

Reading in the First-Year Writing Classroom: A National Survey of Classroom Practices and Students' Experiences

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Abstract

Drawing on surveys of and interviews with a sample of 100 self-selected, first-year writing instructors, the study “**Reading in the First-Year Writing Classroom: A National Survey of Classroom Practices and Students' Experiences**” found that although the majority of first-year writing instructors who participated do not feel as though their graduate and professional training prepared them to attend to reading in their writing classrooms they continue to do so. Rhetorical reading is the most common reading approach taught among these participants and it is used to connect the processes of reading and writing, often through modeling exercises. Still, first-year writing instructors would like ways to assess students' reading abilities, how these affect students' writing abilities, and whether they are preparing students to read effectively beyond their courses. Finally, first-year writing instructors want opportunities to learn more about how their students read and how they can help them become better readers.

While the study may, in fact, suggest larger pedagogical trends within first-year writing courses across the country, its findings are best understood as preliminary due to the relatively small national sample of participating instructors. Still, the study's findings suggest the need to further explore the following questions: What tools does the field of Composition have that would allow teacher-scholars to better understand the reading practices students bring with them to first-year composition? If rhetorical reading is the most prevalent reading practice taught in first-year composition then how might we track the various ways in which it is taught, as well as its effectiveness and uses beyond first-year composition? To what extent do the reading practices students cultivate in first-year composition transfer throughout their academic careers? Which fields might offer Composition models for conducting this research?