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Reviewed by Lynn Z. Bloom, University of Connecticut

Adult learners, claims Sommer, an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, are synonymous with nontraditional students, no matter their age. These are the students who work full-time and take classes on the job or at night or on the weekends, but not necessarily in traditional high school or college programs. They may be learning English to pass the GED (high school equivalency) exams, or as part of a vocational certificate or occupational licensing program. Their writing courses range from basic grammar to professional publishing, vocabulary study to scriptwriting for stage and television.

Whoever adults are, wherever they are in class, they should be taught by methods which acknowledge and respect the fact that they are adults rather than children. Sommer labels this way of teaching andragogy (not to be confused with androgyny), and contrasts it with pedagogy, the teaching of children (including traditional undergraduates 18-22). Whereas pedagogy is "teacher-centered and subject-centered," andragogy is student-centered. Adult students, says Sommer, basing his assertions on educational research, are independent, highly motivated, and strong-minded; they know what they want, and they don't want to waste time in fulfilling their goals. They are accustomed to taking control of their own lives, and they are able to bring substantial life experience—informal learning—to their formal learning.

Consequently, education for adults is—or should be—a two-way process; if it's only one-way, from teacher to students, it's likely to be unsuccessful as well as demeaning to the students. Adult students should be active participants in the collaborative activities of teaching and learning rather than passive receptacles into which the teacher pours instruction. Thus, teachers should serve as coaches or facilitators rather than lecturers; students should collaborate with teachers in planning their courses, "formulating learning objectives," and evaluating their own work.

At the outset of each course, the instructor needs to assess the class to find out who the students are, what they can do, what they need to know, and "how they perceive the learning will affect them." Assessment can be conducted by means of open (short essay) or closed (short answer) questionnaires, but preferably through longer writing samples that reveal the students' skill at persuasion, organization, and interpretation of written texts. The results of the assessment should be used to plan the class. The writing that students do should enable them to "put into practice what they are learning."
Sommer offers a variety of possibilities for individual and collaborative work: a round-robin for brainstorming, group revision, task groups that focus on such matters as interviewing each other and editing. He is an enthusiastic advocate of freewriting, with its emphasis on invention and discovery, pleasure and power. He also sees freewriting as a tension release, a means of untangling garbled thinking and writing, and a way to find a focus for later writing. He uses freewriting to prop up sagging discussions, to initiate longer writing, and to respond to other students' work. And he encourages students to discard it so they won't get locked into a rigid, unchangeable text.

Sommer devotes a chapter to what appears to be a paradox of his model of the adult student, who though independent-minded is even more inclined than younger students "to defer to the direction and judgment of the teacher": "What am I supposed to say? How am I supposed to say it? How long do you want it to be?" Learning contracts between students and teachers work best, says Sommer, with very low and very high achievers; they can collaborate with the teacher to specify what they want to learn, identify the resources and strategies and writing that will enable them to learn it, and determine the method of evaluation. Publishing student writing in class will give everyone a sense of accomplishment. Sommer follows this with two chapters on how to integrate students' experiences into expressive and transactional writing. These range from personal narrative, poetry, dialogue, and letters, to observation reports (descriptive writing "intended to convey objective information about external phenomena to a reader"), consumer reports and reviews, process descriptions, and advertising copy.

The teacher's first job in responding to student writing may be to convince students that it's more important for the students to say something meaningful in their own voices than to write tidy, conventional papers that are grammatically and mechanically correct. Students taught by a process approach, which may be unfamiliar to many of them, will need to be convinced "that writing submitted to the teacher for correction" is not "finished work rather than a stage in the process of improvement and completion." Sommer offers suggestions and a rubric for holistic and naturalistic responses, and he also allows for students' evaluation of their own work.

Sommer concludes with practical applications of his method to teaching writing in the workplace, "handling divergent levels of writing experience," and improving college writing courses. An andragogical (there, I got it right) freshman composition course would make "connections among reading, thinking, and understanding the educational process." It would encourage "self-realization" and use as subject matter not "the ideal academic model" but "the student's educational and career goals" and "the standards of the institution," including its criteria for passing.

*Teaching Writing to Adults* would be a particularly useful book for young
teachers thrust into a classroom of older students. But many teachers of
traditional students have been giving power to all the people, not just adults,
at least since the civil rights and women's movements and the publication of
Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* twenty years ago. Why make stu-
dents' control over their own lives, their own learning, the exclusive province
of adult learners?

Sommer contends that the main problem for adult students is writing
anxiety—another paradox in view of his definition of adult learners as self-
assertive and self-determining. Anxious adult writers procrastinate; they
don't know where to begin; they mistakenly believe that the writing process
is a simple "one-step activity." Sommer claims, rightly, that people become
self-conscious and more anxious as they grow older. His solutions—have
students write lots and often, set goals and solve problems, and "dethrone
the written word" by not correcting and grading everything they write—are
applicable to many types of writing problems. Also, his solutions ignore the
psychological and cognitive dimensions of much of the literature in compo-
sition research, such as John Daly's correlational studies and Mike Rose's
sensitive contextual research in *Writer's Block: The Cognitive Dimension*

In fact, the main trouble with *Teaching Writing To Adults* is that it isn't
*Lives on the Boundary*. It is Sommer's fate to have published an adequate but
arid volume on how to teach writing to adults in the same year that Mike
Rose's brilliant and humane work appeared on the same subject. *Teaching
Writing to Adults* does the job, but it is *Lives on the Boundary* that will linger,
indelibly, in our hearts and minds and classrooms.

*Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy*, ed. Joseph M. Moxley

Reviewed by Wendy Bishop, Florida State University

In the Preface to *Creative Writing In America*, Joseph Moxley reminds his
readers of an unfortunate situation: "At present, no debate rages in profes-
sional journals as to whether creative writing programs are providing stu-
dents with the necessary writing skills, knowledge of the composing process,
or background in literature needed to write well." Those who hope for better
things—an innovative creative writing pedagogy, informed writing teachers,
strong support for student writers—should be interested in this volume.

*Creative Writing In America* consists of twenty-three essays, divided into
four categories: Assumptions, Problems and Prospects (four articles); Craft
and the Creative Process (fourteen articles); Editing and Publishing (three