheadings mean or how to assess the importance of such subheadings and the hierarchical relationships they represent. Other students will be unaccustomed to drawing inferences about purpose, audience, and stance from these visual cues. If you find students uncertain at this stage, it may be worth adding scaffolding—thinking aloud about your own process of making sense of these cues with one text, then having students work together to make sense of a second or third text before asking them to do this on their own. For students who draw ready inferences about purpose, audience, and stance from a quick glance at a text, asking them to articulate the strategies they use to do so will be helpful.

- **Teaching for transfer.** All experienced readers survey texts when they first encounter them, making it especially important for students to learn that this is not merely an activity but a strategy they can use in future encounters with texts of any length. What follows is an example of one teacher’s approach to helping students make this connection explicit.

*Teacher: What we’re doing next is something called “surveying a text.” This is something all of you do already without thinking much about it. We survey a text to decide whether or not to read it, how much effort we expect to expend reading it, how long it will take us, what we might need to know in order to make sense of it.*

- *(Holds up two books—a picture book and a long novel.)*
- *What can you tell me about these two books just from looking at them? (Guides students to talk about issues like how long it will take to read the texts, how easy/hard they will be, what kind of content/language to expect, who the intended audience is.)*
- *(Holds up a page of a newspaper article and an academic article.)*
- *What looks different about these two texts? What does that tell us about the texts? (Guides students to talk about paragraph length and style and relate those visual cues to inferences about purpose and audience and how much elaboration and development to expect.)*
- *When you go to college, you’ll use this kind of surveying of texts to help you decide when to read particular kinds of texts, how long to set aside to read them, even how much preparation you should do before you read them.*

## **Making Predictions and Asking Questions**

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Instructors very often ask students to make predictions or develop their own questions about texts without assessing whether students know how, on the basis of a short section of text, to make predictions about the remainder of the text.
  - Do students know how to identify the key text features overall and the cues present in the first few paragraphs that will help them successfully predict the stance and content of the remainder of the text?
    - When you ask students to “explain how they formed their predictions,” you are both making their knowledge explicit for everyone in the class and taking an opportunity to assess students’ reasoning—what processes *do* they use to make predictions? What text features do they ignore?
  - How can you help them broaden their strategies for making predictions?
    - When you ask students to generate questions about the text before reading the full text, you are both preparing them to read and gathering information about the kinds of questions they

ask. This provides you an opportunity to consider whether or not students need direct instruction or practice in generating different kinds or levels of questions.

- **Teaching for transfer.** To promote transfer of the practices of making predictions and asking questions, you might want to frame the activities with discussions about why and how skilled readers use them. You can either make explicit the purposes for these strategies yourself or ask students how making predictions and asking questions can help them engage with difficult texts.

## Understanding Key Vocabulary

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Just as quickwrites and other prereading strategies can help you assess students' prior knowledge, vocabulary activities can help you determine how much additional support your students will need to access the readings in the module. If students readily organize vocabulary into semantic maps and generate an abundance of language around the central concepts of the module, they will be likely to read the articles relatively easily. If they have little familiarity with those central terms, you may find it necessary to spend more time during reading on interpreting the terms in context.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Because they are not focusing explicitly on transfer, some instructors focus on memorization of dictionary definitions or treat vocabulary learning as an activity in isolation. If you want students to internalize the vocabulary you teach and use it in new situations (in other words, to transfer their learning), students need to encounter the vocabulary in a variety of modes—in conversation, in their own writing, in the texts they are reading. Activities like the semantic map also help build transfer because students build vocabulary conceptually by associating the new vocabulary with words they already know. The activities in this section also provide an opportunity to teach students transferable skills for learning new vocabulary. If you teach the semantic map, for example, not just as a vocabulary activity but more as a strategy for internalizing new words, you help students think about creating associations for new words as they learn them beyond this activity.

## Reading

### Reading for Understanding

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Based on what you learned during your assessment of students' reading during the prereading activities, you may decide to provide additional support to help students actively read the texts in the modules. The assignment template refers to an appendix that lists some metacognitive strategies such as GIST; Reciprocal Teaching; Say, Mean, Matter; and Annotation. Depending on what you notice about students' independent ability to summarize, identify main ideas, and draw inferences, you may want to scaffold such activities even further with think alouds and full-class demonstrations before you ask students to complete these tasks by themselves or in small groups. Note as well that all of these tasks afford you opportunities for valuable insights into students' meaning-making processes as they read. Students' own evaluations of their predictions as they read can also provide important information about what additional support they need to make thoughtful and grounded predictions.
- **Teaching for transfer.** As with prereading strategies, instructors have found that how they frame these activities can make a huge difference in terms of students' engagement and the likelihood that

they will transfer the activities to later reading. What follows is an example of how one teacher frames the activity of annotating a text.

*Teacher A is just beginning the ERWC modules, and he is preparing students to learn how to annotate a text.*

- *Teacher A: Today, we’re going to begin to learn how to annotate texts. What does “annotate” mean?*
- *Student: To make notes on it.*
- *Teacher A: Good. Why do we annotate texts?*
- *Silence*
- *Teacher A holds up a thick packet of readings.*
- *Teacher A: When you’re in college, you will probably have a set of readings like this for one class, plus a textbook. And you will probably have a comprehensive final in the class, which means you need to know everything in all of these readings for your final exam. Do you want to have to re-read all of these articles a few days before the final to review?*
- *Students: No.*
- *Teacher A: Right! Instead, if you annotate these effectively, you’ll just have to re-read your notes, and that will tell you what’s important to remember from your readings.*

### Considering the Structure of the Text

- **Practicing formative assessment.** The activities in this section provide crucial windows into students’ ability to understand complex texts and master essential academic reading strategies. To effectively map the structure of a text, students need to be able to identify main ideas, distinguish between claims and evidence, identify hierarchical structures in texts, and associate related ideas. When you ask students to work on these tasks alone or in groups, you can check in with them to see where they struggle and need additional support. When you provide them feedback on their work and sufficient scaffolding for them to succeed in these activities, you promote their sense of competence. Likewise, you can use the work they produce as assessment opportunities to guide future instruction.
  - Descriptive outlines, for example, let instructors see whether students can effectively summarize sections of text in single sentences and to what extent they can distinguish between content and rhetorical purpose for those sections.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Frame the skills students are developing in this section in ways that help them see the importance of such skills for future reading and writing. One way to do so is to build on the earlier example of annotating texts. By highlighting how students will *use* strategies like chunking texts, identifying main ideas, and outlining texts in academic work—to prepare for midterm and final exams, to make their way through challenging academic arguments—you help students see the purpose for learning and practicing these strategies. Like analyzing stylistic choices, examining how texts work structurally can help students improve their own writing.

## Noticing Language

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Because useful vocabulary knowledge involves much more than citing definitions or even associating related terms, asking students to *use* the academic language in the modules allows you to assess the depth of their understanding and provide support for students whose understanding of the vocabulary in the modules remains superficial. Likewise, the language activities across the modules allow you insight into students' process of engaging with unfamiliar vocabulary during reading. What do students know about using context as a clue for word meaning? Experienced readers often gloss unfamiliar vocabulary in context without needing precise definitions; how comfortably do students do this? What support do they need to deepen their comfort and skill with inferring meaning from context?
- **Teaching for transfer.** Requiring students to practice using the key vocabulary in the modules in a variety of ways—by defining the vocabulary in context, by using the words in small- and large-group conversation and in writing, by modifying the words to fit different slots in the sentence (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)—supports not only students' depth of understanding of the particular words but their flexibility in using (and recognizing) unfamiliar vocabulary. Likewise, making explicit the strategies used to approximate the meanings of words in context supports students in doing so as they engage with more difficult texts throughout their educations. Reminding students explicitly that they will likely be reading complex texts with a great deal of unfamiliar vocabulary as they continue their educations and that they will need to learn how to work with context clues and approximate meanings in context will help students see the value of these activities.

## Annotating and Questioning the Text

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Many students will be unfamiliar with rereading texts in school and may be inclined to see rereading as unnecessary and repetitive. For that reason, paying particularly close attention to the information you've gleaned from assessing students' skills during prereading and first reading is very worthwhile. How quickly and easily can students identify main ideas? How effectively can they distinguish arguments from evidence? Practicing formative assessment means attending to these questions as students work on the activities in this section and providing additional scaffolding for students who struggle.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Because students are unaccustomed to rereading and because the complex texts they will encounter in later schooling and life outside of school so often call for rereading, it is worth taking extra care to help students understand the principles of rereading you want them to take to these future experiences. Talking explicitly about when one should take the perspective of a believer or a skeptic when reading can help students attend to their reading stance. Asking students to consider their purposes for reading—whether they are reading for pleasure/experience, for information, to understand, to analyze—encourages them to develop the habit of establishing a purpose for reading. Teaching procedures for identifying main ideas and distinguishing evidence from claims will enable students to read critically. When students work collaboratively to make their annotations in this stage of the process, they learn procedural knowledge inductively; they also have the social engagement and immediate feedback that support flow experiences and intrinsic motivation. By discussing these strategies explicitly and making explicit connections between the

activities and the strategic purposes these activities serve, you improve the likelihood that students will take these strategies with them to future reading.

### Analyzing Stylistic Choices

- **Practicing formative assessment.** When you ask students to describe associations with an author’s word choices and distinguish connotation from denotation of words, you have an opportunity to assess the sophistication of their understanding of those words. When students look carefully at syntax, you can see if they understand the distinction between subordinate and main clauses if they can describe parallelism. You can also build from students’ intuitive understanding of sentence complexity to deepen their knowledge about these grammatical structures.
- **Teaching for transfer.** When you think about the skills you want students to transfer from the activities in this section of the template, think not only about how they can apply this analysis to future texts but also about how they can attend to stylistic choices in their own writing. You can encourage such transfer by having students play with rhetorical purpose even in their responses to the questions in this section—describing the authors’ language choices affirmatively or negatively, with a tone of approval or dismay, for audiences that agree or disagree with them, for different rhythmic effects.
  - Some instructors take advantage of adolescents’ sensitivity to feeling manipulated when they address this section. By asking students to think about what authors are trying to do to them and how they are accomplishing it, they both increase students’ motivation for engaging in these critical thinking activities and provide them a conceptual frame for using such analysis in the future.

### Postreading

#### Summarizing and Responding

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Your observations and assessments of students’ summarizing skills throughout the module—in prereading, annotating, and descriptive outlining—should help you decide how much support students need to compose overall summaries of the articles they have read. Even students who can summarize chunks of texts in a single sentence, however, may still need scaffolding to bring their notes together to form a coherent summary.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Summary is a key academic reading and writing strategy students will need in school, not just in the sense of composing these kinds of stand-alone summaries but in the sense of summarizing for different purposes—for library research papers, for reviews of academic literature as background for their own empirical research, and in references to authors’ methods of inquiries or main arguments. Practice, therefore, with composing summaries of different kinds of articles, of various lengths, for various purposes can strengthen this skill and prepare students to read and write in later academic study. Some instructors are explicit about this, explaining that stand-alone summaries can help students ensure they understand their reading and prepare for exams (or reduce the study time required for final exams) and also describing the different ways they will use summaries to support their own writing in the future.

## Thinking Critically

- **Practicing formative assessment.** As with summarizing, students have been practicing the skills required for thinking critically about texts, and you can judge how much more scaffolding they need based on what you have seen when they annotated and discussed critical thinking questions in groups.
  - Small group discussions of critical thinking questions allow you to listen in and assess individual students’ understanding of connotation and rhetorical appeals. Note that small group discussions also provide the social engagement that Smith and Wilhelm claim promotes flow experiences.
- **Teaching for transfer.** In school and in life, students will need to be able to evaluate sources for their credibility and usefulness when they do their own research. The questions in this section of the template provide a model for them to do so. They also provide the analytic framework to help students consider how to use sources in their own writing, a skill they will need frequently in future schooling. Framing students’ work at this point in terms of how they will use these skills in the future can help students take ownership of the questioning and transfer the practice to later reading and writing.

## Reflecting on Your Reading Process

- **Practicing formative assessment.** When you ask students to reflect on their reading and learning, you provide opportunities for you to assess their metacognition and for students to assess their own metacognition. The questions for reflection in the template guide students in considering their own reading abilities and reading processes and the content they have learned.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Pausing occasionally to reflect on their learning and abilities is essential for students to transfer their learning. Doing so routinely also helps build a culture of transfer. Metacognition is central to high-road transfer—the ability to apply learning in new contexts that are dissimilar to the contexts in which students have learned knowledge and skills. As students self-assess and reflect on their own developing abilities, they also build a sense of competence and control, not only by seeing their own growth but by deepening their understanding of the principles they are learning.

## CONNECTING READING TO WRITING

### *Discovering What You Think*

#### Considering the Writing Task

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Instructors use formal writing often as a form of assessment of student learning. In order to ensure that you are assessing what you intend to assess, you must make certain students understand what the assignments are asking them to do. Taking the time, particularly early in the year, to ensure that students know how to read assignments effectively can help you ensure the validity of our writing assignments. Note that asking students to identify the key terms in an assignment prompt also affords you insight into students’ processes of evaluating main ideas. The choices they make in reading the assignment help you assess how well they have learned the lessons of reading critically. Guiding students in reading assignments also helps promote their sense of

competence, so that writing in response to prompts can become more engaging and enjoyable for students.

- **Teaching for transfer.** You can promote transfer of strategies for reading assignments by framing these activities in strategic terms and in terms of future writing opportunities. Some instructors emphasize for students that they will be responding to written prompts in all kinds of situations—essay exams for and in college, grant proposals, job applications—and that the procedures they use for interpreting questions in these activities can help them do so. Making this connection to life outside the classroom promotes a spirit of transfer.

### Taking a Stance

- **Practicing formative assessment.** At this stage of the writing process, students are bringing together their brainstorming to begin to take a stance; this moment provides you an opportunity to investigate how they are approaching the writing task—as an assignment or as a response to a real rhetorical situation. You also see how well they have understood the relationships among elements of the rhetorical situation and a writer’s choices. Many students will need the support of think alouds or peer discussions to consider the issue from multiple perspectives and to take their own stances.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Because so much academic writing is thesis driven, students need procedures for developing thesis statements. Rather than simply having students generate a thesis on their own, asking the questions in this section of the template helps them see the relationships among their ideas, their purposes, and their audiences. Asking students to reflect on *how* changes in one or the other element of their rhetorical situation (topic, purpose, audience) affect their thesis will help them develop the conditional knowledge to transfer such strategies to school and lifelong writing.

### Gathering Evidence to Support Your Claims

- **Practicing formative assessment.** During the reading process, students practiced evaluating authors’ examples and evidence for their persuasiveness and development. As students gather evidence in support of their tentative claims, you can gather information about students’ understanding about evidence—what distinguishes fact from opinion, what makes evidence effective, what is appropriate support for different rhetorical purposes and audiences. Some students will need further support and modeling at this stage of the process to help them decide both what constitutes evidence and how to use it effectively in their own writing.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Procedures for gathering and evaluating evidence are important for all writers and speakers attempting to persuade. Although the use of evidence is ubiquitous in academic writing, it is not unique to academic writing. Helping students make connections between the ways they select and evaluate audience for everyday acts of persuasion and tailor that evidence for particular audiences can support them not only in developing these skills in academic writing but in transferring those more developed skills to future writing and attempts to persuade.

### Getting Ready to Write

- **Practicing formative assessment.** Not much fosters motivation in writing more than feeling that one has something to say and a real purpose for saying it to a real audience. Although students have begun to develop their ideas for the writing assignments at the end of each module through their careful

reading and critical discussions throughout the modules, focusing on strategies for developing their ideas and on the *particular* kinds of procedural knowledge students need to succeed at these particular kinds of writing will help them feel competent and in control of their writing. As students are working individually or in groups in prewriting activities, you can check in with them about their developing ideas and give them the feedback they need to remain engaged in the process. Helping students reflect on the kind of prewriting strategies they find particularly helpful for developing their ideas and their reasons for these choices will also help them transfer those strategies to future writing occasions.

- ***Teaching for transfer.*** Hillocks found that teaching students explicit strategies for engaging in the writing process is among the most effective techniques for improving students' writing. Mnemonics for conceptualizing the planning process (RAFT, SOAPSTONE, PLAN) or visual scaffolds help students develop strategies for developing content and imagining purposes and audience that they can take to high-stakes tests, workplace writing, and academic writing experiences.

## WRITING RHETORICALLY

### *Entering the Conversation*

#### Composing a Draft

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Having students draft their essays in class or reviewing students' rough drafts allows you to check in with them during the process to ensure that they understand all the aspects of addressing their audience for the purposes they are trying to achieve as well as to provide them ongoing feedback. The drafting process also allows you to support students in being flexible by allowing the process of developing their ideas through drafting to reshape their tentative thesis statements.
- ***Teaching for transfer.*** Talking with students, even in two-minute conferences, during the drafting process can allow you to guide them in reflecting on how and why some elements of writing are working well for them. Doing so can deepen students' understanding of the writing process and the likelihood that they will use similar strategies in the future. Talking with them explicitly about the purposes of drafts—a first draft to develop ideas, later drafts to refine those ideas as writers tailor them for particular purposes and audiences—can help students develop procedures for drafting and revising in future writing.

#### Considering Structure

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** You can ask students to state explicitly what they know about essay structure as part of their planning and composing drafts. Such direct questions can help you make connections between what students know about essays and what they need to learn about composing the essays they are writing as part of the modules. Examining students' drafts while they are composing allows you to see how much they understand about the relationship between body paragraphs and the thesis statement and about the relationships among ideas—claims, evidence, and analysis—within the body paragraphs. As you observe students composing, you can decide how much more support they need in highlighting the relationships of body paragraphs to the thesis, in selecting and analyzing evidence, in transitioning among ideas. You may find that text frames provide useful scaffolding for students struggling with these skills.

- **Teaching for transfer.** Essay structures have evolved because of the rhetorical situations they have had to address. Asking students about the *why* of essay structures as well as the *what* (that is, Why does the introduction start with a hook? What makes one hook better than another?) helps students develop the procedural and conditional knowledge necessary for them to make strategic decisions about structuring essays on their own. You strengthen the possibility of students’ transferring their knowledge about developing content when you talk about development in terms of communicative and rhetorical purposes rather than structures. Asking students to explain how paragraphs relate to their thesis statements, why they have chosen particular pieces of evidence, and how ideas within paragraphs relate to one another helps them develop the reasoning processes that they can transfer to future writing. Keeping this *reasoning* at the forefront of students’ thinking about writing supports them in feeling competent and in control of their rhetorical choices.

### Using the Words of Others

- **Practicing formative assessment.** No matter what choices students make about *how* to cite ideas from sources, they must understand the sources and ideas they are citing. Asking students to paraphrase and summarize sources is a great way to examine their understanding of the source text. Asking them to choose quotations for particular purposes (to support or refute a particular claim) also helps you see what they understand both of the original text and the effectiveness of evidence.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Because students have critically examined how the authors they are reading use sources, you can readily help them make connections between what those authors have done and how they will use sources in their writing. Such examination and the explicit attention to quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing help students develop the procedural knowledge to incorporate sources in their own writing effectively and the conditional knowledge to choose which kind of reference to use for what purpose. Explicitly discussing both *why* authors cite sources and *how* they choose the citation form (quote, paraphrase, or summarize) is very important for helping students treat this not merely as a school requirement but as a skill they need as participants in academic conversations.

### Negotiating Voices

- **Practicing formative assessment.** In this section of the template, we discuss providing students with language for distinguishing their own ideas from those of the authors they cite. One term for that kind of language is “text frames.” Text frames like the ones listed in the assignment template highlight relationships among ideas and provide you an opportunity to assess students’ understandings of those relationships. Likewise, when students choose text frames from articles, you can see how well they understand the authors’ choices in negotiating other points of view. Their choices from among the text frames you give them also provides you evidence of their understanding of the sources they have selected and the relationship of those sources to their own arguments.
- **Teaching for transfer.** The writing that students will do in college and beyond, and any self-sponsored expository writing they do, will involve their joining ongoing conversations. When you ask students the questions listed in this section of the template, you begin with the assumption that students are choosing purposes and audiences for their own writing, that they are using their writing to join an ongoing conversation. Keeping that language—of joining a conversation for their own

purposes—in the forefront of discussions and activities in the writing process will help students transfer these strategies to future writing opportunities.

## ***Revising and Editing***

### **Revising Rhetorically**

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Having students apply the rhetorical reading strategies they have practiced on published texts to their own and others' drafts allows you to see how well they have internalized the strategies and provides an additional opportunity to support their developing knowledge of rhetorical reading. Peer group work during revision helps students see that the teacher is not the only audience for their writing, and it promotes the social aspects of learning so important for motivation and flow. Listening to these peer discussions can also provide you opportunities to assess students' understandings about clarity and effectiveness in writing, rhetorical appeals, and organization. You can approach each of the stages of students' work during revision and editing as scientists, looking for clues about what students know and believe about syntax, essay structure, persuasion, and rhetoric. Asking students to apply the same rhetorical reading techniques they have used on published texts with each other's texts can both reinforce their use of reading strategies and help them take their own writing more seriously.
- ***Teaching for transfer.*** By practicing, during the peer review stage, the rhetorical reading strategies they used on published texts—PAPA squares, descriptive outlining, critical thinking questions—students also strengthen their understanding of those rhetorical reading strategies. Treating their own drafts with the seriousness with which they approach published essays can also support their sense of themselves as writers, in control of their choices. Revisiting the evaluation criteria and practicing using them to evaluate a sample essay promotes student ownership of those criteria and helps them feel competent in evaluating their own drafts. Discussing explicitly the relationship between those evaluation criteria and the criteria likely to be used in evaluating writing in other contexts helps students see that these criteria are not arbitrary but connected to the rhetorical purposes of the task.

### **Considering Stylistic Choices**

- ***Practicing formative assessment.*** Students' work at this stage of the revision process allows you to revisit their understanding of connotation and denotation of essential vocabulary. You can use the questions at this stage to assess whether students understand how word choice and figurative language use affects the relationship between author and readers. You can use their consideration of their own diction and syntax to assess their ability to apply their understanding of subordinate and main clauses and parallelism to making conscious choices about rhythm and tone.
- ***Teaching for transfer.*** At this stage of the process, reminding students that they are asking the same questions of their own texts that they asked of published texts may be beneficial. That reminder can help them build identities as author who write not just to fulfill an assignment but also to build relationships with particular readers for particular purposes. Encouraging students to play with the tone of their writing and to consider the effect such choices may have on different audiences will help them transfer that procedural knowledge to future writing situations.

## Editing the Draft

- **Practicing formative assessment.** One approach to this stage of the writing process is to ask students to identify the errors on their drafts in different colored ink. Students can even annotate their drafts with different symbols for different types of errors: (1) errors they recognize and can correct, (2) errors they recognize but do not know how to correct, and (3) places they are uncertain whether or not there is an error. Such an exercise can help instructors avoid re-teaching what students already know and can focus their attention where they really need support. If you give students time in class to do such proofreading, you can also distinguish between carelessness and lack of knowledge.
- **Teaching for transfer.** To help students transfer their knowledge of how to correct grammatical errors to future writing situations, it may help to scaffold and focus your feedback, only correcting the error with an explanation a limited number of times and gradually reducing the amount of information you give in later portions of the essay so you teach students how to proofread for the error rather than just make corrections you provide.

## Responding to Feedback

- **Practicing formative assessment.** When we give students feedback on their writing, we often assume that students both understand that feedback and know how to use it. These assumptions are worth assessing in the moment of teaching. Do students understand the distinction between global and local issues? Can they distinguish feedback that addresses one versus the other? Short conferences or even peer work when students have received drafts with feedback can allow you to assess their understanding of these issues. Asking students to write a brief revision plan that addresses your feedback can allow you to assess both their understanding of that feedback and their knowledge of how to respond to it. Asking them to revise based on criteria or limited feedback gives you insight into their understanding of the criteria and feedback.
- **Teaching for transfer.** Students need to develop metacognition about the revision process. By working as a whole class to revise an essay—either a volunteer’s draft or a teacher-made draft—you create opportunities to discuss the *process* of revision and make explicit the different levels of revision and the reasons for particular kinds of changes. The more students can talk about the reasons for their evaluations of their own and each other’s drafts, the more likely they are to apply that reasoning to future essay writing and revision.

## Reflecting on Your Writing Process

- **Practicing formative assessment.** The assignment template suggests taking the time to ask students to reflect on their writing after they have completed it. You can provide prompts for this task that guide students to provide you information about their writing abilities and confidence. Student reflections on their achievements, development, and continued struggles provide useful information about what they have learned. They can also be used as a guide for feedback on future assignments.
- **Teaching for transfer.** When you ask students what they have learned from writing a given essay that they will apply to future writing assignments, you are explicitly directing them to think about transfer. Asking students to track their improvement and continued struggles is a good way to reinforce their learning and turn over control of their growth as writers to the students themselves.

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