

REVISION WORKS!

*A Conversation Between an Author and
JTW Editors*

March 26, 1993

Patrick Slattery
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Dear Professor Slattery:

Your article "Taking Responsibility for Literacy: A Composition Course in which College Students Tutor Undereducated Adults" stimulated the interest of both its reviewers; however, they recommend revision before further consideration. The following comments might be useful if you decide to revise.

Reviewer #1: *I appreciate the commitment to literacy demonstrated in the composition course described here. I find Heidi's observations interesting and perceptive. Clearly, this experience was useful for her. This manuscript focuses primarily on Heidi and has a comfortable anecdotal quality, yet I don't think it is full and rich enough to constitute a case study. In order to be broadly relevant, I believe this manuscript would need to move beyond the description of assignments to a fuller examination of implications.*

A lesser point: I am bothered by the dated statistics on pages 1 and 2.

Reviewer #2: *This is a wonderful idea, and you have the basic information well stated here. I think that readers will want enough information, however, to enable them to try something like this in their own institutions. I'd like to know more about your class, i.e., what's it called, whether it's required, who is allowed to take it, what your goals for it are. Give me a list of the assignments up front. I'd like you to prepare me for your focus on Heidi in the paper.*

Say up front that you are going to focus on her and why; tell me a little bit about her, such as her major. Your final sentence is the most important sentence in your paper. Draw out its implications.

Please notice that each reviewer advises drawing out the implications of your piece.

Should you choose to resubmit, your piece would be sent to the same two reviewers for another response: choices are accept, accept with revision, and reject, so that you would not be asked to revise again unless the piece will be published. I hope that you will decide to revise and to resubmit. I look forward to seeing another version of this piece.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Cambridge
Editor

Enc.

June 18, 1993

Barbara Cambridge, Editor
Journal of Teaching Writing
Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis
425 University Blvd.
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Dear Professor Cambridge:

Thank you for your letter concerning my submission entitled "Taking Responsibility for Literacy." The reviewers' comments were very helpful, and I've used them as a guide to revising the manuscript.

Specifically, I've tried to follow Reviewer #2's suggestion to include more details about my course, adding information about its goals, students, and tutoring sessions, additions that I hope will be useful to readers who might want "to try something like this in their own institutions." To better prepare

the reader for my focus on Heidi's writing, I've also followed Reviewer #2's advice to explain a little more about her and to give . . . "a list of the assignments up front." Furthermore, I've replaced the dated 1970 statistics that bothered Reviewer #1 with statistics from 1990. Most importantly, however, I've attempted to draw out the implications of the piece—a suggestion that, as you noted, was made by both reviewers—by explaining what the students learned from the course and what we, as teachers of writing, might learn from it as well.

I believe these revisions have strengthened the piece, and I look forward to receiving your response. Thank you for your willingness to continue working with my article.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Slattery
Assistant Professor

September 3, 1993

Dear Professor Slattery:

The revisions which you made on "Taking Responsibility for Literacy" answered many of the questions which reviewers had had about your piece. Reviewers remain divided, nevertheless, about publishing the piece in *JTW*. The central problem is the lack of enough discussion of what teachers might learn from your analysis of Heidi's experience. One reviewer put it this way:

I feel the writer doesn't do enough with what remains an extended case study of Heidi. Even the concluding paragraph is just a recap of Heidi's experience, with what "Heidi's papers should teach us" covered very broadly only in the final two sentences. Is the implication that we should have more courses for tutors like this one? That we should all try to be more like Heidi? I'm not sure. The writer concludes that "teaching composition is never politically innocent"

and that "we can all start taking responsibility for literacy," but neither of these insights seems particularly new or incisive.

Although our Editorial Board rarely asks for a second revision, choosing to accept or reject on a second read, I am interested in seeing if a further revision of your implications would convince this reviewer that the piece should be published. I find this revision much stronger than the original and imagine that further revision would make the piece even more helpful for readers. Should you be willing to continue work on the piece, I will be glad to resubmit the piece to this "unsure" reviewer for reconsideration.

Should you decide to resubmit, please enclose some biographical lines to be used if the piece is accepted. I hope to read another version of "Taking Responsibility for Literacy."

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Cambridge
Editor

Enc.

June 10, 1994

Dear Professor Cambridge:

Thank you for your most recent response to my manuscript "Teaching for Various Literacies."

After thinking about the response, I agreed with the "unsure" reviewer that the implications of my study were still undeveloped, and I set out to revise the conclusion in an attempt to demonstrate what my analysis of Heidi's writing suggests about teaching academic discourse. In revising the conclusion, however, I found it necessary to rework the case study as well, placing it in a context of previous writing about academic literacy. I think these revisions address the reviewer's concerns, and I'm much more satisfied with the piece now.

Thank you for continuing to work with my submission. I appreciate your willingness to send it to the “unsure” reviewer once again, and I look forward to receiving your response to this version of the manuscript.

At your request, I include a biographical note, should the essay be accepted for publication.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Slattery
Assistant Professor

August 29, 1994

Dear Professor Slattery:

Revision works! Your article “Teaching for Various Literacies” will be published in the 13.1 or 13.2 issue of the *Journal of Teaching Writing*. I enclose the final response of the reviewer who previously was worried about focus and contribution to our thinking about literacy to indicate his pleasure in your latest version.

In the current issue of the *JTW* we have begun a practice which we hope will demystify the reviewing process and, thereby, encourage writers to send in manuscripts with confidence that they will be seriously and collegially reviewed. Because we had several exchanges over this piece, I wondered if you would be willing to have the review letters printed with your piece to demonstrate your careful attention to suggestions of reviewers as well as the kind of responses you received during the revision process. Your willingness to have the correspondence regarding the essay published with the piece in no way affects its acceptance for publication: should you not want the correspondence published, we will certainly still share your article with our readers.

Thank you for enclosing the biographical lines which we will use. Please do let me know, however, if you are amenable to helping us foreground the review process. Would you please

let me know by September 21, 1994, your decision about including the letters? I include copies so that you know what would be published.

We are pleased to finally be able to include your work in the *JTW*.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Cambridge
Editor

Enc.

TO THE WRITER:

I reviewed an earlier version of this article a year and a half or so ago, and I remember feeling that the strong emphasis on Heidi and her writing for the course needed to be balanced against larger issues involving functional and academic literacy. I believe your article now does this successfully and makes a substantial contribution to our thinking about literacy, as well as the importance of connecting class writing to matters that students have strong feeling about. I am interested enough in what you have to say to consider its implications for my own Advanced Writing course.

I'm glad you persisted in this project, submitting a revision that I believe to be substantially improved, a valuable contribution. I have suggested several small changes in the text of the manuscript itself. Most importantly, on page 4 I'd like to see a sentence or two indicating a direction or thesis for the subsequent essay, and on page 21 I'd like you to refer back to the literacy tutoring and how it affected Heidi, relating this central experience directly to what you say about fostering critical thinking.

September 27, 1994

Dear Professor Cambridge:

I'm delighted that my manuscript "Teaching for Various Literacies" will appear in the *Journal of Teaching Writing*, and I've made several revisions to prepare the piece for publication. Although these revisions are relatively minor, they should help clarify how my analysis of Heidi's writing supports the essay's conclusion, making the entire article more coherent and persuasive.

I like the idea of printing review letters with essays, and I'm willing to have the letters appear with my piece. They should indeed illustrate that manuscripts sent to *JTW* are "seriously and collegially reviewed."

Thanks again for your willingness to work with my submission. I appreciate your help and look forward to seeing my essay in print.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Slattery
Assistant Professor

