

ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF CONTEMPORARY  
COMPOSITION THEORY IN THE TEKS WRITING PROCESS

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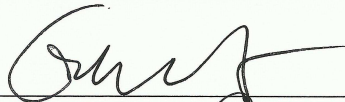
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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Tonya Whitaker entitled "Analysis of the Application of Contemporary Composition Theory in the TEKS Writing Process." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English.



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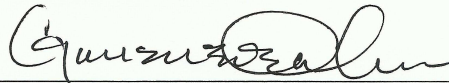
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## ABSTRACT

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### ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION THEORY IN THE TEKS WRITING PROCESS

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Since 1998, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, often referred to as the TEKS, has served as the blueprint for education in Texas. Teachers are responsible for using the best pedagogical practices to ensure education standards prepare students for life post-graduation – whether it is entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. There is much to be said about education in Texas, in particular, its writing instruction. Year after year, students are taught to follow a highly segregated five-step, discursive model for the writing process, value the end product over the process, write discourse centered on one-dimensional modes, and perfect English grammar. Add in state assessments (i.e. the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness, or STAAR), and we are presented with a dangerous recipe for writing instruction in the state. The purpose of this thesis is to unravel how detrimental or beneficial the Current Traditional Rhetoric (CTR) model of the TEKS is to high school writers in Texas. Hence, this thesis will take the state-approved teaching strategies and compare them with the ideologies of contemporary English composition scholars.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, set the standard for education instruction in the Lone Star State (see Appendix A). Approved in 1997 and implemented at the start of the 1998-1999 school year, the TEKS are the focus of instruction for every subject in every Texas public and charter school classroom. Compared to previous education mandates of the state, the TEKS calls for a “rigorous, measurable, specific, and current” roadmap to assist them in guiding their students to academic success, thus meeting “the high expectations Texas citizens hold for high school graduates” (“Texas Essential Knowledge” 2011; McConnell 31). The Texas Education Agency – the governing body for the state’s education initiatives – professes the TEKS is a solid basis for developing classroom instruction and preparing students for assessments – most notable of them the State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness (STAAR). As the state pushes for an appropriate instrument to gage student competency in writing, writing instruction has continually grown into a formula that thrives on conformity, shallow, and formalistic writing over creativity for students and teachers (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter 16).

In this thesis, I will determine what type of writing process encompasses the Texas high school English curriculum. First, I will perform an analytical reading of Chapter 110, Subchapter C of the Texas Administrative Code, better known as the 9-12 TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR). In addition to a scope of the

education standards, I will weigh the TEKS writing process against two articles that outline the features of composition pedagogy theories, “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories” by James Berlin (1982) and “Four Philosophies of Composition” by Richard Fulkerson (1979). Texas textbook writers and the TEA have both defined the state’s writing process as recursive (Kemper 2; “Texas Essential Knowledge” 2011). But, how recursive is the TEKS writing process when it is compared to process theory? Berlin’s and Fulkerson’s articles are a decent starting point to determine the similarities and dissimilarities between the process theory definition and the one presented in the TEKS. In return, I will offer suggestions from process theory scholars that will determine to what degree the education standards of the state reflect sound writing practices.

In addition, I will discuss two contributing factors that will not release their grip on linear writing pedagogy in the Texas education system. First, is standardized testing. The pressure placed on ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade teachers to ensure their students successfully pass STAAR End of Course (EOC) exams have led to writing instruction dominated by preparations to write in timed situations. The effectiveness of timed, impromptu writing exams have been bashed by composition theorists such as Peter Elbow, who refers to them as a means to provide a valueless, “faint, smudged, and distorted picture of the student's writing ability” (White 30). In January 2014, an unspecified number of juniors, members of the class of 2015, still hadn’t passed the English I writing exam of the STAAR, which was first given to them in ninth grade

(McGee and Rice 2014). New writing testing requires students to complete multiple-choice answer selections, short answer questions, and an essay on a particular aim of discourse determined by the state at each particular high school grade (“Redesign of the” 2014). With the advent of multiple-choice answers on a writing test, the state is continuing its position of making writing – a subject that is mostly learned through continuous practice – into one where it can be answered with an A, a B, a C, or a D. According to STAAR field test results, on the average, ninth graders plan, draft, and revise their essay exams within one-in-a-half hours (V. Young 2014; see Appendix B). To lift the “burden” off students, multiple-choice writing questions have been implemented. Thus, teaching a writing process that fits the grading system of a test evaluator continues to dominate Texas writing pedagogy.

Texas’ heavy concentration on state testing, forged on the Texas education system starting in the 1990s by then-governor George W. Bush and, once again, at the national level through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) at the hands of President Bush, reflects traditional writing forms that don’t necessarily benefit students. Fogarty (1959) asserted the Current Traditional Rhetoric (CTR) paradigm on teaching uniformity, lack of writer’s voice, and grammar “nitpicking” was noted as a “crisis in our discipline” (Ede 19). Fogarty’s criticism of the “new rhetoric” during his time led to a definition of current traditional writing and, inadvertently, a name of the rhetoric that is still used to define linear, discursive composition. In *Paradigms and Problems* Richard Young’s view of current-traditionalism further demonstrates Fogarty’s discontent with the writing style.

Upon reading Young's description, I was immediately reminded of strand 13 and strands 17-19 of the TEKS:

Overt features, however, are obvious enough: the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis) ... (qtd. in Hairston 78).

Second, state-approved textbooks have also allowed the state to keep Current-Traditionalism's dominance in place. Young mentioned four modes of discourse in his description of Current-Traditionalism. State writing textbooks promote the approach that students, despite the writer's unique style, use the same writing process each and every time they write (Kemper et al 47). Textbook and curriculum writers have missed the influence that outside factors that are placed on writers. If one takes into consideration, for instance, the cognitive process writers endure, blanket, textbook statements as such has no weight in writing process instruction. Fittingly, the history of CTR in the Texas writing process is deeply rooted in James Kinneavy's four modes of discourse, first outlined in his book *A Theory of Discourse* (1971). The four modes – exposition, description, persuasion, and narration – used in textbooks and the state curriculum are similar in name only. The means by which they are presented to Texas students more closely resemble Alexander Bain's lowly forms of discourse; the aims of discourse

created by Bain is debated by Kinneavy in *Discourse*. The modes closely resemble a narrow track of determination, i.e. if the essay assignment is expository, the student is to stick to writing an expository piece. This unilateral, traditional approach to writing was not Kinneavy's intended meaning for the modes. Kinneavy wrote, "Yet a classification of diverse aims of discourse must not be interpreted as the establishing of a set of iron-clad categories which do not overlap" (297).

Kinneavy used *Diary of Ann Frank* as an example of the misuse of modes of discourse (62). He noted the novel is commonly taught as narration, yet it includes elements of exposition, description, and persuasion. I view Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter From Birmingham Jail* in a similar fashion. King was attempting to persuade his audience. However, within the persuasion rests narration, exposition, and description. According to the TEKS, students are rarely encouraged to write discourse that features interchangeability. Based on what I viewed from the textbook and STAAR field tests, persuasion and exposition – the two forms subject to STAAR testing – are emphasized more than the persuasion and narration at the high school level.

### **TEKS, Testing, and Textbooks**

Within the 74-page document rests grade-level knowledge and skills the state has set for high school students in public and charter schools. Strand 13 deals exclusively with the writing process for high school students in grades nine through 12; strands 17, 18, and 19 will be infused into the discussion, as they outline the state's requirements for oral and written conventions instruction. Seventeen, 18, and 19 are included because, in

the TEKS-based writing process, students are to edit drafts for “grammar, mechanics, and spelling” (“Texas Essential Knowledge” 2011; *Prentice Hall Writing* 26).

The duplication of conventions in the TEKS points to the significant role editing plays in the writing process. The grammar and composition textbooks used in my analysis include grammar, punctuation, and syntax instruction in two portions of the textbooks. In *Glencoe Writer’s Choice*, nine units are spent discussing the five-step writing process and writing assignments aligned with the four modes of discourse, while 12 units are allocated for grammar, usage and punctuation instruction. Also, within each lesson on the steps of the writing process, grammar links are provided for students’ reference. On the other hand, with the literature books, grammar instruction is sprinkled amongst discourse assignments. Grammar instruction exercises on pronoun and antecedent agreement (“Glencoe Literature” 595) and avoiding dangling modifiers (“Prentice Hall Literature” 843) are a few examples.

Strand 13 provides hints to the writing process high school students are to implement into writing. The introductory description of the high school writing process does not mention variety in writing styles; the writing process is not intended to work as a “lock-step process” (Murray 4) or abide by a “product driven, rules based, correctness-obsessed ... superficial, packaged, formulaic” formula (Tobin 5). Essentially, students are to follow this pattern each and every time they write. State textbooks provide a clearer picture of the writing education standards. What does pre-writing look like? How much of the writing process is modeled or left to the discretion of the student? Just by glancing

through the standards, I picked up faults but the textbooks place CTR into a better view for my analysis. Essay assignments in the Prentice Hall and Holt McDougal texts provide little variation in the writing process. Therefore, if the student is writing a descriptive essay on a “believable, memorable character” similar to the pilgrims from Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (“Glencoe Literature: Texas” 208-211) or a literary analysis explaining the student’s personal meaning of Romantic period poetry from Keats, Wordsworth, and Shelley (“Glencoe Literature: Texas” 844-851), the TEKS five-step writing process is to be followed. The instruction follows the same suit; students should always expect to concern themselves with grammar in their discourse at step 4.

The only time the writing process is adjusted is in the STAAR frameworks for ninth- and tenth-grade EOC exams (“TEKS Curriculum Framework” 49; “TEKS Curriculum Framework” 52). The writing process is broken into three steps (structure ideas, revise drafts and edit drafts), but I don’t believe its intent is to align the process with that of process theorists. Instead, for the first time in the history of the state’s writing exam, the re-designed assessments have a time limit; students must complete the written essay in 90 minutes (“Redesign of the” 2014). Thus, textbooks have outlined the timed writing process, explaining to students the minute tally students are to spend on each task in order to complete the writing exam in allotted time (see Appendix B). Standardized testing emphasizes product over process more than daily writing assignments, as expected. However, if teachers spend a majority of the school year preparing students for state assessments, which writing format will prevail?



With the discussion of Texas textbooks comes battles that don't necessarily benefit students' education, for instance, the one that brews every time the adoption of Texas social studies textbooks rolls around (Weissert 2014). The turf war between the political factions on the State Board of Education, Texas legislators, and experts on any textbook subject is worth noting, but it is well beyond the scope of this thesis. Fittingly, my goal is to compare the TEKS writing process and its presentation in composition and literature textbooks with the features unveiled through the research of process theorists. Little public outcry exists on the direction taken in the state ELAR textbooks. However, the states<sup>1</sup> involved in the Core Curriculum battle have addressed the paradigm shift of the English curriculum, where writing instruction is geared toward technical and business writing over teaching analytical discourse.

Based on what I have seen in Texas grammar and composition textbooks, an uproar concerning its content is needed. Teacher wraparounds<sup>2</sup> in high school writing and grammar textbooks offer teachers' guides that endorse one-dimensional writing and prepare high school students to write to be scored, either by a teacher or, as Kemper, Sebranek, and Meyer (2012) write in *Texas Writing Source*, a test evaluator (245). State assessments are necessary; however, when the tests become the sole determinant of a student's ability to write, the results don't provide the most accurate picture. In addition,

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<sup>1</sup> Texas has chosen not to adopt the Common Core Standards (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Additional information placed in the teacher's edition to aid teachers' instruction on a specific topic.

part of the problem lies with the state curriculum writers' vague writing of the TEKS writing process. I refer back to the introductory sentence of the TEKS portion of the TEA website; it states that the TEKS is in place to explain "what students should know and be able to do" ("Texas Essential Skills" 2011). As the standards are composed, there are no guidelines to measure the accuracy or inaccuracy of the TEKS writing process.

Therefore, I have chosen to refer to use the writing philosophy established by National Council of Teaching of English (NCTE). The organization believes:

Writing is a process that "involves an understanding of what writers do, however, involves thinking not just about what texts look like when they are finished but also about what strategies writers might employ to produce those texts. Knowledge about writing is only complete with understanding the complex of actions in which writers engage as they produce texts. ...development, through extended practice over years, of a repertory of routines, skills, strategies, and practices, for generating, revising, and editing different kinds of texts. ...development of reflective abilities and meta-awareness about writing. ... Research, theory, and practice over the past 40 years has produced a richer understanding of what writers do (NCTE 2004).

NCTE makes it clear that writing could be can be turned into a "formulaic set of steps," depending on the writing situation engaged by the writer. Here is where the TEKS fall short of the NCTE's description of the writing process. The standardized writing

found in the education standards and the state-adopted textbooks make this style of composition standard within the curriculum. Are there times when linear writing is beneficial? Yes, some of them are included in the TEKS, for example business writing.

Lindemann (1992) attempts to provide an excuse as to why some state's education standards endorse a discursive writing process at the high school level. In *Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, she wrote high school students and first-year composition students are "unskilled writers" who are unable to juggle multiple writing tasks simultaneously (27). Perl (1979) concludes writers at this level aren't "unskilled," as they exhibit skills that are quite evident. The mistake comes with teachers who are on a narrow mental pathway and teach writing with strict structure (334). Assumptions, such as those that contend revision only happens in one stage of the writing process, further place the student writer's discourse on a linear path (Myhill and Jones 324-325). While this might work as an argument, I believe the reason comes into play as a way to maintain tradition (Shafer 29, Hartwell 15). The writing process boils down to this: Any writing process that shies from discovery is not beneficial, as it shortchanges students' ability to engage in the highly intellectual process (Bartholomae and Hull 47). High school teachers must understand what they are teaching and why they are teaching it (Berlin 10). As much as I discredit CTR, it is actually a legitimate form of discourse. Is it the best choice to provide solid writing instruction? Probably not, but many teachers in Texas probably don't know that CTR is the form of rhetoric they are teaching students.

Hillocks took issue in his book, *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning*, that none of the teachers he surveyed, for example, were unaware of Kinneavy or his four aims of discourse (85). That is not necessarily the pressing issue facing ELAR teachers in Texas. The problem is some teachers don't know the elements of recursive writing process. The value of composition over product composition begins as soon as the teacher has an understanding of the "exciting, eventful, and evolving" process (Murray 4).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The TEKS, and most public school writing pedagogy models in U.S. public schools, has a history that is solidified in rhetoric that was established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Process theory is the emphasis of the state education standards, but the design of writing process taught in Texas high schools doesn't reflect the flow usually associated with process theorists. The nature of the TEKS existence is grounded in formulaic rhetoric.

CTR is identified with “formal correctness, elegance of style, and the modes of discourse: description, narration, exposition, and argument” (Babin and Harrison 54). The name for CTR was inadvertently created through Fogarty's personal criticism of “shorthand and off-the-cuff way of alluding to the way the tradition of rhetoric was currently being purveyed in the Freshman Composition textbooks of his day, writing pedagogy that is current traditional (no hyphen) in nature” (Hawk 14). To assess the landscape of the “new rhetoric” taking shape during this time, Fogarty wrote in 1959, that current writing instruction resembled elements of rhetoricians I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, and General Semanticists yet was still rooted in the Aristotelian rhetoric. According to Hawk, Aristotelian rhetoric embraced elements of philosophy, modes of persuasion, and style (Fogarty 118). Based on the comparison between the philosophies

of Aristotle, Richardson, Burke, and General Semanticists, Fogarty developed a teaching philosophy that details the point where all four meet, what he called CTR.

Crowley (1990) echoes Fogarty; both believe current traditionalism isn't rhetoric because its features have very little to do with writing instruction (147). True rhetoric, according to Crowley and Fogarty, involves the implementation of effective writing by the rhetor with little regard for textbook drilling, writing lectures for teachers, and heavy-handed grading of grammar and syntax. "Full-frontal teaching," Crowley reminds us, is of no benefit to the students; the teacher is the beneficiary of writing instruction.

The current-traditional model of invention played an important role in the development of this pedagogy. The model can fairly be described as the construction of a mental forecast of that was to appear on paper ... the model tacitly assumed that any thinking student should be able to get her writing right on the first go-around. ... What teachers could do was lecture about how a finished discourse should look, if it were to accurately reflect the uniform, 'natural' composing process put forward in current-traditional theory (Crowley 147-148).

### **Birth of Process Theory**

Composition theorists who study K-12 education immediately point to writing instruction that abides by the elements of CTR. However, as the paradigm shift toward process theory took shape in the late 60s (per Tobin) or early 1970s (according to Perl) to counteract CTR, the public school system didn't abandon its emphasis on CTR. Process

theory placed a greater emphasis on learning what happens when writers' wrote over how conforming to a set of rules. Composition, as process theory pioneers Don Murray, Peter Elbow, Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, James Moffett, and James Britton found, involves more than students memorizing rules and steps, writing to be graded, pinpointing and correcting grammatical and syntax errors, and disregarding writers' voices. Interestingly, the steps within the writing process described by process theorists encompass many aspects, including psychology of writing (Flower and Hayes, Moffett, and Britton), the role of grammar in composition (Patrick Hartwell and Martha Kolln), and writing as a social act (Karen Burke LeFevre).

Emig is credited with the first look in into how students come to develop a product. Her leap to define steps in the writing process (planning, prewriting, and revision) in *The Composition Processes of Twelfth Graders*, is, according to Stephen North, "arguably . . . the single most influential piece of researcher inquiry-and maybe any kind of inquiry in composition's short history" (Nelms 108). The process approach to writing, however, was first mentioned by Moffett, who in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (1968) distinguished the differences between processes and products (Hundley 109). Furthermore, Moffett discredits the traditional writing pedagogy model that relies heavily on sectioning instruction into "elements, categories, and units" (Lindemann 98). Britton's challenge to Current Traditionalism is found in his displeasure in teaching static modes, use of worksheets, and heavy concentration on grammar and punctuation skills. He stresses "the use of writing as a tool for learning and communication" (Durst and

Newell 1989). Prior to Emig's discovery, literary texts were seen as simple processes of transcription and decoding. Emig's research ushered in an era of research in student writing in which "extended processes of composition and comprehension" and "understandings of readers and writers develop and change" took shape (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran 687).

Donald Murray, much like Emig, defined the writing process (prewriting, writing, and revision) and explained how teachers are to encourage students to Murray's call for teachers to abandon formalist writing pedagogy. In *Teach Writing as a Process Not a Product* (1972) Murray profusely tells teachers to "shut up and allow students to write" (5). His stance on writing stomped tradition and promoted any approach that places the student first.

Murray valued surprise. Tradition valued rules and prescribed forms; Murray valued form following meaning. Tradition valued an objective, impersonal tone; Murray valued voice. He also questioned writing instruction grounded in the drill-and-practice of traditional grammar-instruction that emphasized correctness as a precondition for effective writing (Romano 74).

In the years following Murray's and Emig's definitions of the writing process, the more process theorists studied the writing process, other areas of inquiry developed. With students in control of the direction of their writing, theorists wanted to know what occurs metaphysically in the writing process. Cognitive writing theorists wanted to merge



cognitive psychology and the writing process to study what internal processes students use when they plan, compose, and revise. Flower and Hayes (1980) write the “process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing” (366). With the advent of multiple facets of process theory, the opportunity to examine its place in the history of composition and rhetoric instruction took shape.

### **Writing Pedagogies: Fulkerson and Berlin**

Richard Fulkerson’s and James Berlin’s works will explain the various schools of writing pedagogy. Although Berlin is not sold on Fulkerson’s four philosophies of composition, both writers define the schools of composition theory through historical and rhetorical significance. In addition, for the purpose of this thesis, their work lay a strong foundation in my discussion of the composition-based writing process. The writing process outlined by the TEKS resemble the Current-Traditionalism discussion posed by Berlin (12) and the Formalist a view developed by Fulkerson. Fulkerson asserts teachers are to avoid formalist writing instruction that devalues student voice in composition and favors student implementation of grammar (4).

Fulkerson’s article, “Four Philosophies of Composition” is based on two previously written pieces on the crisis the authors had seen in the composition classroom, “The Mirror and the Lamp” by M.H. Abrams (1953) Charles Silberman’s “Crisis in the Classroom” (1970). Abrams’ classification of literary theories is a partial basis for his design of the four philosophies of composition: formalist, expressionist, mimetic, and

rhetorical (4). Formalists grade writing assignments based on grammar for example, “one comma splice or five spelling errors” (Fulkerson 4). Janet Emig wrote in “Twelfth,” “most of the criteria by which students’ of school-sponsored writing is evaluated concern the accidents rather than the essences of discourse – that is spelling, punctuation, penmanship, and length” (93). Fulkerson notes formalist writing began to lose its prominence during the late 70s, mainly because of the paradigm shift in writing that was taking place.

Expressionism, as defined by Fulkerson, “values writing that is about personal subjects” and “self-discovery” (5). Personal voice and honest writing is valued, as it is seen as a means to place the student as the center of writing activity. Ken Macrorie emphasizes “truth in writing” in *Telling Writing*, for example. Engfish (a term created by one of Macrorie’s students that characterizes “phony, pretentious language”<sup>3</sup> of schools), emphasizing the importance of truth telling in all writing:

This is the first requirement for good writing: truth; not the truth (whoever knows surely what that is?), but some kind of truth—a connection between the things written about, the words used in the writing, and the author's experience in a world she knows well—whether in fact or dream or imagination” (Lindemann 362).

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<sup>3</sup> Macrorie, Ken. *Telling Writing* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Company, 1980. Print.

Along the same line, W. Ross Winterowd (1994) holds that students should have the right to explore themselves in essays regardless if the discourse is formal or informal (122). This philosophy is seen heavily in the planning stage of the TEKS writing process. High school students are encouraged to draw upon personal experiences to interpret literature; I point out such instances in a later chapter. The use of personal experiences to catapult a student's interest in literature meets my approval, but the writing that doesn't benefit students are the literary analysis assignments where students have to apply characters to real-life individuals. This places the student to create a narrative over an analytical piece.

Mimetics is a philosophy that the TEA has adopted to encourage teachers to prepare students for EOC exams, good writing leads to good thinking ("Redesign of the" 2014). However, a closer analysis of the TEKS and the textbooks shows neither concept is promoted. The linear approach that has settled in the TEKS, STAAR, and state-adopted textbooks does not allow students to engage in the modes of discourse nor the literary works. Mimetics contend students fail at writing sound discourse because they don't have enough background information on the topic. The TEKS writing process lists research as a pre-writing strategy, but a question that will become more evident through the case studies is whether the teaching resources used echo mimetics' stance. Does the student know how to perform research on a topic to yield quality information for the essay?

The rhetorical stance, the fourth and final of Fulkerson's philosophies, stresses "good writing is adapted to achieve the desired effect on the desired audience. If the same

verbal construct is direct to a different audience, then it may have to be evaluated differently” (6). This philosophy is placed squarely on the teacher, as Fulkerson notes writing teachers “either fail to have a consistent value theory or fail to let that philosophy shape pedagogy (7). He uses as an example Kinneavy’s four modes of discourse. With the education standards, they have been distinguished for the student. However, in the case of the student who mixes the modes and the teacher or scorer doesn’t recognize the mix, the student could receive an unsatisfactory score. On state exams, teachers are instructed to prepare student for the writing tests where they are to “stick” to the discourse at hand. For instance, English I students must write an expository essay for the EOC exam. According to Victoria Young, students are to “write on the mode provided” (2014). Will the student’s score suffer if she sways and adds elements of a narrative in the essay?

### **Kinneavy’s Modes of Discourse**

CTR pedagogy is traceable to *English and Composition and Rhetoric* by Bain (1890). This paradigm shift of the late 1800’s classified composition into four forms – description, narration, exposition, and persuasion or argument (Harned 42; Hillocks 41; Kinneavy 12). Bain ushered in the use of specific figures of speech into writing (e.g. simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole) and heavy emphasis on “arrangement of words” and “the structure of sentences and the paragraphs,” principles of great importance to Bain (4).

The consideration of the order of words belongs partly to grammar, and partly to rhetoric. On this important subject there is no hard and fast line between Grammar and Rhetoric. Nevertheless, there are certain topics that may with propriety be allocated to Grammar, and certain other topics to Rhetoric (Bain 1).

The rhetorical model has several critics, but there are advocates of the Bain’s writing philosophy. Proponents of Bain assert his composition theory was written for natural science rhetoric and not specifically for composition pedagogy (Harned 43).

<b>Mode of Discourse</b>	<b>Kinneavy<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>TEKS<sup>5</sup></b>
Narration	Story about, history of, an account of the process of something	Tells a true story
Description (Evaluation)	Describes or details the distinguishing features of something	Convey an impression about a person, place, or thing
Persuasion	Elicits a specific reaction from the audience; can include exposition	Convince readers to do something or accept the author’s point of view
Exposition (Classification)	Detailed description of facts; proves something	Information, discusses ideas, or explains a process

**Table 1: Kinneavy’s Updated Modes of Discourse**

<sup>4</sup> Includes references from paminamagic [cq]. (2009, Aug. 29). James Kinneavy aims of discourse [cq] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWiMn13kigg> and Crusius, Timothy. “Thinking (and Rethinking) Kinneavy.” Rhetoric Review. 3.2 (1985): 120-130. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Source: *Prentice Hall Literature 9e: Grade 10* (2009).

Surprisingly, allusion to Bain’s composition theory still caught the eye of composition researchers who, at the time, were on the quest to define composition. If I had to tie CTR to writing instruction in Texas public schools, I would point to Kinneavy’s *Discourse*. When Kinneavy’s book was first published, it was significant to the study of discourse because it “re-established important connections between writing instruction and classical rhetoric” (Faigley 1999) and re-defined how individuals used language. Kinneavy’s aims of discourse is a throwback to classical rhetoric, taking into consideration the encoder (the writer), decoder (reader), and the reality in which the reference is made, and on the product (Kinneavy 38; Bazerman 105). The TEA developed four forms of language that are loosely based on Kinneavy’s aim (Hillocks 41). In reference to the TEKS, how the decoder receives the message is more important than the approach used by the encoder to convey the message.

It is also in Kinneavy’s text where he re-crafts the four modes of discourse created by Bain – descriptive, exposition, narrative, and persuasive. Kinneavy explains: “The first four (exposition, description, argumentation, and persuasion) became the structuring principles of many composition books in the next half century. They are still accepted modes in many high school and college texts” (12). The only link between Kinneavy and the TEKS is the use of contemporary four modes of discourse (see Table 1). *The Diary of Ann Frank* example used in the introduction illustrates my point. Additional clarity is shown in Kinneavy’s example where he uses a newspaper. He shows that editorials – mainly persuasive pieces – can contain exposition (Kinneavy n.d.). Table 1 shows how

the modes can overlap, yet in the TEKS description of the modes overlapping is non-existent.

No theory of modes of discourse ever pretends that modes do not overlap. In actuality, it is impossible to have pure narration, description, evaluation, or classification ... however, there will what Morris calls a 'dominant' mode or language (37).

The first sentence of the Kinneavy quote explains why changes needed to be made to Bain's framework; the theory included distorted categories and unsureness on what direction each writer was to take in the writing process. Therefore, Pearson's definition fits a traditionalist view of discourse (i.e. Bain) over one that is closer to composition studies. Kinneavy points out in *A Theory of Discourse* that some high school and college textbooks that are used to teach the writing process are working off a theory that is nearly three-decades old. Kinneavy's modes focus on the subject, audience, and the use of language. The TEKS writing process references the communication model posited by Kinneavy: "Basic to all uses of language are a person who encodes a message, the signal (the written product) which carries the message, the reality to which the message refers, and the decoder (receiver of the message)" (Kinneavy 19).

The triangular model established by Kinneavy is essential to communication. The TEKS does include audience as a significant aspect of the writing process, as each student is expected to distinguish whom they want to reach through their written communication. Audience is a facet of the TEKS writing process that students are expect

to determine, but they don't (Clark 141). Teacher wraparounds, for the most part, show the teacher determines the audience for students. There is very little instruction included in writing assignments that teach students how to determine their audience if it requested in the assignment. Research shows that audience is not a cut-and-dry determination process, even though the teacher has made the choice for the student (Clark 143; Ong 10; Emig 7). Students have to be able to determine the best approach to writing for a self-selected audience. In the four lessons I will examine later in this thesis, one assignment mentions that students are to consider their audience when composing. If students are not instructed to consider their audience, a clear indicator is the student is writing for the teacher. Standardized writing prompts ask students to write an essay to a particular person or group of people. It causes challenges for the student because she cannot create realistic discourse since the test grader might misconceive a word or phrase that is well-known to the imagined decoder.

State curriculum writers seem to have placed faith in Kinneavy's assessment of composition and language. Kinneavy is credited with developing the English teacher education program at The University of Texas' teacher education program was developed by Kinneavy while he served as a professor (Faigley 1999). When state assessments became the focus of the Texas education landscape, the TEA, once again, looked to Kinneavy's theory. Theory of discourse served as the capstone for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAAS) (Hillocks 81).



The TEA has obviously misconnected Kinneavy's theory to its curriculum and assessment specifications on many levels. In the planning stage of the TEKS writing process, students are to choose a genre to write their pieces without risk of combining any of the genres. Regardless, students' choosing modes over recognizing their overlapping qualities is a complete aim to maintain uniformity in writing instruction. Therefore, the TEKS writing process and its grammar-specific strands remain closely tied to the CTR pedagogical model of writing that is credited to Bain. Kinneavy's lack of accounting for rhetorical choices and composing processes (O'Banion 196) and failed "empirical support" for his own theory (Fulkerson 43). Despite composition scholars' criticisms of work, Kinneavy's theory of discourse is considered the skeleton for writing instruction and state assessments in Texas.

When I first read the pre-writing stage description, I was under the assumption that "genre" was representative of "mode." If the state curriculum writers really mean genre, a major compartment of the writing process has been overlooked in the state curriculum. For one thing, the textbooks don't explain the genre beyond the literary aspect. I assess the TEKS, when it speaks of genre in writing they are using the form interchangeably to mean one thing. When the student talks of genre, they can mean poetry or narration. The TEKS writing process is not one that encompasses all literary genres of writing. A student cannot use Strand 13 to write a poem, for example. Hence, the TEKS' definition of genre in the writing process fits closer with the modes of discourse than the literary definition of genre. The determination can become confusing,

especially to high school students who have never studied genre as a writing form. Ann Berthoff, like Cooper, sees similarities in the genres, noting that storytelling and expository writing have much in common (Lynn 904). Cooper (1999) also wrestles with the meaning of genre.

For so long had I thought of genres as categories of literary texts that it has taken me years to internalize a new definition that reveals genres to be essential to thinking, learning, communication, and social cohesion (25).

### **Writing Process and Timed Writing**

The writing process has acquired many schools of thought since 1971 (e.g. expressivism, social cognitivism), but, since Texas has put grand faith in the assessment process, the writing process taught in high schools has brought up a personal interest in research on the writing process in timed situations. Does “teaching to the test” completely rip students of their ability to proceed through the writing process? On the surface, all students who take timed exams go through mental adjustments to pass written assessments. Much like the inquiry Flower and Hayes made about metacognition in the writing process, researchers such as Dorothy Worden, Willa Wolcott, and Edward White have devised niche research that explains the specific act. Prior to the work of Worden, Wolcott, and White, “composition studies has long assumed that students will not exhibit ‘the writing process’ in timed essays and as a result has neglected to study the writing process that is exhibited in timed essay exams” (Worden 158). With reference to the writing process definitions created by Flower, Hayes, and Murray (159), words on

revision by Sommers and Faigley and Witte (161), Worden adamantly calls for English teachers to teach writing as Murray suggests – product over process.

Process-oriented pedagogy is encouraged through practices such as requiring multiple drafts, peer review, and portfolio-based class assessment ... we should take a cue from Aristotle's classic definition of rhetoric and define the ideal writing process as the ability to discover in a given situation the available means of composing (176).

Worden's findings of the direction we need to take to maintain the writing process in timed writing situations is interesting because it would call for a complete abandonment of current traditionalism. I don't know much about the public school writing process used in Washington state – the location of the research sample in Worden's study – but the TEKS writing process would have to make severe changes to its curriculum and testing policies to shift the emphasis of its writing instruction to value process over product.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to review the high school TEKS writing process and how it compares with the writing process that has been researched and established by contemporary composition theorists. Through the research I have accumulated for this thesis, I encountered several discrepancies between components of the three-step, recursive writing process created by Emig and Murray (pre-writing, drafting, and revision) and the five-step, discursive model (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing) designed by the TEA. The research will allow me to analyze and outline the similarities and dissimilarities between the two writing processes. To narrow my analysis of the writing process down, I concentrated on two contributors that determine how the process is taught to Texas high school students – the STAAR and state-approved textbooks. Based on these two avenues, I plan to answer the following question: Does the state's five-step, writing process encourage high school students to concentrate on the process of developing sound discourse over reaching an end product?

I originally planned to use human-subjects research on English teachers in Texas to gain the best view of composition pedagogy in Texas high schools. Scheduling and participation became an issue, so I opted to consult state-approved writing and grammar literature textbooks as resources. The larger textbook producers on the state adoption list will be used, such as Prentice Hall (Pearson), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Glencoe, and Holt McDougal. Lessons included in this thesis have come from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade edition of

*Texas Write Source* by Kemper, Pat Sebranek, and Verne Meyer (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), the 10<sup>th</sup> grade edition of *Prentice Hall Writing and Grammar* (Pearson Education), and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade edition *Glencoe Writer's Choice: Grammar and Composition*. While the basis of the writing process is covered in composition books, literature texts reiterate the writing process to guide students through essay assignments. Therefore, it is only fitting to include selections from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade edition of *Prentice Hall Literature: Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes* (Pearson Education), *Holt McDougal Literature*, and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade edition of *Prentice Hall Literature*. I will weigh writing assignments found in writing and composition and literature against writing pedagogy determined by composition scholars and provide an analytical comparison.

The reference section of Texas Woman's University library houses one textbook that is rhetorical traditional yet includes a close resemblance to process theorists' opinions of the writing process. I didn't spend too much time reviewing textbooks that are no longer on the state's adoption list, but *English: Communication Skills in The New Millennium* caught my attention for two reasons. One, it wasn't published by Pearson, Glencoe, or Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. And, two, the publisher, Barrett Kendall, is located in Austin. Senn's and Skinner's textbook might have fallen out of favor with the state because it might have sounded too radical for the ears of the majority, current-traditionalist minded textbook adoption board (Crowley 146). Compared with Kemper et al and the Pearson texts, *English: Communication Skills in The New Millennium* by J.A. Senn and Carol Ann Skinner (2001) takes TEKS and aligns writing pedagogy with

composition theory. Senn and Skinner wrote, “while no two writers use the same strategies when putting their thoughts into writing, there is a general process ... to upgrade your own writing at your own speed” (C11). This description is completely different from “the best writers approach writing with the same writing process” (Kemper et al 47). Senn’s and Skinner’s diversion from current-traditionalist rhetoric doesn’t stop there. The authors wrote, “For example, you may choose to revise your writing as you draft it or edit your writing as you revise” and it is perfectly OK for a student writer to “go back to any stage at any point until you are satisfied with the quality of your writing” (9-10).

I reviewed several writing assignments for this analysis. For the sake of space, I chose four writing lesson assignments – two from writing and grammar texts and two literature texts – to illustrate how students are taught to approach writing assignments (see Chapter 4). After I present the details of each lesson, I will consult research from composition theorists to explain how each assignment fulfills or fails to help Texas students produce sound discourse. In my overall assessment of the lessons, I will determine whether school textbook instruction contributes to students’ misunderstanding of the writing process. My intention for this thesis is not to spend mounds of space on the test, but I did discover interesting research on the writing process and timed writing.

The entire discussion of the writing process has paved the way for my discussion of additional topics related to the writing process. The writing process is more than placing thoughts on paper and submitting the final copy for a grade. Elbow and Murray

note that pre-writing is the most important aspect of writing. If the student doesn't plan, he or she will not be able to produce quality writing. How do the teaching resources presented promote planning in writing? I will make commentary on pre-writing techniques process theorists find to be beneficial to student writers.

Do outdated writing instruction ideologies – such as CTR and formalists – prevent Texas students from comprehending the writing process? Does an English teacher's education background matter, especially when the TEA has established the writing process fit to prepare students to pass the STAAR? While the STAAR is not the focus of this thesis, it must be mentioned as a new direction the state has taken in its writing process. Is the state assessment as harmful as many paint it to be? Is it possible for the writing process used in timed assessments to benefit students?

The research presented in this thesis is needed because scholarly research on English composition pedagogy in Texas public high schools, especially research post-TAKS, is needed. Hillocks' *Testing Trap* and the Odell and Hampton study of Fort Worth ISD are the closest references that describe the how the writing process is taught in Texas schools. Emig, Hillocks, and Odell and Hampton are ideal choices for emphasis for this thesis, as their studies laid groundwork for further studies in K-12 and the writing process. Not to slight Emig, but Hillocks' and Odell and Hampton's research in the writing process focuses specifically on Texas' writing process curriculum. Fittingly, the trio's contribution to composition pedagogy contend training and professional development of high school teachers contribute to English teachers' understand of

teaching the writing process. Hillocks' book is a distinct vision for the thesis because it takes a hard look at TEKS writing instruction and testing program through the eyes of teachers, school administrators, and composition theorists. The goal here is to analyze the TEKS through process theory; Hillocks does this and more. Although the book was written in the age of TAAS, I have found some of the same erroneous writing pedagogy methods repeated in textbooks used in the STAAR era. For example, Hillocks was critical of teaching the characteristic of the mode of discourse over teaching the strategies for making an effective piece that reflects the mode (24). Similarly, in an analytical essay assignments, seniors are to analyze *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and explain the meaning "behind the contrast between the beauty of the pleasure dome and darkness of its surroundings" ("*Glencoe Literature: Texas*" 847). Students are told to take quotations from the poem that support and amplify the thesis. The instruction portion of the poem only explains difficult to understand vocabulary from the story; thus, teachers are to allow the model literary analysis show students how to effectively write a literary analysis.

Based on education and population statistics of Texas, it is not hard to see why research is quite robust in teaching bilingual students and disabled students the writing process. According to the Intercultural Development Research Association, between the 1996-1997 and 2006-2007 school years, Texas public schools saw its number of English language learners leap from 514,000 to 731,000 (Cortez and Villarreal 5).



Approximately, 8.8 % of students in Texas qualify for special education services under the American Disabilities Act (Associated Press 2012). While this number is slightly lower than the national average of 11%, according to 2012 statistics, composition theorist and education scholars continually research the methods to bridge the learning gap between these students and those who don't have a learning disability. Studies show that students with learning disabilities write poorer than their non-disabled counterparts and consistently “struggle with cognitive processes such as planning, organization, and composing” (Strassman and Schirmer 168).

## CHAPTER IV

### TEKS WRITING PROCESS UNFOLDS

To illustrate how the writing process is taught in Texas high schools, I have taken four diverse lessons from the larger state-adopted textbook publishers for analysis. With each case study, I took detailed notes of the assignments and instruction methods presented to students before the assignments. As I took notes on the assignments, I considered the research I accumulated on the process theory, Kinneavy's theory of discourse, and the TEKS writing process strand and grammar strands. Based on what I acquired, I will disclose the benefits and drawbacks to the assignments, and issue improvements by each step in the TEKS writing process. For instance, I will discuss an instruction faux pas in the pre-writing stages because, according to the TEKS, all planning for the writing assignment takes place in stage one. The results of my opinions are solely based on the best methods to teaching the writing process by theorists.

#### **Case Study One: Comparative Analysis**

Assignment: After reading several poems from The English Renaissance Period (1485-1625), senior high school students are instructed to write a comparative analysis on two of poems read in class. The poems are works from Edmund Spenser, Sir Phillip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, St. Walter Raleigh, William Shakespeare, Francesco Petrarch, and Pablo Neruda ("*Prentice Hall Literature*" xi).

Instruction: Students are introduced to the unit with a historical background of the period, including sections on the Tudors, religious turmoil, and Elizabeth I. The literature

of the period chronicles the Elizabethan Drama, poetry, and Jacobean Prose (199-200). Following each poem, guides for student response set students minds on responding the literature through their own life and critical thinking. Vocabulary and grammar style application exercises are reiterated in some post-reading responses. In Shakespeare's Sonnets 29, 106, 116, and 130, students are instructed to pretend they are an Elizabethan gossip columnists and write a brief paragraph "to interest your readers in the sonnets" (219).

Pre-writing: Students are encouraged to choose two poems that contain similarities, in content, structure, theme, or authorship. As the student reads through the poems, students are to write notes on notecards and include passages to cite in the analysis. Textbook writers encourage student to locate information about the authors and historical periods ("*Prentice Hall Literature*" 232).

Drafting: Refer to pre-writing notes during the draft. Students are encourages to "use transitional words and phrases to clarify relationships between among your ideas" (232). Striving for unity and citing sources are greatly emphasized.

Revising: Key notes for students to remember: review and add information that will help insinuate points; place transitional words, if needed; and proofread the work for "errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar" (232-233).

Publishing: Create an anthology of responses; a discussion group, or hold a class discussion the comparative analysis with a question-and-answer session to follow.

## **Case Study Two: Personal Response Essay**

Assignment: Student is to write a personal response to a short story or a poem (“The Language of” 644). For this assignment, we will use “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst.

Instruction: Students are provided a five-paragraph form to follow for essay assignment: the plan includes an introduction; three supports of the literary work, and conclusion.

Pre-writing: Students are to plan for writing by reading the short story or poem, free write about response to piece, consider their own memories affected their response to the short story and identify the audience (“The Language of” 647).

Drafting: Specific instructions include writing an introduction that includes title and author of the work; body that states your general response to the piece; paragraphs that included student’s elaboration of key points by quoting specific passages or quotes; conclude essay with closing paragraph that summarizes student’s overall response to short story.

Revising: Target skill for this essay is to revise sentences that are not written in active voice. Students are reminded that the “subject performs the action” and are encouraged to “place a modifier as close as possible to the word it modifies ... ‘In the street, Bob heard a bus’ implies Bob was in the street ... ‘Bob heard a bus in the street’ clarifies that the ‘bus’ was in the street” (648).

Editing and Proofreading: This assignment requires students to become mindful of misplaced modifiers in their writing:

When first reading the passage, Doodle's brother was teaching him to walk because he felt ashamed. I was disturbed that he did it for himself, not to help his disabled brother, not want the achievement for Doodle but for himself of this goal?

becomes

When I first read the passage about Doodle's brother teaching him to walk because he felt ashamed, I was disturbed that he did it for himself, not to help his disabled brother. How could the narrator, as a brother, not want the achievement of this goal for Doodle, but for himself? ("The Language of" 648).

Publishing: Reflecting in the student's writing portfolio is encourages instead of publishing the work.

### **Case Study Three: Exposition Compare-and-Contrast Essay (10<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

Assignment: Sophomores are to choose two or more subjects and compare them. (Carroll, Wilson, and Forlini 176).

Instruction: Defines comparison and contrast essays and the types of comparison-and-contrast essays. Lecture concludes with a professional model to enhance the reading and writing connection (174). In "Two Writing Processes" by William Zinsser, the writer discusses his method of writing and the thoughts of "Dr. Brock." The textbook writers

point to Zinsser's presentation: Early in the essay, it becomes apparent that Zinsser and Brock have different ideas about what it means to be a writer ... It becomes clear that Zinsser is comparing and contrasting the writing methods of the two writers, himself and Dr. Brock ... Transitions such as 'at the end' help readers follow Zinsser's thoughts ... The essay contains a clear and logical organization (Carroll, Wilson, and Forlini 174-175).

Pre-writing: Freewriting and listing are strategies provided by the textbook. The freewriting exercise – write for five minutes – allows students to recall a recent decision they made. Lists, on the other hand, help students go from a broad subject to a narrower, more specified subject. Once the student finds two items in the list that are similar (textbook example used is e-mail and U.S. Mail) different, the student uses a Venn diagram to evaluate the topic; uses four questions to consider the writer's audience and gather details (personal experiences, primary and tertiary sources).

Drafting: Carroll, Wilson, and Forlini share with students' two methods commonly used to organize C-C essays, subject by subject or point by point. Students are told to provide details in this stage, such as examples, facts, and quotations and figures.

Revising: Four areas students are to revise are the structure and balance, paragraphs for variety, sentences (run-ons and fragments, add conjunction and combine sentences), and word choice (add transitions to clarify meaning). As noted in the teacher's wraparound, peer review allows students to look for things highlighted in the chapter (e.g. audience, use of conjunctions, organization, logic, balance, and structure). In

the student edition, students are instructed to write down five questions they want answered by the peer reviewer (186).

Editing and Proofreading: Students are to edit for punctuation, specifically for punctuating compound sentences.

Publishing: Build a portfolio and make a presentation of the essay and reflect on writing the C-C essay via self-analysis rubric.

#### **Case Study Four: Persuasive Essay**

Assignment: Eleventh grade students are assigned the following writing project: “Your school has started a peer-support group to help first-year student adjust to high school. You have been invited to speak to a small group to persuade them to act in a certain way in order to avoid some common pitfalls. The talk will be based on your own experiences and observations. While you may use humor and irony, your overall tone should be thoughtful” (“Glencoe Writer’s Choice” 306). The purpose of the assignment is to convince the audience to explain which actions to embrace and those to avoid. A page length of 1 to 2 pages has been stipulated for the assignment.

Instruction: Unit 6 of the Glencoe text is dedicated to teaching strategies to help students build sound persuasive essays. The unit begins with a model of persuasive writing in the real world, a persuasive speech from attorney Walter R. Echo-Hawk where he discusses the need to return “ancestral remains and cultural objects to tribal descendants” (267). Furthermore, students engage in lessons on building thesis statements (270-271); knowing your audience (272); distinguishing fact from opinion

(275-276); evaluating evidence (279-280); inductive and deductive reasoning (282-286); and recognizing logical fallacies (288-293). Each lesson includes professional and “student” models of concepts.

Pre-writing: Students are to develop a list of regrettable events they encountered early in their high school careers and explain a course of action for the audience to help ninth graders avoid the same mistakes (307).

Drafting: Make an informal outline of the essay. Writers are to include at least one piece of supporting evidence for every point made (308).

Revision: Evaluate the essay for its strengths and weaknesses. A revising checklist is provided to guide students through the process. The checklist emphasizes: a good opening; appealing tone; tight argument; aspects lie with the audience and purpose; sound reasoning; and logical organization (308).

Editing and proofreading: A checklist is again provided; students are to make sure: subjects and verbs agree; sentences are complete; pronouns have clear antecedents; and words are spelled correctly (309).

Publishing: Have essay published or student presents essay as a speech.

The unit concludes with a literary model, entitled “Of Accidental Judgments and Casual Slaughters” by Kai Erickson. The essay model, written in 1985, takes a closer look at the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II (310).



### **Step One: Planning**

The TEKS, textbooks, and composition theorists concur: planning establishes the ground work for the student's entire essay. Planning – whether it is internal, collaborative, or social cognitive – can hinder the writing process; planning is one way to improve student's writing (Flower and Hayes 367; Elbow 32). With the TEKS, all foundational thoughts for the essay begin at step one. Pre-writing allows students to “organize your ideas into a writing plan, perhaps using an outline or a graphic organizer” (Kemper et al 23). Thus, the student is allowed to take the most comfortable and effective planning strategy and run with it – another hint of individuality in student planning. Glencoe, on the other hand, describes pre-writing as “find a topic; establish your purpose and audience; research and plan your writing” (“Glencoe Writing” 56). The structure for organizing an essay is the last step in the pre-writing process. TEKS doesn't dictate how a student should proceed to develop all these areas; thus, Murray wrote in “Teaching Process of Product” that 85% of the writing process involves planning. The TEKS presents students with a clear vision of what students are to determine at this stage, which includes genre, audience, topic, and thesis (or controlled idea).

The meat of the essay, hence, will come from the student's reception of the information discovered in her query for content to build her discourse. The drawback to this approach, however, is assignments that focus on literary analysis rely too much on student's use of personal experiences to explain literature. This approach is OK for

planning; as expressivists view this approach encourages students to connect with the literature and, possibly, lift the burden of interpretation (Spear 55). This is specifically important on literary analysis assignments. Textbook authors fail to provide students with valid pre-writing preparation to write essays on literary works. Student writing difficulties, posits Bizzell, do not stem from a lack of understanding of writing but from the conventions of academic writing (Reither 142). Baron asserts beginning writers are “further hampered by their ignorance of factual and theoretical material, and by their unfamiliarity with the subject-specific conventions that exist for manipulating the material (55). As we see from the literary writing assignments from some of the high school textbooks, there are very few credible exercises in the pre-writing stage to prepare students to write essays. Also, vehemently missing in the pre-writing stage of literature assignments is instruction that encourages students to tie their thesis or controlling ideas back to the literary work. Instead, students are asked to use real-life examples of points from the literature. There is very little reference in the writing process students where students are instructed to reference the work. Thus, where does literary analysis come into play? Is this not the connection between reading literature and writing about it? Along with modeling, this style of writing is not beneficial to high school students. Fulkerson believes, “The major problem with student writing is that it is not solidly thought out. Hence, we should either teach students how to think or help them learn enough about various topics to have something worth saying, or we should do both” (5).

With or without a writing starter, the student uses several routes to develop the focus of their essays. *Texas Write Source* uses succinct verbs to describe the initial step of writing; gathering, finding, deciding, and organizing show there is research and thought that goes into the early development of an essay (Kemp et al 48). Free writing, clustering, and brainstorming are some of the approaches used by high school students. The multi-layered planning approach of heuristics “increases the possibilities for probing a topic thoroughly, and they usually generate provisional answers” and “formulate further questions” (Lindemann 118). Teachers, according to David Coleman, are obliged to ask students to read like detectives and write like investigative reporters” (Goldstein 2012). Who, what, when, where, why, and how are required for every news story; without its presentation, the reader (or audience) is left uninformed. And, without the 5W’s and H, there is no organization, or meaning, to the news article. The heretic, in composition sense, “can teach new strategies” and “help experienced writer keep track of information and monitor their own plans” (Flower, Schriver, Carey, Haas, and Hayes 237). We can see from textbook examples that heuristics is presented as an option for students. The Glencoe 11<sup>th</sup> grade edition has placed its heretic into four categories: personal, creative, analytical, and informational (66). Personal and creative approaches are somewhat questionable for high school discourse, but the analytical and informational queries are better options for the writing assignment.

The distinguished rhetorical device is rooted in Greek, meaning “to found out or discover; however, it’s Aristotle’s definition of heuristics that is featured in the *Rhetoric*

(Enos and Lauer 79). Aristotle approach to heuristics is the writer's ability to authenticate "proofs" for creating meaning. Lindemann explains these proofs are in the forms of questions. Questions are rhetorically sound because it allows the rhetor – or high school student in this case – to create several "open ended questions that will stimulate "intuition ... memory ... and ... reason" (118). Thus, the more questions the student creates, the greater chance for the writer to build descriptive details and cultivate avenues for inquiry and research. As I am writing this section on the planning stage, my mind won't allow me to list the characteristics outlined by the TEKS. If I think heuristically, one of the first questions I encountered was, "How do I locate curriculum examples used in Texas classrooms to teach the TEKS planning stage?"

Glencoe lists questioning as one of its "musts" for pre-writing. Through this activity, students are developing "an understanding of how asking questions about a subject can lead to writing topic" (60). In my view, "collecting ideas" – according to Senn and Skinner – is important to writing, as it is the questions that build thoughts and establish directions to take. The Glencoe text also distinguishes the types of heretical questions the student should ask at this stage. Heuristics fits the mold of the TEKS, as the standard expects student to think of means to immediately organize their essays and progress to the drafting stage.

The Common Core Standards has pretty much outlawed writing about personal feelings, opinions, and experiences are discouraged in later grades. I applaud this move since literary analysis involves students pinpointing quotes and information from literary

texts and creating impersonal discourse; all types of writing don't always revolve around narratives. The TEKS, on the other hand, doesn't shy from this style of essay writing one bit. Based on the textbook lessons I use for analysis, personal writing is standard in Texas high school writing. In case one, twelfth grade writers assigned to write a comparative analysis of two poems of their choice from the Tudor Period. The background reading on the period is quite informative for students; however, the presentation of the individual poems includes reviewing vocabulary words in the works the students might find difficult. The genre (poetry) and the mode of delivery (analysis) has been chosen for the student. If I were a senior high school student who was encountering her first opportunity reading the poems in the lesson, I would not be able to write a comparative analysis of the works, as the lessons don't provide enough information to analyze two poems. Reading and writing are closely connected, so, in this instance, the student has not been properly instructed to read the poems for analytical reasons and "think beyond the pages" (DasBender 37). Therefore, the student will automatically convert back to writing in a form she is most comfortable, such as writing about personal feelings. In case three, lists and a Venn diagram are used to allow the student to visualize a plan for their essay. However, the use of personal experiences to build around the thesis is elementary; primary sources work best.

Models are used in two of the four writing assignments. The textbooks the state has approved contains a high degree of modeling. Further, it is also used in STAARs preparation material to show high school teachers and students what an essay at each

scoring level resembles (“English I Expository” 2014). Actually, classroom modeling is lauded by education and psychology scholars, as individuals model other people’s behavior as a way to control and develop their own behavior (Eggen and Kauchak 236). Greene writes modeling is most effective when students “develop a sense of the options they have as writers ...” and are able to “articulate their reasons for making they do in different situations” (Dean 61). Kemper et al describe how students are to model paragraphs; students are to practice writing paragraphs based on patterns in an author’s writing that “you really like” (57). To add further fury to this style of writing instruction, the authors refer this instruction back to the TEKS, specifically the writing process. Within the Glencoe Grammar and Writing textbook, there are several instances where modeling is used to illustrate how an 11<sup>th</sup>-grade student should write. For example, in the introduction to the pre-writing lesson, one of the objectives of the lesson is to “analyze the writing process of both professional writers and student writers” (52).

Eggen’s and Kauchak’s assessment doesn’t help explain its significance because writing is not about taking someone else’s writing style and copying it. Greene’s take on modeling seems to be a waste of instruction time. Students are in class for 40 to 45 minutes; why spend so much time teaching students how to use a model to determine their own writing style, especially in the case of literary writing essays? More time should be spent allowing students to develop an understanding of literature or engaging in the writing process instead of students picking out what they “like” about the writing

style of a professional writer. Lindeman and Murray both warn against heavy concentration of models.

I don't endorse professional writing as models for assignments, especially if they are used to allow students to "mimic" professional writers. Lindemann suggests that student's writing is just as good to search as a starting point for writers. Case four uses both student and professional models. Furthermore, something I have been guilty of too, is teachers introducing models too early in the instruction. She said the best time to introduce models is after the student has completed either pre-writing or a draft (126-127). From what I have seen of the schoolbooks and TEKS, modeling is used more as a stand in for teacher instruction. I say this because the teacher wraparounds do not provide additional information pertinent to the assignment. Instead, instruction is geared toward pedagogical concepts (i.e. bell ringers, grammar lessons, teaching English language learners). The purpose of the model is to show students how the writer solves the problem; it should not be treated as a "subject for literary analysis" (127). In *Glencoe Literature: Texas Treasures* (2011), students are assigned to write a literary analysis on "The World Is Too Much For Us" by Wordsworth. The professional model for students to analyze is a reflection piece written by poet Robin Becker; she details her reading of "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" as a child (845). Based on the students' reading of the model, they are to assess the points made by Becker and analyze her writing form. Becker begins with a strong introduction, literary elements Wordsworth used in the poem (unrhymed iambic pentameter and metaphors), literary interpretation,

quotations from Wordsworth and the writer's responses that support her thesis, cohesive paragraphs, and a closing paragraph that re-iterates the thesis (845).

Of the samples I developed, case two provide a harshest example of CTR. In the instruction notes, students are expected to plan to write a five-paragraph essay. Process theorists have voiced their discontent for the five-paragraph essay, because its focus in on sentence placement rather than developing ideas, and, according to Murray, doesn't teach students how to write (Campbell and Latimer 8). Its use doesn't promote sound composition; it is a mode to help make grading essays easy for teachers. Furthermore, in Texas timed-writing situations, the paragraph style is the model is used to allow students to complete the writing exam within the time limit. As I stated earlier in this thesis, if a majority of the school year is dedicated to preparing high school students for EOC exams, the five-paragraph theme must be highly touted. I am convinced there is no ideal situation to use the five-paragraph essay; the essay should never be submitted as a final product. Actually, it might make a good pre-writing exercise, what Elbow calls low-stakes writing (Campbell and Latimer 61-62).

### *Freewriting*

How does a student organize the garble? State-mandated textbooks mention flowcharts, free writing, outline, and graphic organizers are common strategies used by high school students. Elbow is a huge proponent of free writing, as it allows the student to take all her ideas out of the head and place them onto a blank page. Free writing, Elbow said, is beneficial because it allows the student writer to get all the garbage out of



her head. In *Writing Without Teachers* Elbow mentions free writing and garbage, a process that “is good for you” (8). One should not think of free writing as “bad writing;” it is supposed to be that way. In this process, it is perfectly OK to be a scatterbrain. The student’s thoughts literally fall where they may.

Freewriting is taught a pre-writing strategy in the textbooks, but I am suspicious of some of the free-writing examples used in the textbooks. For instance, the free writing example in Glencoe textbook is too “clean” (56). The authors notate the writer is a student from an academy in Concord, Mass. There is surface-level development of thoughts and moments of being a scatterbrain, but the commas and apostrophes are in the write place and there are no misspelled words. In cases two and three, state-adopted textbook suggests that students use freewriting, but the textbook authors do not present a model or explanation of how it works. I envision students drawing doodles on their paper or typing and deleting thoughts. Putting freewriting into instruction sometimes do more harm than good, especially if they are taught erroneously such as the textbook models or are not explained to students at all. Taking random thoughts out of the student’s head and place them on paper or in a Word document with little regard for correctness (e.g. grammar, organization) can be problematic for some students.

I encountered the same issue with my students. They were quite concerned with getting things in order, an aspect of the process that is not required. I concur with Elbow, who said that students are so used to being criticized by teachers that, when they are told to ignore conventions and order in their writing for 15 minutes, they don’t know what to

do. Macrorie, like Elbow, advocates freewriting because it is honest writing since the writer has to present prose in his own language in a set number of minutes (Lindemann 114). Kim Stover, a high school student who studied under Macrorie one summer in 1988, notes “freewriting uncovered buried images and allowed new ones ... freewriting taught me to write as a talk, formerly a cardinal sin. It allowed me to talk honestly on paper and kept me from editing ideas before they’d even been written” (61).

### *Audience*

According to the TEKS, students are encouraged to create a thesis statement or controlling idea (purpose) in the pre-writing stage and determine the intended reader of the essay. My assessment of the high school textbooks shows that audience is either forged by teachers or the textbook and is rarely left at the discretion of the student. Glencoe, for example, consistently emphasizes the importance of audience in writing; it is pushed in its writing and literatures textbooks. “Part of your job as a writer is to know your audience and your reason for writing ... Before you begin any writing task, you must know who your audience is” (64). Furthermore, textbook lessons on audience are not helpful one bit. The TEKS states students must be able to write for a variety of audiences, yet instruction wrap-arounds do not place audience into a clearer perspective for students. Based on the small amount of talk on audience in these cases, most of it is a simple explanation. The audience for the case four is high school students who have yet enter high school. That is a specific group of students at a school. The writer can tailor the prose to reach the students. However, with school-sponsored writing assignments, the

teacher is the reader of the final product. Thus, the student might shy from using certain words that might offend the teacher. Therefore, she strives to write for a grade over writing for individuality.

In a move to shift the textbook conversation away from audience, Glencoe textbook toss in a discussion of purpose. Why I am writing (purpose) and who I am writing (audience) involve two different thought processes for the writer. If the student struggles with writing to a particular audience, she will probably end up choosing the default audience – teacher. Clark (1994) notes some writing teacher encourage students to take their audience into consideration, yet they don't expand on how students are to do so. More than half of the lessons I examined stressed the importance of audience. Teachers must be able to “understand the complexity of the concept and demonstrate how audience awareness manifests when in text (141).

Note there is very little concrete development toward writing a draft taking place. Past students jotting down notes or filling in the steps of a tree diagram, the TEKS doesn't encourage student writing before planning. The thought process that is so heralded in the TEKS is looked down upon by Elbow; heavy concentration on what to say is not always necessary. He sees writing as an avenue that begins at the first thoughts and evolves as the student continues to write, thus explaining his endorsement of freewriting. Why bother thinking about it, as Elbow asserts, “[O]nly at the end will you know what you want to say or the words you want to say it with” (Faigley 530). The

more a student plans, in my view, the better. Maybe, just maybe, some of the garbage that was thrown out in the free writing exercise is worth including in the draft.

The education standards TEKS scratch the surface in the high-degree of mental activity that takes place in the beginning, it is evident students are making several important choices about the direction their essays will take. Hayes and Flower (1989) wrote students journey through three subprocesses in the pre-writing process -- generating, goal setting, and organizing (Lindemann 26). The cognitive writing pre-writing process, claim Flower and Hayes, include students draw from their long-term memory. This information is interesting in regard to the TEKS and standardized writing exams. The education system is based upon scaffolding; vertical alignment progresses a students' comprehension of the writing process from third to twelfth grade ("TEKS Curriculum Framework" 2011). Therefore, for some writing assignments, students must reach back beyond the current lesson; this where long-term memory is beneficial to planning. Thus, the pre-writing strategies learned in elementary school are not the same as the ones presented in tenth grade. When students write about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* in tenth grade they can remember items they learned about the writer as background use in essays they compose on Shakespeare's works (e.g. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*) their senior year. Even among the sub steps, there is mention of moving back and forth. The planning process can become a very complex process and it is a constant, ongoing process in all steps.

## **Step Two: Drafting**

According to the TEKS, after students accomplish the first stage of planning their essay, students are prepared to begin writing their essays. At this point, student writers are to take the preparations they have developed in the planning stage and add structure and coherence. Here is where we start to see the recursive writing process plugged by the textbook writers and the education standards comes into play. I have encountered several instances where students are discouraged from going back to the first step and re-planning their discourse. Based on the cases drawn for this thesis, all of them seem to adopt a discursive writing process. There is absolutely no mention of a student going back to the planning stage if a student doesn't feel comfortable with the direction of the essay during the drafting stage. The forward-thinking diverges from the well-written lessons presented in the texts.

The TEKS notes at this step the student is to create a draft for their essay. Unity is a commonly promoted in writing and composition textbooks. Yet, the textbook doesn't exactly explain what is meant by writing in unity. According to Glencoe, "to achieve unity, each sentence must support the main idea of the essay ..." (72). In case 1, students are to write their first draft with unified sentences in mind. Therefore, unity fits with the direction of the assignment. The planning stage doesn't mention writing a thesis or main idea, but the mindset of the student is to ensure every sentence is in step with the analysis' main idea. I revert back to the importance of the planning stage in the writing

process. *Texas Writing Source*, for instance, emphasizes to tenth grade students the need for student to draft with the following thoughts in mind:

**Focus and coherence:** Strong writing presents a clear focus. It contains specific, connected ideas that support the thesis, and it does not contain unrelated information. Each paragraph adds depth to the writing.

**Organization:** Effective writing creates a meaningful whole – with interesting and distinct beginning, middle, and ending parts. The supporting details are arranged in the best order for the topic and audience. The writing flows smoothly from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph.

**Development of ideas:** Good writing contains thoroughly developed ideas that are clearly supported with appropriate details. This type of development helps the reader appreciate and understand the writer’s message.

**Voice:** Writing that has voice reflects the writer’s personality. It is engaging and appropriate for the topic and audience and contains strong words, including specific nouns, verbs, and modifiers.

**Conventions:** Strong writing follows the rules for grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. It is carefully edited to be free of errors (Kemper et al 34).

Just like the TEKS, the words used in the description above are questionable. In focus, the student who is writing the essay in case two has a difficult task mainly because the student has five paragraphs (conclusion, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion) with five sentences to make her point. Drafting is made simple, as the student must relegate their thoughts to the organized, pre-approved writing module. The writing model also impeded on development of ideas. The natural flow of ideas is hampered because the student has to edit or trim their thoughts as they write. When this happens, sometimes the meaning doesn't come out right.

Case four is different from the writing assignments I have chosen. In the drafting stage, students are still planning for their essay. The textbook authors and TEKS encourage student to make an outline of the thoughts they wish to present in the essay. Hence, planning is more cognitive in nature; no words should hit the paper. I question the effectiveness of not including outlines, for example, in the planning stage. Suppose a student is in a class where case four is an assignment. She is not allowed to free-write in the planning stage nor write an outline? This could cause some misunderstanding in the classroom, especially if the teacher doesn't explain the freewriting and drafting processes accurately. The student freewrites for about 10 minutes then begins to draft. In the mind of the student, the free-write becomes the first draft. Some of the elements of the free-write, not the freewrite itself, are included in the draft.

The fourth implication of concentrating on process over product, according to Murray, is a student has all the opportunities to write all the drafts necessary for

discovery (5). The TEKS stresses multiple drafts (I count three) that will be revised in the later three steps. At the drafting stage, the development of ideas from the planning stage is essential. Although I have found sharp criticism in the recursive writing process that is presented in the TEKS and textbooks, there will be times when students might have to take a step back to develop a first draft.

### **Step Three: Revising Drafts**

According to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Texas *Write Source*, students are to revise their essays in the areas mentioned in the stage three and ensure “the genre is the best choice for the topic and audience and that writing is clear and improve style, word choice, use of figurative language, and meaning” (Kemper et al 36). The later step teeters on editing; the TEKS describes as revising is somewhat accurate. Elbow asserts in *Writing With Power*, at the revision stage, writers are to shape their meaning and strengthen their language, According to process theory, revision involves editing and revising.

Sommers (1979) shows in “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” that unskilled writers are actually re-wording, or what she calls, “thesaurus philosophy of writing,” where a few words are changed here and there. Revision is a word that is not common place to the students in her study. Hence, they apply functions such as “scratch out and do over again,” “reviewing,” “redoing,” “marking out,” and “slashing throwing out” (78). True revising is just as messy as some of the pre-writing methods we use. Revision includes eliminating sentences, moving sentences, moving paragraphs, and adding paragraphs; it is the “process of selecting,



ordering, questioning, and changing is what you do as you write and revise” (Brannon, Knight, and Neverow-Turk 30). However, students are not taught to use these strategies. Case 2 asks that students re-write sentences specifically for misplaced modifiers, or re-doing sentences. Unbeknownst to textbook authors, revising sentences for grammar is editing. Although the lesson focuses on conjunctions, editing is dispersed throughout the writing process as process theorists endorse. A posit that student’s revision habits are based on how their teacher’s grade their final product. Sommer concludes that composition teachers do not appropriately explain to students what true revision entails. Take a look the Holt McDougal example: In the revision process, writing to the rubric is encouraged in *Holt McDougal*. Students are expected to “do a critical review of your draft, evaluating its content, organization, and style” and “check your draft against a rubric” or “ask a peer reader for feedback” (15). A part of revision is checking it again the rubric? Rubrics are used to determine a student’s grade, not to dictate student writing. Peer reviewing is also used when students are prepared to submit their final product to for grading. The process is pointless if the students are not taught to look for pertinent aspects of the essay. Students should not conduct the same habits the writer has done and call it revision (i.e. choosing different words or correcting grammatical errors).

Revision that calls for students to assess their audience is urged but rarely explained. I originally addressed audience in the planning stage but textbook models bring audience into another part of the writing process. Once the audience has established by the student, they are at will to change the decoder. The lessons have not explained the

difficult process of determining audience yet students are to examine if their message is meeting the need.

The revision stages in the cases use various means to explain the same concept. Case three defines revision as adjusting paragraph and sentence variety, ensuring the piece meets the needs of the audience, and using conjunctions in writing. Case two concludes revision is re-writing sentences in passive voice to active voice. Passive voice has a purpose in writing, but, as James McCrimmon writes, it should be “avoided unless there is a clear gain from the writer” (qtd. in Baron 21). Case four involves, among other things, revising for audience, a good opening, tone, and style, whereas case one students are to read the essay and add information, transitions, and proofread. Despite what the TEKS and textbooks assert, revision is more than choosing words or heavy concentration on figuring out a non-existing audience.

#### **Step Four: Editing Drafts**

Subject-verb agreement. Punctuation. Complete sentences. Misplaced modifiers. Pronouns and antecedents. These phrases are some of the grammar, punctuation, and syntax problems teachers want student writers to correct as they write essays. Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford found the same problematic areas in a sample they took of student essays (Shuman 118). We have learned through process theory research that concentration on the style of writing is less important than developing sound writing skills. Judging from the extensive amount of grammar lessons that litter high school writing and composition books, Texas public schools are attempting to make high school

students into grammarians instead of competent writers. How far is too far? Lisa Ede (1994) wrote in “Reading the Writing Process, “Of course, student errors aren’t perverse and random manifestations of ignorance but rather ‘traces of the different pressures and codes and confusions that have gone to make up ‘English’ (33).

Composition-based research shows the heavy-handed, grammar grading system of written communication is not beneficial to a student’s development as a writer (Hillocks 189; Hartwell 105). As noted earlier, most of the high school composition schoolbooks place grammar in two spots in the text. I am not completely sold on choosing one specific element of grammar for student focus. The goal of editing is to encourage a holistic view of the editing within the writing process. Grammar is a part of the writing process. Theorists content editing for standard English has its place in writing, but when it becomes the only means in which a teacher grades student writing there is no purpose. Shuman concludes the only way students can remedy common grammar errors is by writing. Thus, this is why a “paradigm shift” has taken place among composition teachers who drove grammar to its whit’s end. Constance Weaver remains committed to research in grammar, but she breaks the mold in her book, *Teaching Grammar in Context*. She lists twelve reasons why teachers still teach grammar. Quoting d’Eloia (1981), the top reason is they are unaware of the research that proves teaching grammar in exclusion doesn’t work. Also, Weaver writes teachers think teaching grammar will allow students to do better on grammar sections of standardized testing (23). Grammar lessons are easy to grade and point out in writing than reading an essay and figuring out what the student

is trying to convey. In the cases I present, textbook authors make grading easy for teachers. If the teacher lacks the patience to grade tons of essays, she can definitely look for the misplaced modifiers or comma splices and provide a grade to the student.

The TEKS dedicates more strands to grammar than it does to the writing process; that says a lot. One of America's great poets, Emily Dickinson, is known for breaking the rules of grammar just to be rebellious (Bennett 30). Should we consider Dickinson a horrible writer because she broke grammar rules? Shuman (1995) asserts grammarians are not necessary the best writers. Writing and reading – not learning rules of grammar – promotes good writing (127). I intentionally pointed out in the case assessments that the textbook reading selections point to hard-to-comprehend vocabulary words. This attention to vocabulary words and inserting grammar lessons in the discourse assignments is not flattering. Essentially, the state curriculum favors that students learn to apply grammar in reading comprehension and literary analysis assignments.

The instruction of grammar is best done within context of writing. I chose two lessons from state-approved composition textbooks for a reason – to illustrate how textbooks and curriculum writers present grammar to students. Both lessons disperse grammar throughout the composition lessons, but they the grammar sections are solely grammar instruction.

### **Step Five: Publishing Final Product**

Publishing gives students the opportunity to share work and respond to additional feedback. Peer reviews provide students with feedback from their writing – feedback that

doesn't come from the teacher. Teachers sometime require students to maintain a portfolio of their work. Portfolios are beneficial to students as they build their writing skills, as it gives them the opportunity to reflect on their writing. In the toned down writing process for timed-writing assessments, the teacher or evaluator has the final say on the quality of writing the student presents.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The writing assignments I selected for the case studies, for the most part, shows the writing process in the Texas textbooks and the one presented in the TEKS places students on a linear writing roadmap; the “complex, amorphous activity” of writing is non-existent (Foster 13; Elbow 35). Despite how recursive Kemper et al attempt to paint their writing process, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade edition of *Texas Writing Source* shows students are expected to complete one particular step before going to the next one and discourage students from jumping around in the writing process. The textbooks used in classroom instruction teach the TEKS contribute to the one-dimensional writing style that is has withheld the test of time. The only difference is, in the age of state assessments, the curriculum is more rigorous, but the writing style has remained the same. Students are expected to write analytically but the teaching methods do not prepare Texas high school students to write this way. To push English teachers to teach writing at a higher level, the TEA has reconfigured the state assessment to serve as the means by which students learn how to become good writers. The writing process is still overshadowed by a concentration on product over process.

State assessments serve as the main reason CTR is in place in Texas schools. Worden found in her research that a step back to Aristolean rhetoric is the best route to allow students to progress through the timed-writing process. Recall it is Aristotle’s

rhetoric that Fogarty strongly criticized as a standard in daily discourse assignments. Since what we have seen in high school textbooks, Aristotle's rhetoric is already in place.

Worden's research on the aspects of writing in timed situations is worth a look from state curriculum writers. The research on the timed-writing process raised my awareness of the process that takes place as students take writing exams. Elbow completely discredits writing assessments because they don't provide an accurate picture of how students write, but I prefer a flawed writing exams of over multiple-choice writing exams. You have to take the good with the bad. As I have said, state assessments are not going away. As much as parents, educators, and composition researchers protest, common ground must be met somewhere; Worden is what has partially persuaded me to take a second look at the cognitive writing process that takes place in the student's mind as she writes her exam. The time it takes a student to maneuver through the writing process is not discussed in the education standards; however, if the student is taking a timed writing test, students still exhibit an exhaustive degree of planning despite time constraints (Worden 158).

The five-step writing process is detrimental to building student writing that is sound. The stages of the TEKS writing process are too rigid; a recursive writing process allows students to maneuver between steps without risk of being "wrong." The process theory introduced by Moffett, explored by Emig, and re-stated by Murray are three steps that are not so demanding. Pre-writing allows students to plan their essay, yet, it is perfectly OK to return to the drafting stage as they revise. In the TEKS writing process,

there is no room for students to draft in the revision stage. If I were to re-write the TEKS writing process, stage 1 and the first part of stage 2 would become one, the later part of stage 2 and all of stage 3 would pair up, and stages 4 and 5 would round out the process. There is not enough emphasis at the beginning on planning for the essay.

Perl (1979), for example, notes even students who are labelled “unskilled” partake in a recursive writing process. “This ‘back and forth’ movement appeared to be a recursive feature: at one moment students were writing, moving their ideas and their discourse forward; at the next they were backtracking, rereading, and digesting what had been written” (330). Lindemann’s attempt to justify alternative writing processes makes sense, but the reason for these methods is to maintain writing tradition, not help students increase their writing competency.

### **Teaching the TEKS**

Texas teachers are more likely to attend a workshop on grading writing assessment over learning rhetoric and composition (Hillocks 86; Odell and Hampton 287). I have previously talked about teachers possessing an understanding of the type of rhetoric they are teaching and how it promotes student competency in writing. What is the best approach to build teacher’s awareness of the TEKS writing process and process theory? Teachers need opportunities to learn more effective procedures for teaching writing. Hillocks asserts “...workshops on scoring indoctrinate teachers into the state’s way of thinking about writing: what counts for good organization, good support, good development, and so forth. They do not deal with teaching” (Hillocks 204-205).



Therefore, a remedy for this problem is for school districts or the state to coordinate writing workshops that are presented by professors of English – individuals with doctorate degrees in English, rhetoric, and composition. Through this method, also endorsed by teachers can learn about composition. High school teachers must understand what they are teaching and why they are teaching it (Berlin 10).

However, workshops on timed-testing and the writing process would work best. After all, for a majority of the school year teachers are engaged in this style of instruction. At least teachers will gain exposure to process theorists. Unfortunately, the high-stakes state assessment system will not go away in Texas any time soon, but research on the writing process in timed-testing situations could benefit students and maintain the testing the state heavily relies upon. Since the state wholeheartedly believes standardized testing is its answer to improving student writing, workshops on cognitive writing in impromptu writing assessments might ease the hostile learning environment teachers and students embrace on a daily basis.

Glenda Moss (2002) brought up an interesting point about teacher certification education. She wrote university students who are preparing to take the state certification test are following the same drill the TEA has placed on students. She said “the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET), an accountability test for teachers in Texas, was shaping capstone courses into test-review courses, just as the TAAS (the state assessment in place at the time of the article’s writing) had shaped writing within the five-paragraph theme” (2002). The timed, constructed-response

assignment requires future teachers to write an essay on a given topic; the final product “must conform to the conventions of standard English” (“Preparation” 75). Essentially, standardized testing of students and the writing sample posed on future teachers for certification share resembling qualities.

Teachers are at the will of the university’s curriculum and, once they become certified teachers, are forced to teach CTR to satisfy the demands of the state, the school district, and school administrators even though they don’t necessarily agree (Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, and Fry 140; Hillocks 191). Hillocks explains:

They have not learned the explicit and necessary strategies for doing that, and they have had no supervised practice in doing it. They may have heard that teaching traditional school grammar is ineffective, but they do not understand the reasons such teaching is ineffective. They may have learned that writing is a process, but they have no ideas how to use that knowledge in thoughtful ways (191).

### **Future Research**

Strengthening students’ writing skills during the high school years is emphasized in the TEKS and textbook instruction, thus a logical question is the role the TEKS plays in Texas high graduates’ future writing success, specifically in college and university English composition classes; this facet of writing instruction is worth further discussion. I thought to myself, “It would be wonderful to perform research similar to Wells’ on Texas high school students.” I came across dissertations, but I would prefer to read studies

based on human-subjects research on students who supposedly excelled in high school writing yet sit in a developmental writing class as a first-year college student.

Hillocks also notes, in some poor-performing school districts, the TEKS can take a back seat to the state assessment framework. Hillocks writes in *Testing Trap* some teachers pass on teaching pre-writing because of time constraints, yet find time to teach grammar the entire class period (237). I see this as an issue of the teacher's lack of understanding composition pedagogy. An experienced teacher would find a way to merge pre-writing strategies and grammar instruction into one meaningful lesson. The adjustments some school districts make for the sake of passing a state assessment further places the have nots in an academic disadvantage.

A complete discussion of socioeconomic status and the TEKS writing yields an interesting introduction into further study. Hillocks points out another interesting topic related to socioeconomic status and the writing process. He contends exemplary school districts – more likely have students from wealthier homes – have the ability to adopt expressivist writing process models over the failing schools that cannot afford to risk teachers stepping outside the box, per se, to teach writing (99-102).

Coleman said the reason behind some high school students entering college at the developmental level is partially because teachers are not teaching students appropriate literary analysis or a recursive writing process. The gap was partly due to the different types of writing valued by high schools and colleges. Most of the discussion in this these center on Texas high school students who spend their first semester of higher education

in remedial or developmental reading or writing. Some graduates who ace placement tests and earn their spots in first-year composition are immediately slapped with the reality of writing in high school vs. writing in college (Hacker 2010; Schemo and Fessenden 2003).

In the introduction of “Coming Out Right” Moffett recounts a tale that is somewhat common to Texas students have come to experience all too well.

I got all A’s in English during high school and flunked my first theme in college. My high school English teachers loved my highfalutin’ vocabulary, complex sentences, solid paragraphs, and clear organization. They didn’t care much about what I might be saying, but they wanted me to say it right. ... I fell from A to F because my freshmen composition course differed from this. Everything came out right. But it was written in a sense that I wasn’t there. ... Harvard’s old English A instructors had been as well trained in pillory formulas and drivel as my high school teachers had been pounce on malformed sentences and meandering paragraphs ... (17-18).

Stories that resemble Moffet’s will continue as long as the Texas curriculum continually relies on outdated writing process instruction models to teach writing. If it means, as Odell and Hampton suggest offering workshops on composition rather than essay scoring, let it be. A complete 360 is needed to be made in how the writing process is presented to students. The core issue with teaching writing is students are not provided

the opportunity to expand their comprehension of texts and modes of discourse. Most important, the TEKS, not the STAAR or any standardized test, is the guide for writing instruction. Emig contends writing is a mode of learning that is multifaceted in nature (24). Programming Texas students to write is not beneficial, and continually places the state in a bubble of teaching students to pass state assessments.

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APPENDIX A

Strands 13, 17, 18, 19 of TEKS Grades 9 and 10

STRANDS 13, 17, 18, 19 OF TEKS GRADES 9 AND 10<sup>6</sup>

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

- (A) plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;
- (B) structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and rhetorical devices to convey meaning;
- (C) revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes, consistency of tone, and adding transitional words and phrases;
- (D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and
- (E) revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

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<sup>6</sup> "Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills." Texas Education Agency. 3 Sept. 2014. Web. 25 Feb. 2014.

(17) Oral and Written Conventions/Conventions. Students understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity.

Students are expected to:

(A) use and understand the function of different types of clauses and phrases (e.g., adjectival, noun, adverbial clauses and phrases); and

(B) use a variety of correctly structured sentences (e.g., compound, complex, compound-complex).

(18) Oral and Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation.

Students write legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions. Students are expected to correctly and consistently use conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

(19) Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling. Students spell correctly. Students are expected to spell correctly, including using various resources to determine and check correct spellings.

APPENDIX B  
Preparing For Timed Writing

## PREPARING FOR TIMED WRITING<sup>7</sup>

### **Step 1: Analyze the prompt (5 minutes)**

- Read the prompt carefully
- Read it again
- Underline the words that tell the audience, the topic, and the purpose.

### **Step 2: Plan your response (10 minutes)**

- Think about the reasons for each argument.
- Make a list of pros and cons.
- Which side of the argument do you support?
- Which side can you defend with reason?
- List at least two pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, anecdotes, examples) for each reason. Decide on the position you wish to argue.

### **Step 3: Respond to the prompt (20 minutes)**

- Begin drafting your essay.
- Keep in mind the following points: grab the reader's attention in the introduction, in each body paragraph give one reason for your position and specific evidence. Use examples of your own or someone else's.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Language of Literature (Texas Teacher's Edition: Grade 9)*. Evanston, IL: Holt McDougal, 2000. Print.

- End essay with a statement of strong conviction and a call to action

**Step 4: Improve your response (5-10 minutes)**

- Revising
- Proofreading
- Checking your final copy