Why do you say that? What do you think are the connections? How did you come to that? Crystal’s final research report, a creative fable depicting a conflict between an “empirical King” and his “subjective Subjects,” seems to me to point Sternglass to the way out of her dilemma. Crystal’s “subjects” have built a labyrinth that the “empirical legions” can’t negotiate because each “subject” built one part of it individually and so the key to the maze lies in personal knowledge. When the “empirical King” complains to the “subjects” that he can’t figure them out, they retort, “Why didn’t you ask for directions?” The King explains, “BECAUSE YOUR DIRECTIONS WOULD BE SUBJECTIVE AND THEREFORE UNRELIABLE.” I get the same sense about Sternglass. She wants to argue for subjective accounts, but she’s at bottom suspect of uncontrolled experiments.

If only she had taken the time to ask her students for directions. I kept wanting Sternglass to broaden this study into an even more naturalistic account of those students’ reading and writing. Although she did have her students read The Presence of Thought in manuscript, she only mentions ethnographic research once in her conclusion, and she does not seem to have learned Shirley Brice Heath’s lessons about how to become not only observers of language activity but also participants in the community. I wholeheartedly agree with her concluding call for more naturalistic research “carried out over extended periods of time that give the participants opportunities to reveal as much as they can of the factors that influenced their interpretations of tasks and the shape of the outcomes,” but I would argue that ethnographic research will tell us much more than retrospective accounts alone, especially journals written in such isolation as these.

Marilyn Sternglass has probably done what she set out to do in The Presence of Thought: add to the body of knowledge about how composing happens. However, she could have done so much more than support what we already know about writing and teaching, if only she had taken the time to ask her students questions.


Reviewed by Kevin Davis, East Central (Oklahoma) University

Frequently, it seems to me, English faculty go about their business largely oblivious to what’s going on in English studies. Composition theorists, for example, only occasionally and indirectly affect what average practitioners actually do in average composition classrooms. Similarly, what
we know about reading and teaching literature rarely interacts with response and evaluation practices used in composition classes. Such cross-field speculations are explored in *Encountering Student Texts*, a volume whose premise is that while we frequently call upon a variety of approaches for interpreting literature, we acknowledge far fewer possibilities when faced with stacks of student essays.

In exploring ways in which we approach student texts, the editors asked several college writing teachers to reflect on how they read and react to student writing. *Encountering Student Texts* is a compilation of these responses, a set of composition teacher-reader protocols, each analyzed and explained by its maker.

As Lawson and Ryan state in their introduction, “Student texts provide a unique intersection of reading and composition theory. The uniqueness of student writing and the peculiar writer-reader-text relationship that arises from teachers’ interactions with students’ essays are phenomena which have not been adequately explored.” The editors point out how teachers are by nature false readers, willing to see texts outside of the boundaries the writers intended, willing to force false readings onto texts. Instead of coming to a text from an attitude of acceptance, as “regular” readers would, teachers come to a text hoping to see it as something it is not (yet), to remake it beyond the writer’s original expectations. In this way, “the teacher becomes the significant creator of student texts.”

The authors have collected eighteen essays and arranged them into four groups. Representative of the first group, “Encountering Ways of Reading,” is an essay by Elizabeth Flynn that draws on feminist perspectives to read student texts. Flynn explores her own evolving feminist approaches to student texts, offers an overview of feminist reading and pedagogical theories, and analyzes her comments on student papers according to the rubric she establishes. The end result is simultaneously anecdotal, explanatory, and analytical.

The second section of the text, “Encountering Conflicts in Theory and Practice,” focuses on demythologizing the teacher’s traditional authoritative power, suggesting instead that teachers function as co-interpreters and facilitators of student texts. Jim Corder reminds us in “Asking for a Text and Trying to Learn It” that student writers and writing exist at levels outside the traditional composition-teacher response. Corder explores his own approaches to writing essays and to seeing student writers as essayists. Central to his thinking is that we try to be real readers of real writing, not demagogues.

“Encountering Ethical Responsibilities,” the third section, examines the ethical responsibilities writing teachers have to students and their texts. As we co-create students’ texts, we must recognize the power we have to facilitate or hinder students’ writing abilities. Lisa Ede compares her own responses to the “fun” of reading writing assistants’ journals and the “work” of reading freshman essays. She sees a difference between “reading writing,”
a relaxed process, and "writing reading," an intense struggle in which reading student essays becomes tantamount to writing them. She also discusses "the critical role that social, political, and ideological forces play" in reading.

The final section of *Encountering Student Texts* deals with practical aspects of responding to student texts. The pieces in this section are the most limited: they are most appropriate for specific types of writing or particular writing situations. Richard Beach, for example, explores responses to journals, and Anthony Petrosky discusses essay and poetry writing.

I found *Encountering Student Texts* interesting and provocative. I regularly question my own reactions and responses to student texts, and the volume gave me additional material for my own self-analysis. At the same time, though, I found the essays to be a descriptive hodgepodge, filled with after-the-fact justifications and rationales. Most of the contributors described their own practices and then defended them on theoretical grounds, no matter how much manipulation the defense might have entailed. The practice-before-theory approach taken by the self-analyses in this volume is interesting, but essays which placed theory before practice might have contributed more to the direction of our discipline.

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Reviewed by Rick Cypert, Nebraska Wesleyan University

Alice Brand hopes to fill a gap she perceives in psychological studies of composing by focusing on the affective domain as it enhances «our understanding of the cognitive domain and of their interdependence. In trying to consider scientifically the emotional experiences of thousands of writers writing, she has utilized a variety of data-gathering methodologies, including but not limited to ethnographic case studies and data from her own scale revealing how writers feel about writing—how they feel before, during, after writing, and with what frequency and with what intensity.

Sounds suspiciously like a dissertation—and yet, happily, even a cursory reading reveals that such is not the case. I found myself returning to sections of this book for second and third readings. The scholarship is comprehensive, the research is sound, and the conclusions are appropriate.

After an introductory chapter, Brand reviews "statements by leading authors about the emotional correlates of their writing," and then she