

The idea that audience plays a key role in distinguishing experienced writers from their more inexperienced counterparts was raised in our very first set of readings by Flowers and Hayes in “The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem” (1994). In that paper, the authors argued that inexperienced writers fail to take into account all parts of the rhetorical problem – the factors that collectively comprise the interaction between author and reader – in their composing processes. In the readings for this week, each of authors again raise the issue of audience, but in ways that extend and complicate Flowers and Hayes’s simple assertion that writers must consider audience when beginning a composition.

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, in “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy,” argue that there is a division in the field of composition theory between those who describe finding an audience and those who describe creating one. To be more specific, some theorists view audience as a collection of real persons whose “attitudes, beliefs, and expectations” must be determined and addressed by the author. Others view audience as a mysterious entity, which cannot be determined by the author and thus the author must create an identity for it, offering readers cues as to the role the author intends for them. Ede and Lunsford argue that each of these theories is insufficient alone in the practice of writing pedagogy, as an overemphasis of the former leads to pandering, while a preponderance of the latter devalues individual readers. Instead, they propose that good writing arises from a middle ground, one that acknowledges both the importance of the readers (by considering their attitudes and addressing them) and the importance of the writer (by not constraining the paper to one addressed audience). The idea of finding this middle ground is important for us to know about as WAs because it may help us to articulate to our WAees when they are falling to far to one side of the fence or the other. But how can we help them find their way to this happy medium? What strategies can we employ to assist them in both addressing *and* invoking an audience?

Peter Elbow, in “Closing My Eyes As I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience,” raises similar issues to those raised by Ede and Lunsford but offers a different approach for resolving them. As

with Ede and Lunsford's critique of overemphasizing an addressed audience, Elbow brings up the way in which a writer's perception of his or her audience can be unproductively constraining to the drafting process. He suggests that if a writer can learn to ignore this audience until the revising stages of the paper, the resulting product will likely be more interesting and sophisticated because the writer was allowed to engage in the exploratory aspects of writing without fear of judgment from an unreceptive audience. He further argues that this "turning off" of audience awareness is something that is difficult to begin with, and made even more difficult by a pedagogical style that emphasizes the importance of audience.

From his arguments, it seems that Elbow would look approvingly on the arguments made by Muriel Harris in "Writing in the Middle" about the importance of writing tutors such as WAs. Although Elbow never addresses the issue of peer tutors specifically, the philosophy of peer tutoring advocated by Harris is one based on providing writers in the drafting stages with a non-judgmental sounding board for their ideas, which is similarly intended to help them through the exploratory "poesis" to better, more sophisticated arguments, unhampered by concerns about seeming smart enough to impress their professors. However, part of Elbow's critique of the existing pedagogy of writing is the way in which it has made such self-discourse difficult for students, who accustomed to social discourse. We always talk about the importance of working with writers, not papers (which we acknowledge is an over-simplification, but we still say it...). How then can we ensure that what we are doing in acting as a sounding board for exploration is helping our WAees become more independent writers, capable of self-reflection, rather than building their continued dependence on others for their own thought processes? Or is this the wrong question to be asking at all? Is our goal as WAs really to foster independent writers that will no longer need our help? Can we ever be done teaching someone how to write?

Anne Lamott in "Shitty First Drafts" describes the struggle to turn off the unproductively judgmental audience that is the writer him or herself. In this personal essay, she describes her writing process: she uses the first draft to get all of the ideas down on the page, ignoring the critiques

from her own internal monologue, and trusts in her ability to revise her writing to something presentable in the next draft. This process seems at first very different from the arguments made in the other two, more academic, articles we read for this week. In fact, she is making two very similar arguments to those of Elbow. First, audience awareness, even from one's own self-critic, can be detrimental to getting words on the page. Second, the writing that is produced by when the self-regulatory mechanisms are kept in check, while disorganized, often contains insights that would have been impossible within the constraints of communicative, rather than playful, discourse (to apply Elbow's language to Lamott's point). While I enjoyed Lamott's explication of her writing process –and remarked at how similar it sounded to my own – it did raise some questions for me about how it fits with our work as WAs. Specifically, where do *we* fit into this process? Are we WAing that first draft? Are we WAing the second draft, but benefiting from the knowledge that this is how said draft came into existence? Are we participating in the “writing” of that first draft? (Obviously, we are not literally writing anything. But is the WA conference another process, equivalent to the process of Lamott's first draft, during which Elbow's “poesis” occurs?)

None of the readings this week address the issue of WAs or writing tutors or really the role of anyone else in the writing process, other than writer and reader. Yet there are many implications within the arguments presented on our practice as WAs. Given that there are not any directives to us about our practice, what advice did you find implicit in these readings?