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Ever since I first heard George Jensen and John DiTiberio present a CCCC session on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and its application to teaching writing, I have eagerly awaited the arrival of this book. Before I received the volume, I was favorably predisposed to its premise: that Jungian personality theory and the MBTI, an instrument designed to measure the personality preferences Carl Jung described, could shed light on problems in teaching writing. Having used the MBTI in a composition class for students undecided about majors and careers, I already knew the instrument and the insights it can provide. But I had not considered its application to students' writing abilities and needs, nor to pedagogical preferences and judgments of students' work. Personality and the Teaching of Composition provides a thoughtful, careful introduction to these issues and deserves the attention of composition specialists.

Chapter One, “Jung’s Model of Personality Type,” provides an overview of the theory, clarifies the four personality aspects appraised by the MBTI, and gives general history and background. Some of this material is quite theoretical and may be challenging reading for the unfamiliar. Chapter Two, “Individual Writing Processes,” integrates personality theory and composition theory: extraversion/introversion, sensing/intuition, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving are analyzed as approaches to writing. Chapter Three, which concludes the theoretical section of the book, discusses writing development in college in the context of personality theory as well as other theories of development, such as Perry’s model of intellectual and ethical development. It becomes clear that student writers need to develop both preferred and non-preferred strategies and that models applied to them are often biased by the personality preferences of the model makers. The authors make a strong case for viewing writing and its development more broadly than any model currently being discussed. Even the reader who disagrees with their argument will think more carefully about current proposals.

The five chapters which follow are pragmatic. Each focuses on some aspect of teaching writing, showing how knowledge of personality type and preferences can help teachers better understand themselves and their students. One chapter looks at how students develop natural preferences, and how to challenge students to develop their non-preferred style. Another chapter analyzes anxiety and writer's block; two case studies demonstrate how teachers can use knowledge of personality type to give more substantial help. A third chapter explores evaluation, revealing ways in which we respond to writing in terms of personality preferences, and helping us to account for teacher disagreement and student frustration over widely varying
teacher approaches to writing. Another chapter deals with basic writers, building a case for their diversity, for the weakness of generalizing about them (or any other group). Here, Jensen and DiTiberio make one of the most important points in the book: "Jung's theory of type posits that people prefer certain psychological processes, not that they possess certain innate and unalterable static traits. A person's preference... only provides a push to behave in a certain way; the preference does not determine behavior."

Readers must see that although Jungian theory is helpful in expanding our understanding of teaching and learning writing, it does not explain everything about anyone. Thus, Personality and the Teaching of Composition ends with a discussion of the need for considerable additional research addressing individual differences in writing. The fifty pages of appendix offer additional material on Jungian theory and its application to composition studies, plus a list of references which provides readers with a solid background in writing theory and the application of personality analysis to composition.

From a scholarly standpoint, the book has considerable merit. Jensen and DiTiberio cogently integrate Jungian psychology and composition theory, and their findings may be of particular importance to those in advanced composition, who often have greater opportunity to work with students individually and in small groups. The authors are appropriately cautious about mixing two disciplines and about the research that must be done before we reach more definitive conclusions about the implications of personality type for teaching writing. They mention Emig, Flower, Graves, Murray, Rose, Troyka, and other key thinkers in the field, and appraise their work in the broader light of personality theory. The authors offer significant insight and will cause readers to think more carefully about questions (and previous answers) in composition.

There is much for the classroom writing instructor. (The case studies in Chapter Five are particularly helpful.) Teachers will recognize themselves and their students in the discussion, a substantial part of it offering good "Monday morning" help. I did wish that an early chapter had taken up each of the sixteen MBTI types in terms of writing, but the more general approach taken by the authors may have been more appropriate given the general state of research and understanding about personality theory and its application to our interests. The material presented in tabular form in the last few chapters and in the appendices is the sort of information I have in mind.

Personality Theory and the Teaching of Composition should be read by teachers and scholars in rhetoric and composition. It gives a detailed overview of what is for most readers an untapped area of research and insight. For most readers, it will provide a good introduction to psychological approaches to teaching and learning writing, a developing focus of inquiry in composition studies. Personally, professionally, and pedagogically—reading this book will yield rich rewards for all members of our profession.