Table of Contents

Agenda

12:00 to 12:15

Introduction:

- *The Elements*
    - *The Elements of Writing Can Be Taught and Learned Because They Can Be Identified and Practiced*
        - Write Freely and Prolifically
        - Write From Generative Structures

- *Two Kinds of Skills: Behavioral and Artisanal*
    - When it comes to getting started, a bias toward action
    - Learns how to strategically lowers expectations
    - Distributes writing across the process
    - Uses writing as tool to plan and think

- *Three Kinds of Readers*
    - Authority Readers
    - Peer Readers
    - Ally Readers

- *Four Kinds of Audience Response*
    - Private Writing
    - Shared Writing but No Response
    - Response but no Evaluation
    - Evaluative Feedback

12:15 to 12:45
Write Fluently and Prolifically Non-Stop (or Free Writing)

12:45 to 12:55
Break

12:55 to 1:25
Write from Generative Structures: Imaginary Table of Contents

Introduction

The Elements of Writing Can Be Taught and Learned Because They Can Be Identified and Practiced (M. Ponsot and R. Deen)

Elements

Write Fluently and Prolifically
Write From Generative Structures

Topics

Filling the Store
Strategies for generating new material
Strategies for when self- judgment becomes an obstacle to writing
Practice to build confidence in your voice and your ability to produce on demand
One moment to create new material, another to review, rewrite, revise

Principles

Three kinds of Readers

- Authority Readers
- Peer Readers
- Ally Readers

Four kinds of audience response

- Private Writing
- Shared Writing but No Response
- Response but no Evaluation
- Evaluative Feedback

Part One: Write Freely and Prolifically

References

- Natalie Goldberg's Rules
- Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts"
- Peter Elbow Transcript
- Robert Boice "Spontaneous and Generative Writing"

Directions

- Write without stopping for a fixed period of time.

Principles

Write concretely and abstractly

Three kinds of Readers

- Authority Readers
- Peer Readers
- Ally Readers

Four kinds of audience response

- Private Writing
- Shared Writing but No Response
- Response but no Evaluation
- Evaluative Feedback

Two goals for prolific writing: spontaneous and generative writing

- Spontaneous Writing: Shift Brain Dominance, a way to get started, produce novel material, develop confidence in one's ability to write on demand, practice tolerance of one's own voice
- Generative Writing: adding planning and direction, working toward useful copy, loosely defined goals, not for a public audience yet, prompts and models; generative structures

Basic Prolific Writing Session

Set a timer. Ten minutes.
Write without stopping. Keep your hand moving throughout.
Before you begin, remind yourself that you are here to practice. Experiment with language.
As you write, follow the energy of your thinking.

As you write, name concrete objects and actions. Explain in detail. Elaborate on assertions and abstractions with particulars.
Remind yourself that you “expect lively things to emerge.”

Note: Getting Stuck/Getting Unstuck

Often, getting stuck when you’re free writing is simply the way it is today.
Sometimes people find that when they write freely, they get stuck in an emotional loop: anxiously perseverating, pawing over some negative experience or self-assessment. It would defeat the purpose of the practice to judge the experience or the outcome. But if you’re writing in judgment of yourself, I have a suggestion. Turn your attention to something concrete. Look around and describe what you observe in your environment-- what you hear, see, smell. Your physical state. Then, turn your attention to something in your work that interests you and use that same attention: write concretely. Define, describe, explain. And of course, in a few minutes you’ll be done and tomorrow will be different-- or the same.

Part Two: Write from Generative Structures

References

- Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts"

Some Prompts

- ***Annie Lamott's Short Assignments***
  She explains it so well: find it in the readings and resources.
- ***Look for a model.***
  Study it closely, first as a whole, divided into sections. Then, look at each individual section. How are paragraphs and graphic elements tied together. How are the paragraphs arranged? It is easier to figure out what the writers say than it is to identify what the writer does. Pay attention to the strategy of the paragraph and how sentences relate to one another. Create a kind of map, outline, or diagram of the structure. See if you can use your map, outline or diagram as a guide to your own text.
- ***Write a Letter to an Ally Reader: Hi Grandma***
- ***Define terms in a glossary.***
  Remember that glossaries have three or four word definitions.
- ***Write an encyclopedia entry.***
  Find an encyclopedia for your discipline. Look the entries over. Write one on a topic that pertains to your project.
- ***Imagine you were a section editor for an anthology of readings.***
  Choose five selections. Write a 350 to 500 word introduction to the section that explains why you've included them and how they ought to be understood by a reader
- ***Write a text intended to teach, guide or explain.***
- ***Abstract; proposal;***
- ***Create claims in your field or project based on the following structures.***
  - Once….; now…..
  - Although…..,.....
    Some….; others…..

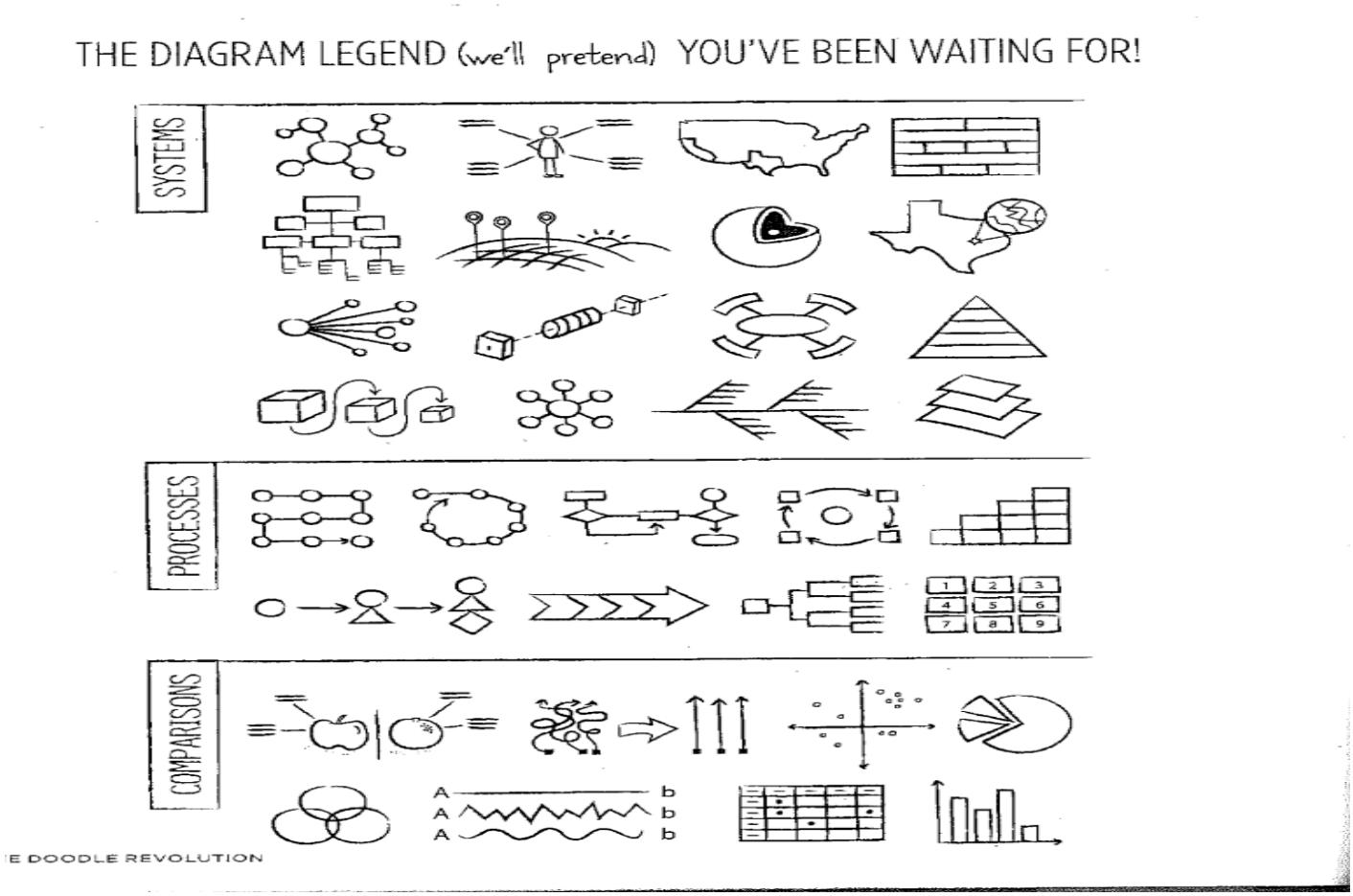
  Then write a paragraph that uses the claim as the first sentence. Support your claim with evidence, reasons, explanations.
- ***Find an article in your field but not on your specific topic.***
  Choose a paragraph, one you think accomplishes its purpose well. Go sentence by sentence. Use the paragraph as the basis for one of your own, substituting your terms,

processes, experts, key words and so on, for the author's. Rewrite as you see fit. Pay attention to the moves and connections the writer makes, as well as how the writer explains. Try to stay as close to their strategy as you can without getting in your own way.

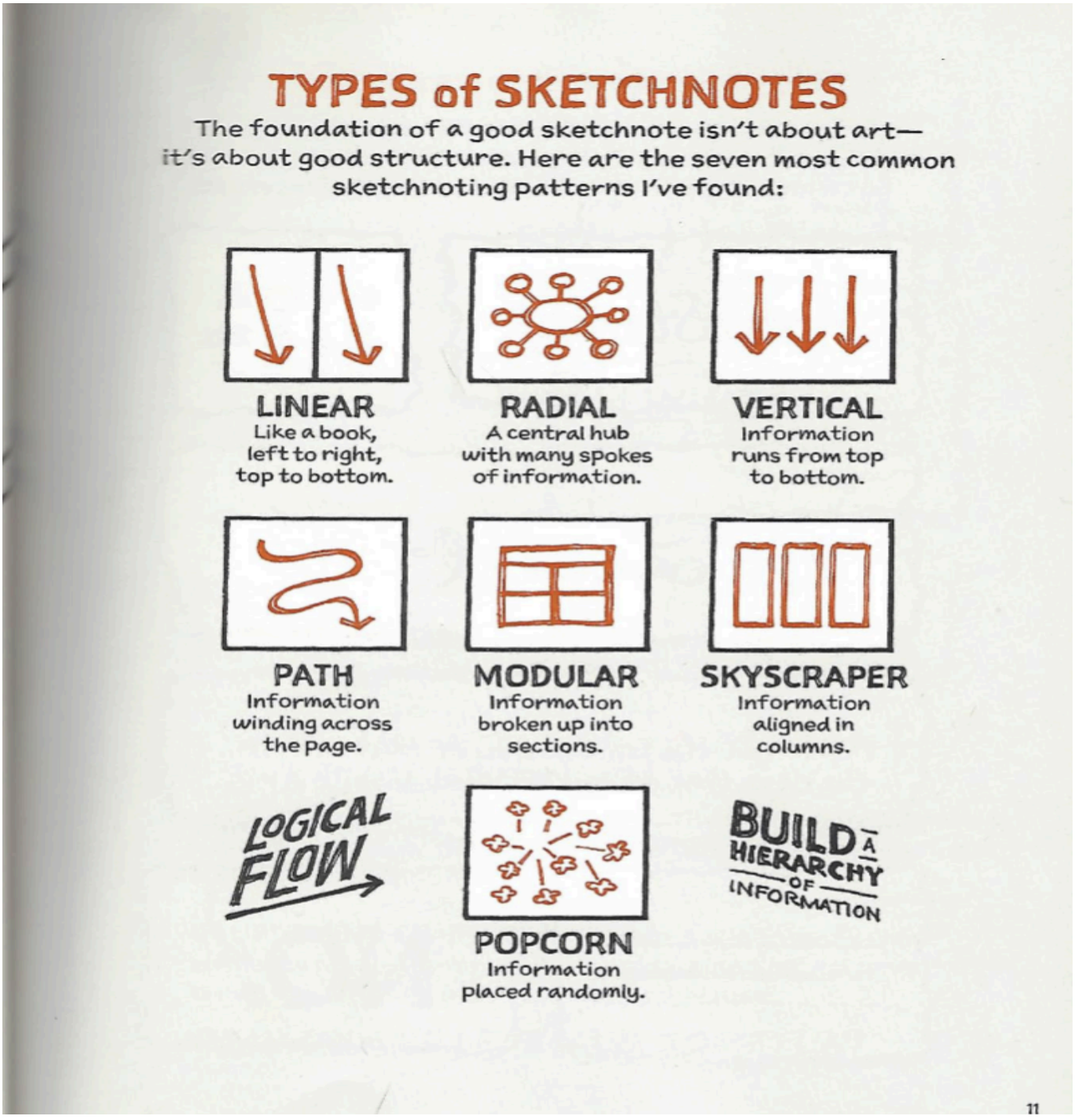
Try Representing Ideas and Information Graphically

Use some of the structures below to represent either the document you are writing-- the whole, a part, try to use this as a way to plan a paragraph. Or work through your ideas and arguments with these structures. Experiment with representing your ideas and arguments in this form-- not the text, but ideas, concepts, and arguments.

Diagram Legend (The Doodle Revolution)



Sketchnotes (The Sketchnotes Handbook)



Write an Imaginary Table of Contents

The Imaginary Table of Contents practice was shared with me by Colin Gifford Brooke, PhD, Professor of Composition and Cultural Rhetoric at Syracuse University. The practice is simple, powerful, and lends itself to playful revision.

The instructions below use a dissertation as an example, but this practice can be done with an article, chapter, or with a dissertation.

Create a Table of Contents for your dissertation. Set aside any concerns about length and although you might have some boilerplate chapters in mind (Literature Review, Methods) that your discipline or department stipulates, decide on a set of titles for each chapter, or subtitles for those boilerplate titles.

Once you've completed the Table of Contents, write an annotation under each. Describe what a reader will find in the chapter, its contents and point of view, the sources, theories and examples found there.

After you've completed the Imaginary Table of Contents, review it. Ask yourself what is missing. Consider subdividing each of the chapters into sections, or adding new chapter titles and annotations.

The ITC exercise can form a point of return, as well. That is, you can keep a folder of them as your work progresses, writing and revising, creating new ones, adding and subtracting.

Variations:

Use the exercise to imagine the contents of an article, naming its subsections and annotating them in the same manner you might for a longer work.

Annotate the Tables of Contents you've created and compare them to one another, tracking and clarifying the development of your ideas. If you can ask yourself-- "What has changed or remained constant?" between Tables separated by weeks or months, you may be able to identify or clarify a trend.

Appendix 1: Peter Elbow, So what's the essential psychological fact about writing for me?

So what's the essential psychological fact about writing for me? It grows out of this experience of watching myself write and trying to figure out when I get tied in knots and when I don't get tied in knots. And I think it has to do with the fact that there's two essential muscles, two essential processes that get involved in writing. One is the process of opening the doors, that's where making a mess comes in, allowing a mess to occur. Opening the doors, asking for input, inviting the maximum amount of thinking words, just letting words come out. I've tended to call that the creative move, the generative move, the generative muscle, the creative muscle. You can't write anything unless you generate a lot, a lot, a lot. And you just need to take everything that comes and not worry whether it's any good.

But the trouble is you can't write anything that works very well, unless you emphasize the other muscle which is the clenching, critical, logical, nay saying muscle that says wait a minute, is this any good? This doesn't work. That's wrong. This is wordy. This is no good. Unfortunately you need to be critical. At certain magical moments you can do those two things at the same time, when everything goes magically well. But most of the time, I find, and I see this in my students too, it helps enormously to do those two processes one at a time. To accept garbage to be generative, to make a mess, then after you have a lot of rich material, too much, then turn around and be critical and nasty and then engage in organizing too and trying to figure out what goes where.

Appendix 2: Peter Elbow “Three Audiences, Four Kinds of Audience Response”

Three kinds of Readers: Authority, Peer, Ally

The most precious gift a writer can have is not a critic or an evaluator but an audience. If someone wants to give me a present as a writer, what I want is an audience. I want my words to go to readers. A critic can be useful, an evaluator can be useful, but what's precious is an audience: someone who will listen to me, someone who will understand what I'm saying. What I've discovered in my own writing and in my teaching, is that if someone listens to me, if someone will understand me, my writing gets better. I guess that's a little mysterious, I don't quite know why that is, but it's true. If someone will listen to me and will understand me, I'll be able to say what I'm trying to say better.

And so, the effort that I'm looking for from readers and the effort that I'm trying to persuade my students to give to each other is the effort to understand each other. So even if a piece of writing is very flawed, even if it's a mess, even if it's a problem, even if it's tangled, I don't think it's so valuable to tell them what the mess is and what the tangle is, what's really valuable is to understand it. To have a reader who says, oh, I see you're saying this. I see you're saying that, that's an interesting idea. Tell it to me again. Then the writing gets better.

So that what we need, what writers need is a range of audiences. So let me talk a minute about that because this has grown into, to become I think, my kind of grounding theory, my foundational way of looking at the writing process and the teaching of writing.

Authority Readers

Very, very often everything people have written has gone to a teacher. So that means most of what you write, sometimes all of what you write has gone to a teacher which is a reader who has authority over you, and that teacher has given an evaluative response of some sort or another. Sometimes just to circle the misspellings or something, but think about that. Teachers are a difficulty, not that thee is anything with teachers but that there's something wrong with the exclusivity of teachers, that we write only to teachers, that's the problem. It's rare that anybody can engage in much writing without sometimes writing for a reader who has authority over you. Readers with authority. They are here to stay.

Peer Readers

When I wrote during my teaching years before I went back to graduate school, I was doing some writing and it wasn't for teachers, it was for peers, it was for fellow teachers. All of a sudden I

found I could write. It was such a pleasure writing for regular human beings not for teachers. Teachers are human beings but when you are a student sometimes you don't feel them as human beings. Writing for peers, we need peers. In a classroom it is so important to me to get students to write not just for me as the teacher, but to write for each other, to share their pieces in pairs, in small groups, to bring in copies of what they've written to give to each other. Things are different when you write for peers.

Ally Readers

A third kind of reader I want to talk about is what I call an ally reader. An ally reader is someone who cares about me or cares about the writer. Cares about me as much as they care about my writing, so that if I write something and give it to an ally reader, even if it's dumb, they don't think I'm dumb. Even if it's kind of unlikable in some way, they still like me as a person. And so in my classes I try and invite students to share their writing with their friends, not just the person who happens to be sitting next to them. I want allies, I need allies, I think everybody needs an ally.

So...

So three audiences: authority readers, peer readers, and ally readers. If we can get all three audiences our writing goes better. That's my premise. That's what I think I've discovered. Nothing wrong with teachers for readers, but there's something wrong when teachers are the only readers. So I need to find occasions and I need to find occasions for my students to write for allies, write for peers and write for me.

Four kinds of audience response: ***Private Writing , Shared Writing but No Response, Response but no Evaluation, Evaluative Feedback***

I've been talking about audiences, I want to talk about the ways in which these audiences respond. What kind of response. What kind of feedback an audience gives. So let me just take a moment and say what's valuable about all four audience responses: private writing which is no audience. Shared writing where it goes to an audience but there's no response. Feedback: a response but no evaluation, and then full evaluation.

Private Writing

Let me first talk about private writing. I'm kind of a champion, I'm kind of a cheerleader for private writing. It gets neglected enormously in school. It's very common and traditional for people to keep diaries but in schools there's not enough private writing. Writing is a beautiful medium because I can write privately. I can write page after page after page after page an now show anybody. I can explore my thinking. I can explore my feelings. I think one of the main

skills, one of the main features of a wise person would be a person who is able to talk to him or herself, who is able to carry on a conversation in his or her own head to explore a topic, even if no one else is interested in that topic.
It's very hard. We wander around in the world and often what we're interested in we can't find anyone else around us who is interested in it. And, I think this is sometimes hard for people in adolescence, I know when I was an adolescent I often felt odd or no one was interested in what I was interested in or I couldn't find people to talk to about what was on my mind. But writing permits me to pursue a topic even if no one else is interested in it.

So, I ask students in my classes to do a lot of private writing. I take time in class for it. I even ask students to keep a journal and I don't read it, but I ask them to show it to me and try and demonstrate to me that they are keeping it up, because it's a skill, to learn to talk to yourself on paper is hard. It's hard at first any way. You can learn to be two people, you can learn to be three people. We are two and three people inside our own heads, and writing is the place where we can let those people have a conversation with each other and so we can learn to pursue a topic even when no one else is around that want to pursue that topic and learn to take on that feature that I think does characterize wise people.

Shared Writing but No Response

What about writing that you just give to someone and they read it and they don't give you any response at all? That also seems like a kind of a stupid thing to doin school. In school if you had a piece of writing to somebody, especially if you hand it to a teacher, it feels as though they are supposed to say something. Is this okay? Did I do all right? Is this right or wrong? Is this good or bad? To hand a piece of writing to someone and say, here's a gift read it. Or, I want you to read this, or I want to read this out loud to you. I want to see what it sounds like. Please don't give me any feed back.That's sounds very peculiar, very odd. It makes people awkward. I've had to learn how to do this in my classes. There's a ritual I use that's very nice. I read something out loud, and your job as a reader is to say thank you. People get in pairs, people get in small groups, everybody reads and the job of the listeners is to say thank you. Now let's hear someone else's piece. It's a great pleasure once you learn that ritual, but it feels very odd.

Well, I want to call attention to how – what looks odd isn't very odd. Even though it feels odd in school to give writing to someone and get no response, in fact most writing in the world functions that way. When people write newspaper stories, when people write memos, when people write novels or any books, the words go on paper, the words go out, they go to readers and that's it. Almost never feedback. Sometimes people write a letter to the author but mostly words go out, readers read them, goodbye, that's the end of it. That's the normal fate of writing in the world to be done. And I've discovered that for my writing and for my students writing, when I build time into a classroom for private writing and for writing that we just share, writing gets

better, even though there is no feedback. People's writing gets better when they write privately and when they share their writing.

Response but no Evaluation

Another kind of feedback I often want is non-evaluative feedback or you could call it believing feedback, someone who believes in what I've written. . This is especially important to me if I'm writing something that's difficult and something that's close to my heart, something I really care about and I'm struggling with it. If I write something and I walk down the street and I find a friend, I've written a story or an essay and I want them to read it. I can interrupt their awkwardness because in their awkwardness they are going to want to feel as though they've got to say, 'well this is lovely', or 'well I think you could get it a little bit better here'. I can interrupt their awkwardness and say, "tell me what do you hear this story about? What's the story about when you read it? What's this essay about? What is my main point? What do you hear me saying?" There's no evaluation there, but I want to know what do they hear? Because I don't know whether what I'm trying to get across in this story or this essay is getting across or not. And I can ask them, what's important to you about what I wrote? Or, what other thoughts do you have about this topic that I'm writing about? Tell me your thoughts. Have you got any thoughts I can use? This feedback that doesn't involve any evaluation, turns out to be very useful. It's such a pleasure to understand how the reader understood my words. And I can make my writing a lot better when I see what's going on in their head.

Evaluative Feedback

Finally there's evaluative feedback. There's feedback that involves someone telling me, you know, what are the strong points, what are the weak points, what advise do they have. And evaluation is a problem. Evaluation, I think, is what stopped me from writing when I was in graduate school I was only writing for teachers and only writing for evaluation and it stopped me cold. But evaluation is no problem if I'm doing lots of other writing. Evaluation from teachers is no problem if I'm writing for other people in addition to teachers. And evaluation from teachers is no problem if I'm getting other responses besides evaluation. If I'm doing private writing and sharing my writing for fun and getting other responses besides evaluation. So, at a certain point, of course, I want evaluation. I want someone to tell me, what worked, what didn't work, what's strong here, what's weak here, have you got any thoughts about how I can make this better, that's terrific. But only if that's one ingredient among many.