

Teaching Mindful Writers

Brian Jackson

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Reviewed By

Andrea Janelle Dickens

*Arizona State University,
Tempe*

One of the many goals of a college education is to foster skills that allow our students to become self-learners, capable of continuing to improve and grow even after their college experience is finished. In his book *Teaching Mindful Writers*, Brian Jackson provides strategies of planning, practicing and applying, revising and reflecting to create self-sufficient writers. The book provides details on how faculty can design and implement meaningful assignments and exercises that focus on creating a culture of self-direction and reflection in our students.

Jackson draws upon a wealth of research in both learning styles and writing theory to show how the entire class design can be leveraged to create this type of learning outcome. Techniques such as daily writing are introduced. Jackson also spends time discussing how assignment design, class discussions, and feedback on work can further reinforce goals of self-direction among students. The book covers the process from beginning to design the course to the completion of teaching it.

The sections of the book are structured to guide us through the process students engage in while writing in the classroom, from brainstorming and choosing a topic to reflecting on the process after a project is completed. His method includes a model of: design, plan, practice, revise, and reflect. Within the book's sections, Jackson focuses on all aspects of course design and teaching; the work really starts before students enter the classroom, as he begins at the level of considering course outcomes. This book is thorough in its commitment to engaging students through multiple channels in the work of mindfulness, including all aspects of the course such as the homework the student completes, and discussions within class. The book makes an excellent read over the summer while considering how to structure a course for the fall semester.

While this book is aimed at the composition writing process, it has a wide application beyond first-year composition classes. Many of us teach courses that include service learning, or teach students in internship settings or other settings in which students are encouraged to use reflective practices in writing about their experiences. Others teach students to write a capstone project that demonstrates their accumulation and application of learning in a particular project or activity. In reality, any class that involves a process, such as a class teaching students to write a full-semester term paper, will find Jackson's guidance helpful. Those teaching in seminary contexts will find that Jackson's instructions are easily adapted to help students be formed by their writing process and coursework, helping students apply varieties of learning into their particular contexts.

Jackson begins with an overview of what it means to teach writing; this overview explains the field of writing for composition scholars, but is expansive enough to encompass many of our fields in which we ask students to write. The strategies shared in this book are meant to make the course design, content, assignments, and exercises reinforce a sense of student self-direction and growth. This book particularly shines in its commitment to the use of writing in pursuit of student self-sufficiency.