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REFLECTION IN DIGITAL SPACES

Publication, Conversation, Collaboration

Naomi Silver

"Affordance" means you can do some things easily now, and you are more inclined to do these things than you were before simply because they are easier. . . . Computers make it easier. So, the new things that ubiquitous computing makes easier may not in themselves be completely new. . . . However, just because the new technology makes them easier to do, they become more obviously worth doing than they were in the past.

—Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, *Ubiquitous Learning*

Well, Naomi (and other Sweetland Writing Profs). You have succeeded in brainwashing me. Here I am, sitting in the library determinedly writing various papers until my computer runs out of batteries (currently at 9%—I have been here awhile), and I am writing self-reflective comments! I didn't even realize what I was doing until I had written a couple and started to rearrange some paragraphs. And then I realized that I have been using reflective commenting quite a bit lately. At work, in my internship, when reviewing friends' papers . . . and it's just so handy!

—Hannah Tasker, Sweetland Minor in

Writing student blog post¹

THE DIGITAL DIFFERENCE

I will begin with what I take to be a truism in a book dedicated to reflection, namely, the benefits of reflective pedagogy have been pretty effectively established at this point—for student engagement, for development of student writing, and, as more and more research makes clear (including chapters in this book), for transfer of learning about writing to other contexts. But, if these rich educational experiences are possible in analog, print-based classrooms, what more do *digital* reflective spaces have to offer? How does reflection work—and does it work any differently—when it is electronically mediated? These are the questions I take up in this chapter. By way of a preliminary response, and following the

line of thought sketched in the epigraph from Cope and Kalantzis (2009), recent digital technologies make student reflection on writing *easier to do*, and therefore *more obviously worth doing*, more frequently and in more diverse ways, than ever before. Here, I echo a point already made by L. Lennie Irvin in 2004: "Reflection is at the center of learning . . . This learning cycle can happen in any context—electronic or not. However, the electronic learning environment magnifies the potentials for reflection's role within this learning cycle" (under "Conclusion").

With ubiquitous computing and ubiquitous learning, there are indeed more texts and types of texts to reflect on, more ways to reflect on them, more possibilities for social and public reflection, and more opportunities for researchers—and students as self-researchers—to perform data-driven reflection on writing by using such features as versioning, histories, metadata, and the like to study in detail changes in writing over time. But Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis also note that "the new things that ubiquitous computing makes easier may not in themselves be completely new" (2009, 4), and, indeed, as some of the more recent literature on reflection points out, many of the genres of student reflection remain fairly stable in digital contexts, but their modes and media continue to change in ways that matter for reflective pedagogical practice. As I will suggest in this chapter, then, the integration of digital tools for reflection into writing classrooms offers, at a minimum, these affordances:

- Reflection is more easily ubiquitous, making the design of a reflective curriculum easier, and therefore a more obvious choice.
- The work of reflection can become more public and visible, allowing peers more easily to dialogue and collaborate and thus to learn from each other's reflective practice.
- More parts of the writing process can become visible, retrievable, and accurately measurable, which allows both student learning and instructor and program assessment to become more data based.
- And, last but not least, reflection can be more fun to do because it more easily offers students the opportunity to be innovative, to take new ownership of the modes and forms of their reflections, and to share those forms with multiple audiences.

I will explore these claims, first, by way of a brief review of the literature on digital reflection in writing studies and, next, discussion of a range of student examples from a course I teach at the University of Michigan.

In her seminal book *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Kathleen Blake Yancey (1998) builds on the work of Donald Schön (1987) to develop the idea of "the writing classroom as a reflective practicum," one where

“reflection is woven into the curriculum” (vi). Here, she sets the stage for the idea of what we might call *ubiquitous reflection* in an analog context and delineates the ways in which students’ reflective practice can permeate a writing classroom during, between, and following compositional tasks via *reflection-in-action*, *constructive reflection*, and *reflection-in-presentation* (see 13–14 for Yancey’s initial definitions). Reflective genres such as prewriting activities, writing journals or logs, process notes, writer’s memos, and portfolio letters, among others, institute reflective work both around and between each distinct writing task. At these various moments of composition, according to Yancey, reflection constitutes a kind of self-dialogue that, over time, develops into a method for self-regulated learning: “In method, reflection is dialectical, putting multiple perspectives into play with each other in order to produce insight. Procedurally, reflection entails a *looking forward* to goals we might attain, as well as a *casting backward* to see where we have been. When we reflect, we thus *project* and *review*, often putting the projections and reviews in *dialogue* with each other, working dialectically as we seek to *discover* what we know, what we have learned, and what we might understand. . . . Moreover, we can use those processes to theorize understandings that will themselves be revised through reflection” (1998, 6; emphasis in original). Taken together, these dialectical practices of projecting and reviewing enact what we might call, following Gregory Schraw (1998), an ongoing and recursive metacognitive cycle of planning, monitoring, and evaluation around the range of writing tasks students encounter. Indeed, Schraw, like other researchers of metacognition,² regards this process of self-dialogue as “essential to successful learning” (123). As multiple studies have suggested, a reflective curriculum of this type scaffolds and promotes reflective self-dialogue, assisting students to develop a “theory” of understanding for their writing, however nascent, that offers them a sense of self-efficacy and developing expertise (see, for example, Bandura 1989; Conner 2007; Meizlish et al. 2013; Shulman 2000; Zimmerman and Moylan 2009).

Interestingly, the earliest literature to take up the then-new idea of *digital reflection* interrogated the character and function of dialogic reflection in a “networked” environment. In 2004, when Irvin published “Reflection in the Electronic Writing Classroom” (explicitly taking Yancey’s book as prompt and interlocutor), he could cite only two other publications addressing the practice of digital reflection: Steve Watkins’s (1996) “World Wide Web Authoring in the Portfolio-Assessed (Inter) Networked Composition Course” and Joel English’s (1998) “MOO-Based Metacognition: Incorporating Online and Offline Reflection into

the Writing Process.” Though Watkins doesn’t explicitly use the term *dialogue*, his argument for networked electronic portfolios centers on the role of hyperlinks in enabling the imagination of an “authentic” audience for the student’s artifacts and reflective letter and a consequent move from reflective self-dialogue to a reflection “oriented . . . to outside audiences” (229). English, on the other hand, constructs his argument for MOO-based writing conferences specifically around their ability to foster and support “metacognitive dialogue” between and among instructors, tutors, and students (under “Discussion of the Annotated Logs”). Irvin picks up on this idea to claim that “in a traditional writing classroom the most important ‘other’ a student engages with is the teacher; however, the networked environment changes this teacher-centric dynamic” and leads to an “expanded social environment for reflection” (under “Reflection in the E-Writing Classroom”).

More recent literature builds on this discussion of the differences reflection in digitally mediated spaces may make for students’ metacognitive processes of self-dialogue and their more social forms of reflection via the affordances of new digital tools. To take one example, as Julie Meloni notes in her August 18, 2009, *Chronicle of Higher Education ProfHacker* blog article on incorporating the versioning function in Google Docs into a portfolio-based writing class, “The Google Docs revision history allowed the students to pick specific points in their writing process and discuss the changes between these points, down to the most granular details. Although I told the students ahead of time that they would need to be aware of their writing and revision process in order to talk about it at the end of the course, students reported that the Google Docs revision history was a ‘life saver.’” Meloni highlights the nuanced, self-evaluative reflection-in-presentation work the revision history made possible, and the student enthusiasm quoted here perhaps pertains primarily to this unexpected access to their previous drafts. But Meloni also speaks to another affordance of reflection in digital spaces: this tool gives students unprecedented ease of information regarding their own writing histories, down to their minute-by-minute choices, should they want to engage in such detailed self-study. In this case, the use of a digital tool may significantly alter the reflective activity of casting backward to review what we know about our own writing development.

Other publications describe remediations of existing genres of reflection—writing logs become weblogs, say, or handwritten notes in the margins of a paper move into the electronic Comments (see, for example, Irvin 2004; LaVaque-Manty and Evans 2013; Meizlish et al. 2013; Welch 1998;). These same digital tools and spaces—such as VoiceThread or

blogging platforms—also bring other voices into the process, turning reflection into a much more collaborative endeavor (in an update to the benefits noted by English in 1998 in regard to the MOO) and thus building on one of the central dimensions of Web 2.0 activity. Tools like Google Docs can support social reflection as well by facilitating collaborative writing and allowing collaborators to view each other's revisions in the history and in fostering dialogue in the margins of the document via the Comments feature and push notifications to e-mail of any updates in the dialogue. Indeed, the ability to use digital forms of reflection for peer-to-peer social activities easily and regularly stimulates the important processes of affirmation and ideas testing that John Dewey (1916) and others have attributed to the work of reflection in community (see also Rodgers 2002; Vygotsky 1986).

Still other remediations of reflective genres take greater leaps. For instance, Gail Hawisher et al. (2009) describe remediating a prompt used by Prior and Shipka (2003) that asked students “to draw images of their writing processes” (Hawisher et al. 2009, 255)—itself already a remediation of an alphabetic process note—by proposing that students “attempt to capture a representation of [their] writing processes on camera” (255). The authors here comment on the meaning making enabled by this medium that is not available in the prior media: the ability, for instance, to capture time-based phenomena, such as the rhythms of writing in our everyday lives, or the opportunity to add multimedia, such as soundtracks, that may convey richer information about our writing processes. As they note, “We show how digital media can offer new images of the dispersed character of writing and learning, not as punctual events but as emergent flows” (255).

Debra Journet et al. (2008) describe a similar experiment—producing a daily reflection in “any form: written, audio, video, still images” (under “The Reflection Assignment,” emphasis in original)—with interestingly similar results, reaching the conclusion that “what we discovered as we composed multimodal reflections was that *modality changed the nature of reflection*” (under “Home”; emphasis in original). In particular, reflecting in digital media altered these students' own sense of their writing processes and of the generative role of reflective work in these processes. For instance, in an audio reflection, one student describes becoming more aware of the ways the recursiveness of his own writing process (signified by his unedited *ums* and *ahs* as “signs of the reflective moment”) challenged his attempts at linearity and clarity of purpose (under “Audio Reflection”). Another student describes, by way of multiple drafts and “takes” of her narrated final video reflection, coming to understand

reflective writing itself as a form of “practice” for composition that prepares and enables it (under “Reflecting through Insecurity”).

Taken together, these examples of reflection—using digital tools, often on writing in digital spaces—suggest not only that the activities of reflection have changed, but that the availability and use of these tools can change students' and instructors' expectations of what it is possible to reflect upon, of the kinds of insights and meanings that may be achieved through reflection, and of the skills and competencies that may be acquired by engaging in reflection. A brief taxonomy of this changed landscape of reflective activity might note the following multiplication of possible scenarios for reflection:

1. There are new ways of reflecting (using digital tools) on traditional ways of writing (print-based products and processes)—for example, using a webcam to record a series of brief writing-log video entries on the process of writing an argumentative essay.
2. There are also traditional, print-based ways of reflecting on new digital ways of writing (new products and processes), such as multimodal texts—for example, writing a reflective process note about composing a webpage.
3. And then there are new ways of reflecting on new ways of writing—for example, using VoiceThread to engage in a group reflection on a video essay.

In all these scenarios, core aspects of reflection, as described by Yancey (1998), persist. Yet these core aspects of reflection are augmented in various ways as they are connected to the new demands and opportunities of working with digital tools in digital learning environments, thereby enabling *ubiquitous digital reflection* within a *digital reflective practicum*.

UBIQUITOUS DIGITAL REFLECTION

But what exactly does ubiquitous digital reflection look like from the student's perspective? In the following pages, I explore the ways students take up the invitation of ubiquitous digital reflection within a classroom setting and how this experience may carry over into other later endeavors. My primary focus will be a course that tried to enact a digital reflective practicum by weaving reflective activity into every aspect of its curriculum. The Gateway course to the Sweetland minor in writing program, like the program as a whole,³ is based upon supporting students from across the University of Michigan as they grapple with writing problems that engage them—in any mode and medium and in a variety of

rhetorical situations—and as, through this process, they develop a sense of writerly identity. Students work on three major writing projects—a project examining “Why I Write,” a repurposing of a previously composed argument for a new audience, and a subsequent remediation of this repurposed piece—and create an electronic portfolio.

The course has as one of its central learning goals that students “become flexible and creative writers across a range of rhetorical situations as they develop an electronic portfolio that demonstrates self-reflection and writing development” (Sweetland Center for Writing 2013). In pursuit of these goals, reflection is not simply “threaded through” the curriculum (to borrow a metaphor from Yancey [1998, 17]), an accompaniment to the three major writing projects, but in a very real sense it is the curriculum; it constitutes the warp and woof of the course. From analyses of their “go-to” sentence styles in previous writing assignments to interviews with their classmates exploring important writing experiences; from the major writing project examining “Why I Write” to planning activities, self-reflective marginal comments, and self-evaluations accompanying their Repurposing and Remediation projects; from the construction of their electronic portfolio with a reflective introduction and contextual reflections for each artifact to the blog on which all of this work is presented, shared, and dissected; and in both analog and digital media, students in the Gateway course are always reflecting on *something*. One Gateway student, sums this experience up in a December 4, 2013, post to the *Sweetland Minor in Writing Blog*⁴: “Because of the way we have to reflect on our writing processes . . . I can honestly say I’ve thought and written about my writing process more in the past three months than I have in the entirety of my life, without question.”⁵

The ubiquity of this reflection, however, comes not only from its frequency, but also from the fact that much of this reflective work is not necessarily identified explicitly as such but simply comprises the low-stakes writing of the class. Of course, several of the activities that surround the major projects are explicitly named *reflections*, such as the self-reflective comments students are asked to insert in the margins of primarily alphabetic texts (or in other ways in texts that don’t have margins, strictly speaking) that identify areas of challenge or pride or that ask questions about a particular moment in the text, or, again, in the shorter contextualizing reflections students are asked to include in their electronic portfolios that accompany particular artifacts and provide some insight into their role in the portfolio. But, at the same time, a blog prompt may simply invite students to describe an experience trying out a new digital application they wish to employ for their Remediation project or to share

some images from their planning storyboard. Here, the reflection takes place along the way, so to speak, in the act of describing, analyzing, and drawing some conclusions but not because students have been instructed to engage in some specialized activity labeled *reflection*. As a result, many students in the course stop seeing reflection as something separate from and additional to their *writing* (and perhaps, therefore, as onerous). This point about the seamless integration of reflection is highlighted by a student’s commenting on the blog post cited in the previous paragraph: “Your point about reflection is definitely interesting. I hadn’t really given thought to how much we do it in this class, but there’s definitely a ton with the exercises we did before each project and all the reflective writing for the e-portfolio. It’s definitely made me think about the choices I make during my writing process and my overall evolution as a writer.”⁶

In recounting his memories of reflective writing in the course, this student identifies the *capital-R* reflection he performed but not the low-stakes reflective activities—like his own blog posts on “Scriptwriting Surprises” about his analyses of the genre of podcasting scripts as he created his own podcast; or “Admitting Defeat and Starting Anew,” about deciding to use an html template for his ePortfolio rather than coding it entirely by hand; or “Writing FAST,” about altering his writing and revision process out of necessity during the semester and finding it works better for him. As this student exemplifies, then, the Gateway students understand their reflection on the blog differently from their reflection in other spaces; here, they are *blogging*.⁷ That is, they are engaging in a personally meaningful act of expressive communication directed at a genuine audience of their peers. And their peers respond, creating dialogue and potential collaboration. That they are also analyzing their own experience in order to share it with others is something they have learned from Andrew Sullivan (2008) and other writers on blogging to be a central feature of the genre; consequently, in this digital space, students can feel proud of their reflective writing (as demonstrated in a blog post title from this same student: “Finding My Blogging Voice . . . and Making it Look Good”).⁸ It is not a dead-end, school genre of writing, written only to satisfy a requirement, as less fully integrated reflective activities can feel to students.

The full integration of reflective activity I have described in the Gateway course is completely facilitated by the various digital tools and environments students use, from word-processing software to blogging platforms to audio, video, and image-editing applications to website platforms, and more. Further, student investment in these digital reflective activities is bound up with their sense that, through reflection, they are grappling with new challenges and situations introduced by the digital

writing and rhetorical tasks they are taking up in the course as well as in gaining a sense of their own development as writers—and maybe more to the point, they are gaining digital skills and experiences they understand to have legs beyond the course and outside of school altogether in internships and jobs. Ubiquitous digital reflection, then, may also help circumvent what we might call *reflection burnout* resulting from the “mis-educative” experience of reflecting as a routinized activity, unconnected to genuine problem solving or meaning making (see Dewey 1916; Rodgers 2002). Scott analyzes this “mis-educative” phenomenon in connection to institutional ideologies and pressures within large-scale portfolio assessment programs that turn reflective letters into a “bureaucratic exercise” that leaves students “unengaged and resentful” and even “consciously dishonest” (Scott 2005, 26–27).⁹ But even in the practices of an individual classroom, if reflective writing is perceived as routine, it may not lead students to engage the metacognitive cycle of learning so as to enable development of a “theory” of self-understanding for their writing (Schraw 1998; Yancey 1998).

Anything that can help avoid the stilted, artificial “conversion narratives” about their own writing development students often produce under such inauthentic pressures is a good thing in my book. But beyond that, as this chapter’s second epigraph attests—from another Sweetland Minor in Writing student blogger, this time posting to the blog in the semester following her Gateway course—when reflection is so woven in to the writing curriculum that it becomes habit, students begin to reflect voluntarily, sometimes without “even realiz[ing] what [they are] doing,” until they pause and take a look and notice they are creating, via self-reflective comments, an electronic self-dialogue in the margins of their documents. In other words, with ubiquitous digital reflection, students like this one can become self-sponsored reflective practitioners of writing.

Interviews conducted with students from several sections of the Gateway course in the semesters subsequent to their taking it bear out this idea.¹⁰ Students reported overwhelmingly that they found the course’s number and variety of reflective activities “productive,” “useful,” and “valuable.” Further, in response to the question “Are you still using reflection in your current writing?” a majority described both continuing their reflective practices in one form or another and also internalizing them, as suggested in the epigraph. For instance, as one student remarked, “Yeah, just reflecting on . . . how I want it to say and what I want it to say. Then examine it. Does this actually do what I want to do? . . . My whole process of writing now is kind of self-reflective, in maybe not such an explicit way as we did in the course.” And another:

“I think doing it [reflecting] out loud [i.e., in writing] like that makes me do it in my head now all the time, like why am I making this choice and then what is my choice saying?” These students are clearly engaging in the self-dialogue fundamental to effective metacognition, and in so doing, I argue, they describe a genuine transfer of reflective learning: they apply ubiquitous reflective strategies to new writing situations, and, further, they employ a metacognitive language of projection and review to describe their ongoing reflective practice. This connection of conscious, scaffolded, and reiterative reflective practice to student transfer of learning is consistent with what is reported in other studies (see, for example, Clark and Hernandez 2011; Jarratt et al. 2009; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak 2014) and is the subject of ongoing research.

THE DIGITAL REFLECTIVE WRITING PRACTICUM

At this point it makes sense to turn to some student artifacts to illustrate some of the reflective work I have discussed. All of the artifacts presented below, produced by students in sections of the Gateway course for the Sweetland minor in writing program, were selected because they are typical of student work for the course, both in quality and in the range of genres of digital reflection represented, and I offer examples from the full cycle of metacognitive work—planning, monitoring, and evaluation—students engaged in.

Planning

Students in the Gateway course undertake a range of planning and discovery activities for their major writing projects throughout the semester in a variety of modes and media: interviews with their classmates, pen-and-paper storyboarding, low-stakes writing in Word documents and on the class blog, and more. Students also share their planning work on the blog as a way of presenting their project ideas and receiving additional feedback and comments from their classmates (beyond their more extensive writing workshops). These three blog posts show students presenting the storyboards they drew for their Remediation projects in response to this brief prompt: “This week, post some images from your storyboard to the blog and comment on them.” We can see these students reflecting on the medium of the storyboard (markers, colored pencils, butcher paper) as well as that of their Remediation platform (iMovie, Tumblr, Twitter); we see their varied responses to the helpfulness of the storyboard form as a prewriting activity—it aided one student

My Drawn Out Storyboard

I just figured out how to get this drawing to be the right size in here, that was a small tech challenge in itself. But this is my storyboard, which is very subject to change. I learned that you have to ask yourself a lot of questions to simply create the storyboard, so I'm glad it forced me to think through the details more thoroughly. I hope I will have the proper amount of time to create this video and make it the way I am imagining it, but if I do not, it will definitely be a simpler version of this. I need to spend some more time coming up with good questions and considering how I will phrase the argument, but it should be fun.

Some questions I am currently considering are, "What do you think the overall message in pop music is?", "Do you think the message in Pop Music matters?", "What Pop song do you like most?", "What do you think the message is?" and more. I am hoping to show that Pop Music does have a message and if people are aware of it, than what do they think of it? Songs have different messages of course, but there are definitely some common styles and patterns that are used to make Pop Music that creates some overarching messages. I am a Communications major so I am interested in this ha.

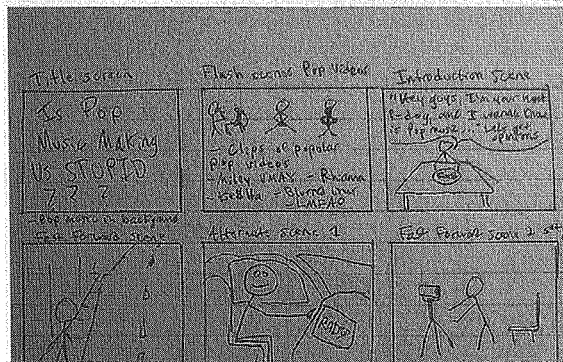
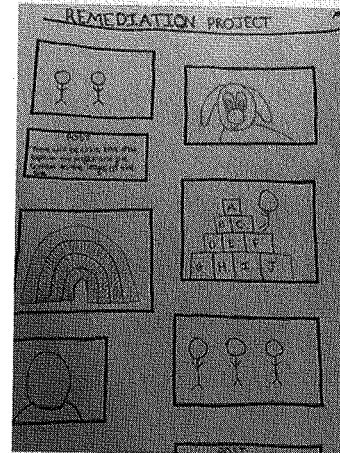


Figure 9.1. Student blog post reflecting on usefulness of storyboard for video planning.

in thinking through the details of the project of making a movie (see fig. 9.1 and Appendix 9.1); it led another to a realization about the limitations of her initial choice of platform for the Remediation (see fig. 9.2 and Appendix 9.2); to a third, it seemed less applicable to a Remediation platform that isn't intrinsically narrative (see fig. 9.3 and Appendix 9.3).

We see these students talking through their storyboard images with their classmates and receiving comments and further advice that affirm their Remediation ideas and in some cases indicate peer learning or "inspiration" already from these initial plans (see fig. 9.4 and Appendix 9.4). A key benefit of the digital platform for this sort of planning exercise is the opportunity for students to externalize a set of ideas and share it with an interested audience, to turn "writer-based prose" into "reader-based

Storyboarding Part 2



I wrote before about loving the storyboard experience (mostly after the fact) of the e-portfolio, so I was actually looking forward to storyboarding my Re-Mediation project. For this project, I was going to create a collection of animated GIFs, on the topic of gender socialization.

I planned to make a BuzzFeed-type article about breaking gender stereotypes, with most of the information presented visually through animated photos or video clips. Creating my storyboard was pretty straightforward - I typed a list of what images or clips I wanted to find (ex: a female gamer, a boy playing with dolls). I even had a title, "(#) People Valiantly Breaking Gender Stereotypes."

But when I looked at my completed storyboard, I realized it lacked depth and context. I felt

that viewers would not get anything out of this project. It left much open to interpretation and did not take a clear stance on the issue of gender stereotypes.

So, I changed my platform. Instead of creating a single, static list, I will compile my animated GIFs into a Tumblr. While many of the posts will still be visual, using Tumblr should give me more room to explain the issue, how the GIFs relate to each other, and will give my topic more of the depth and seriousness it deserves.

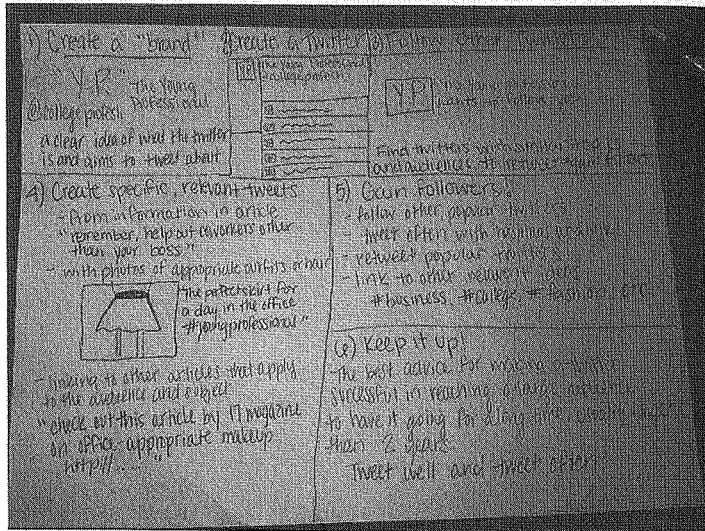
Figure 9.2. Student blog post reflecting on how storyboard helped her rethink her choice of project platform.

prose" (to borrow Flower's [1979] terms). These students accomplish this move with varying degrees of polish and detail; sometimes the key ideas come out in the Comments section in an exchange with a peer or in the thoughtful rephrasing and extension of an idea other readers give them. In allowing the publication of the storyboard in the first place, the digital space makes this dialogic reflection possible, and, additionally, preserves the exchange for later reference and further reflection.

Monitoring

For every draft of each major writing project, students are asked to include self-reflective monitoring comments—using the Comments tool in their word processing or PDF-creation program for alphabetic and multi-modal print documents¹¹ or tools like VoiceThread or a screencasting

My First Storyboard



For my remediating project, I plan on taking the advice and information I have learned through my repurposing project (a magazine spread on being a young professional) and turning it into an anonymous advice twitter. I have experience many of these as an avid twitter user and find them a successful medium for getting information across to girls of my age.

Creating a storyboard for this kind of project is a little bit difficult. Twitters don't exactly tell a story, rather a string of 140 character blurbs that all apply to the same topic. Argues about our

Figure 9.3. Student blog post reflecting on limitations of storyboard planning for nonnarrative projects.

program for websites or time-based digital media projects—that indicate bottlenecks, breakthroughs, or anything else they wish to draw to their readers' attention. The prompt for these comments was developed out of a study of metacognitive strategies in upper-level writing-in-the-disciplines courses (see Appendix 9.5 for the full prompt).¹² Students practice using these comments all semester and receive feedback on the form of the comment as well as its specific content, helping to scaffold their use of comments and leading students to become more precise and push deeper in their queries and observations.

As the examples included here suggest, students' self-reflective monitoring comments—which function as a kind of embedded

3 thoughts on "My First Storyboard"

November 4, 2013 at 9:53 pm

It looks like you have a pretty good plan for creating a successful twitter! I like how you addressed the less obvious things that can influence the success of a twitter, like the description, background, and twitpic. Do you plan on updating the twitter even after the semester is over? It would be interesting to see its progress months/years from now.

Excited to see your final product!

Log in to Reply

November 5, 2013 at 12:05 am

Dang, your storyboard looks really good! I really like how you are branding YP and plan to provide lots of links/pictures/etc. in your tweets. This is definitely a unique and interesting project to be working on, and I can't wait to see more in class!

Log in to Reply

November 6, 2013 at 8:08 pm

This is such a cool idea! As Sophia said, your storyboard does a great job of showing all the different components that make a twitter successful. I also like how your project has the potential to be very interactive. Since the discussion of Web 2.0 in the Lev Manovich reading, I have been looking for ways to make my own remediation project more open to the public, probably through social media. Your storyboard reminds me that social media success takes more than simply posting a few photos or links. You have to join conversations that are already happening and actively invite others to check out your brand or thoughts. Thank you for the inspiration, and I can't wait to see how your project turns out!

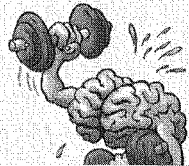
Figure 9.4. Students' reflective dialogue in comments on blog post.

reflection-in-action—provide an excellent means of creating a reflective dialogue in the margins between writer and reader (whether instructor or peers). Readers get a “back story” on the writer’s paper, enabling responses that speak directly and efficiently to the writer’s central questions and concerns. Further, over time, these small acts of self-monitoring become integrated into students’ composing processes—become a kind of self-dialogue as well—such that in the act of noticing and formulating a comment, students often become able to supply their own response and enact an appropriate revision. One of the Sweetland Minor in Writing student-interview respondents explains the process in this way: “You insert little comments. If you, as a writer, have a question or you’re not sure about something, you’d say, ‘I wasn’t sure if this was

Your Brain, The Muscle

Like the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease (AD), the early physiological changes are nearly as subtle. It is only at the severely progressive stages of the disease that changes become noticeable. The changes occur in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain which are the two lobes primarily responsible for executive functioning tasks such as decision-making, the ability to adapt in novel situations, multi-tasking, working memory, and planning. A loss of volume in these areas is an indicator of AD onset. The loss of volume occurs because neurons die. Why these neurons die is still being investigated. These lobes show the fastest rate of age-related cognitive decline, therefore physical activity (PA) has the greatest chance to be of benefit there.

However, the neurological benefits from PA are not global, they are specific to brain structures associated with executive functioning. Exercise exerts a *unique* protective role in not only preserving, but maintaining cognitive functioning. A 2006 study found that aerobic training actually increased brain volume for previously sedentary individuals. When you engage in aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, anything that increases heart rate), your body releases a growth factor that induces angiogenesis, or the birth of new blood vessels. In your brain, increased blood vessels in your brain means increased blood flow and increases in cerebral blood flow are a measure of cognitive processing. Increased cerebral blood flow allows for neurogenesis, or the birth of new neurons, which in turn increases brain volume. Furthermore, PA stimulates the release of brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that maintains neural integrity. This entire process can take place in as little as three months post workout. Importantly however, for this processes to occur, the exercise must be aerobic in nature.



Comment [1]: Student: New lines of research suggest that physical activity and laughter are the cornerstones of AD— is this worth mentioning here or do you think it is too much of a tangent from the exercise focus?

NS: I think a quick and casual reference could be useful. Also, avoid the passive voice in this sentence (still being investigated)—it reads too formally.

Comment [2]: Student: Writer's note: I should spend this paragraph exploring all the background stuff, what Alzheimer is, what's known, etc. or I should assume a reader of TIME would be familiar—the articles I read varied on the level of detail they went into explaining or not explaining general knowledge topics.

NS: As a reader, I felt the broader background info was sufficient (though adding a bit about plaques, etc. would be good). I think, but I'm a bit confused by your last sentence, because it's less clear to me why physical activity has an impact on cognitive life or health... Another neuroscience sentence would be useful here. (I see that you get into the explanation below, but it doesn't connect quite as quickly to me, perhaps a bit of reorganization here, or a preview phrase or sentence.)

Figure 9.5. Student self-reflective monitoring comments.

the best argument here.' I really like that. I think that really strengthened my writing, because it made me ask questions. Then sometimes after just seeing that question, I was able to answer it on my own, and then sometimes the teacher or students would answer those questions."

The two excerpted examples of self-reflective monitoring comments I've included here are drawn from the major Repurposing project, in which students are asked to select "a piece of writing you've already completed on a topic that's dear to your heart and/or mind, a topic you'll want to continue living with this semester" and "repurpose it for a new audience and with a new or extended argument." Both students are grappling with repurposing an academic argument into one directed at a popular audience (fig. 9.5 and Appendix 9.6 show how a kinesiology research paper on the effects of exercise on the development of Alzheimer's disease was repurposed as a *Time* magazine article, and Appendix 9.7 shows how political science and philosophy research papers on global feminism and universal human rights were repurposed as a *Foreign Policy* journal article). These students' comments speak to struggles with balancing their depth of subject knowledge against what might be expected from their audience, striking an appropriate tone for the target publication venue and refining their argument to convey the complexity of their ideas appropriately. My responses aim to address their question or concern directly and to strike a balance between offering a readerly response of impressions and more specific advice for revision.

Evaluation

As they did for all of their final project drafts during the semester, alongside the polished draft of the Remediation project students were asked to submit a reflection accounting for their response to feedback on the earlier drafts, and they were also asked to comment specifically (1) on the extent to which they were able to reach their ideal version of the project, given the constraints and learning curve of the medium or platform in which they chose to work, and (2) on the "behind-the-scenes" rhetorical choices they made working within this medium/platform, a reflective activity not unlike Michael Neal's "rhetorical rationale" (this volume). Students could use any medium they chose for this reflection, and most used print. But some students chose to make videos instead for a variety of reasons—because they had made videos for projects in the class and felt comfortable with the medium, because videos afforded the ability to narrate their process dynamically, because videos can convey affect in ways print cannot always (as Elizabeth Clark notes, this volume),¹³ and because videos can approximate a reader's experience of a project (navigating a website, say) in a way print text cannot easily.

The video reflection presented here (see fig. 9.6) was composed by a student for whom the Remediation project video was her first foray into video making. For her Repurposing project, this student had chosen to rework an analysis of a girls' health website into an APA-style research paper, and she remediated this paper into a video, "Female Body Image and Sexuality." She incorporated survey data and interview footage she collected as research for the two projects. Her video reflection is essentially a frame-by-frame screencast commentary—from within the "back end" or workspace of the iMovie software program—on her choices and her revisions as she pulled all of these elements together and moved closer to the version of the project she had in mind. Among many topics addressed in the fifteen-minute video, this student talks in detail about how she learned to use the iMovie software and the video tutorials that helped her; she responds to feedback I had given her in a one-to-one conference, concerning transitions, for instance, and also discusses the rhetorical choices behind certain transition effects she ended up using; she discusses her aesthetic and organizational choices in the service of impact of argument, parallelism, and uniformity of effect; and she closes by noting her satisfaction at having taken on the challenge of the project.

Video reflections can take a range of forms, from the "talking head" speaking to the camera, to more narrative forms documenting and portraying writing processes (as in some examples from Hawisher et al. 2009), to more experimental and impressionistic collages (as in some

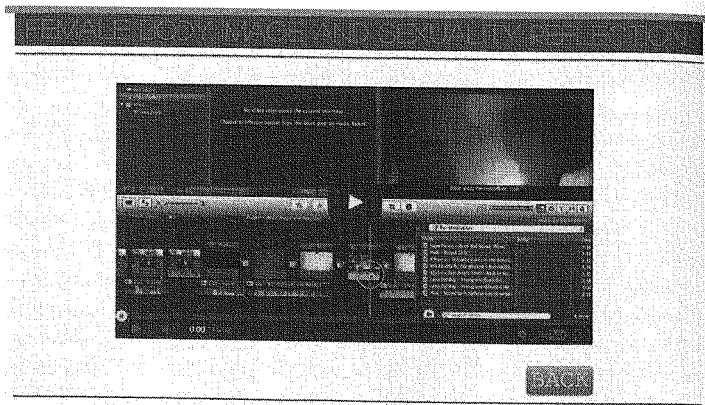


Figure 9.6. Student reflective video evaluation of remediation project. (<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/113197>)

examples from Journet et al. 2008). This student's choice to offer a frame-by-frame reflective narration on the video was completely her own and is unlike any other video reflection I've encountered. In a sense, this video commentary has much in common with—is perhaps a kind of remediation of—self-reflective marginal comments in that it takes the viewer into the text of the video production itself to engage in fine-grained annotation. It is also reminiscent of the work Meloni (2009) describes her students doing with the Google Docs revision history in that the iMovie software workspace, captured in a screencast, offers unprecedented access to moment-by-moment rhetorical choices. It is a very long video—almost three times the length of the original 6:18-minute video on which it comments (<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/113196>)—and one could offer a critique here that it essentially constitutes a narration rather than an edited composition in itself;¹⁴ yet (for this viewer), it is a fascinating look at a student's account of her rhetorical processes in creating a complex composition and, in that way, beautifully fulfills the reflective genre of the (video) process note.

Reflective Essay

As part of the final electronic portfolio they create for the Sweetland Minor in Writing Gateway course that collects their work in the course and tasks them with constructing and presenting a provisional writerly

self-identity, students include a reflective essay presenting their process of working through their Repurposing project and its subsequent Remediation. A brief prompt (part of a larger prompt for the portfolio as a whole) directs students to compose “a reflective essay on our big two-part project that leads your reader through the steps from ‘source’ text to ‘re-purposing’ essay to ‘re-mediation’ project—it should say something about your motivations and your choices and also include links to your ‘source’ and ‘model’ texts.” This essay requires students to make a number of moves quickly: charting the pathway of texts from point A to point B and so on, making these texts (and, if they choose, also their drafts) available to the reader, accounting for the choices made and the understanding gained in the process of remaking an idea in new genres and media in a style that invites readers in and makes them care about this process. It's a complex rhetorical situation in any event, made more so by its being embedded in the high-stakes assessment scenario of a final course portfolio that counts for a quarter of the course grade.

I juxtapose two examples of this reflective essay to demonstrate different possibilities for taking up the prompt and to highlight some subtle intertextual connections between them. Josh, who hand coded his site, makes expert use of thumbnail screenshots, hyperlinks, text interspersed with images, and arrows and other diacritical markers that indicate connectivity and movement and foreground the visual rhetoric of his own work of repurposing and remediating (see fig. 9.7 and Appendix 9.8). His linear top-to-bottom format narrates the temporal progression of his conceptual relation to the topic of zombies over a few semesters and specifically his “exploration of the undead and the cultural implications of our culture's obsession over them.” It also narrates and demonstrates changes in his relation to the modes and media in which it is possible to explore the topic, as we see in the shift from traditional alphabetic essay to multimodal magazine article to website.

Beixi takes a different approach, essentially creating a miniwebsite within a website that illustrates not only the evolution from Repurposing to Remediation but also the evolution of each of those projects in itself (see fig. 9.8 and Appendix 9.9). In its use of arrows to point the way from topic to topic, her reflection in some ways draws inspiration from Josh's—a very real possibility in that Josh's reflective essay is published on a publicly accessible website (it is housed in the ePortfolio showcase on the Sweetland Minor in Writing blog [<http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/portfolios/>]) and was used as a model of this reflective genre in Beixi's Gateway class two years later, which allowed Beixi

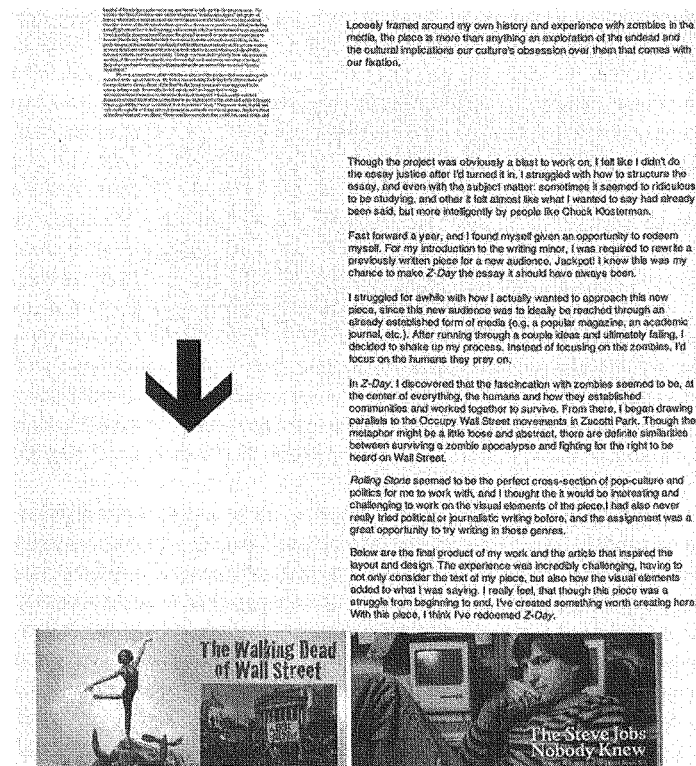


Figure 9.7. Student reflective essay portraying linear temporal development of repurposing and remediating projects.

to view it, reflect upon it, and learn from it on her own time. This asynchronous form of peer-to-peer learning extends the model of dialogic reflection afforded by the digital space of the public website. The shift in Beixi's essay, from the single large arrows pointing downward we see in Josh's, to clusters of arrows pointing first right and then left, signify in some sense the complex hyperlinking of her miniwebsite. Buttons naming the source texts (Memoirs), repurposed texts (Short Stories), and remediated text (Ann Arbor Awesome) lead us to webpages that present those artifacts along with brief contextual reflections for each item. The text of the reflective essay itself also includes hyperlinks to each individual artifact, and sidebar columns include links to drafts of the

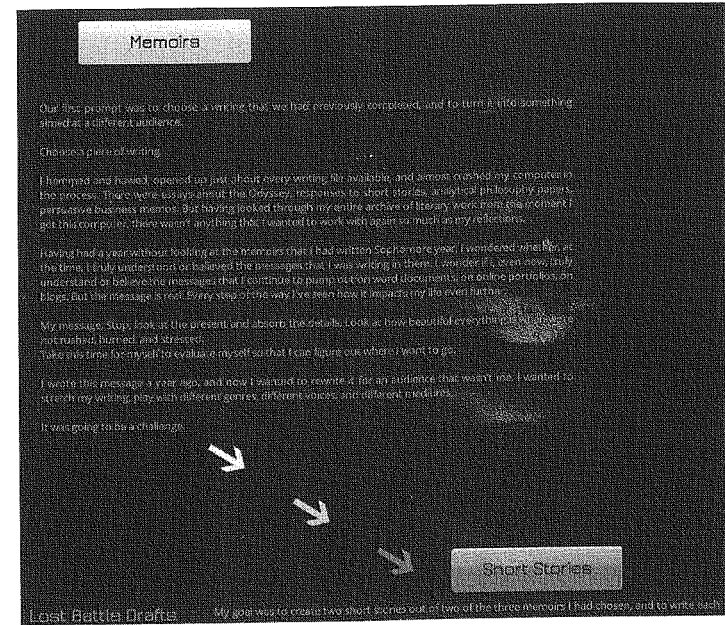


Figure 9.8. Student reflective essay portraying networked development of repurposing and remediating projects.

Repurposing project short stories as well as brief reflections on topics related to the development of the Remediation project: the choice of a platform, rhetorical choices behind the image captions in the final version of the project, and ways she understood her writing style to change over the project's creation.

These reflective essays, which constitute a kind of middle ground between the writerly identity-building work of constructive reflection, made public and explicit, and reflection-in-presentation offer a rich sense of how students take up real choices among complex rhetorical situations and the investments they have in both subject (or content) and medium. In so doing, they enact a remediation of the *essay* form.¹⁵ Josh describes knowing from the outset that he wanted to make a website about zombies, but then feeling frustrated when constraints on his composing process did not allow him to achieve his aim as he had envisioned it, despite his previous experience building websites; he also describes his excitement at deepening his work with the topic by

incorporating the visual rhetoric of his magazine article. Beixi, on the other hand, describes wanting to try out a genre she had never explored in order to return to some ideas about growing up she wanted to think through more fully and the challenges this genre posed for her, particularly in regard to craft; she also describes the leap in collaborating with a classmate to create the *Ann Arbor Awesome* website (<http://beixili.wix.com/livelaughloveshare#!listen/c3c1>), a process that combined a wide range of analog and digital media, from in-person interviews and digital photography to writing and website building. The rich multimodal and multimedia dimensions of these two reflective essays are central to the conceptual, aesthetic, and metacognitive work they do—for their writers and readers alike—work that fully depends upon the affordances of the digital spaces in which they live.

DIGITAL REFLECTION AND DIGITAL RHETORIC PEDAGOGY

In response, then, to the questions with which I began—how does digital reflection work and how does it differ from nondigital reflection?—the literature and the examples I've presented suggest that digital spaces present both new challenges and new opportunities. We see these challenges and opportunities

- in the relative “ease” (to return to Cope and Kalantzis’s [2009] term) of designing a reflective curriculum using digital tools and thereby cultivating students’ capacity to become reflective practitioners of writing;
- in the new and varied forms of dialogic reflection and collaborative possibilities these tools make possible;
- in the increased visibility of aspects of writing development and writing processes enabled by these tools that can alter our sense of what we’re doing when we write; and
- in the creativity, engagement, and sense of ownership of their reflective writing students exhibit when given the freedom to explore these tools and use them to make authentic composing choices.

But beyond these student experiences of reflection in digital spaces, of course, as Yancey reminds us, “teachers are also reflective practitioners” (Yancey 1998, 15). I want to conclude, then, by taking a look at how teaching ubiquitous digital reflection may have effects on instructors’ own reflective and pedagogical practices. Does pedagogy work differently in digital reflective spaces, and does reflection work differently in digital pedagogical spaces (such as a Google Doc or student website)? Just as we saw that there are multiple possible scenarios combining

digital and print-based tools for writing and for reflection, there are also various ways of incorporating digital reflection into writing classrooms. Indeed, some instructors may wish to introduce their students to multimodal composition in a primarily low-stakes way and so may use forms of digital reflection in curricula based around analog forms of major writing assignments. In this way, then, the use of tools for digital reflection need not entail a more general digital pedagogy.

Yet, I want to suggest that there are significant benefits to teaching digital forms of reflection in classrooms where students are also engaging in other genres of multimodal and multimedia composition. And beyond that, once we have taken the plunge, so to speak, into teaching certain digital genres, it can be hard to resist transforming the writing classroom into a fully digitally mediated space. Journet et al. (2008) describe their efforts “to move the [multimodal reflective] work [they] were doing into [their] own undergraduate teaching” and their sense that their teacher experience of the affordances and constraints of reflecting in digital spaces ended up facilitating deeper insight into their students’ digital *and* analog print-based writing experiences, in terms of students’ apprehension and resistance to reflection but also opportunities for “play” and new composer/audience relations (under “Home”; see also Rogers, Trauman, and Kiernan 2010). In part, it may be the case that teaching and cultivating student reflection with digital tools and in digital environments may feel different because there are so many elements to be figured out—more variables to juggle and more permutations possible in all aspects of the rhetorical situation for a particular piece of writing. In these scenarios, the instructor does not have all the answers and may play the role of codiscoverer. Indeed, instructors may themselves be reflecting in ways more urgent and deep than usual on the pros and cons of their pedagogical choices with the tools at their own disposal.

In my own experiences with teaching in the digital reflective curriculum of the Sweetland Minor in Writing Gateway course, I have found that students’ explorations of (and growing confidence and expertise in) digital rhetoric in their major writing projects (particularly the Remediation and ePortfolio) and on their blogs creates a kind of synergy with their uses of digital tools for purposes of reflection, leading to digital reflections that are unexpectedly innovative, nuanced, and thoughtfully conceived. Here, then, working with students as they discover the rhetorical affordances and constraints of various digital tools for their writing, as part of digital rhetoric pedagogy, supports as well the development of a digital reflective curriculum. On the other hand,

I have found that my students' digitally mediated reflections on their own and their classmates' writing have also changed the ways I respond to their writing, such that much of my own commentary and feedback has become multimodal—almost as a means of keeping up with them. One example of this change can be found in the dialogue initiated by my students' self-reflective monitoring comments, but I have also found myself needing tools like VoiceThread and screencasting software to respond to my students' videos, podcasts, websites, and the like. Most recently, I have screencast my one-to-one conferences with my students; we sit at my computer and they lead me through the questions and comments they have about their multimodal compositions in progress. After the conference, I send them the link to the video so they have a record of our conversation, in what might be a kind of time-based remediation of the alphabetic record English (1998) describes students taking away from their conversations in the MOO.

Teacher and student, then, we both become aware that there is now much more to reflect on, that our digital composing work has us crossing into new and unexpected compositional and rhetorical spaces, and that there is therefore real exigency and scope for our work of reflection. At the same time, we both understand that our digital tools for reflection are themselves part of these spaces and that in wielding these tools with increasing precision and know-how, we may glean important new insights into the significance for writing, learning, and teaching of a reflective curriculum.

Notes

1. Hannah Tasker, February 2, 2012, "PSA on Self-Reflective Comments." *Sweetland Minor in Writing Blog*, <http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/author/hazita/page/2/>.
2. The literature on the role of metacognition in self-regulation of learning is vast. Some key texts include Flavell 1976; Palinscar and Brown 1984; and Dunlosky and Metcalfe 2009. See also Matthew Kaplan et al. 2013 for an overview of strategies for teaching metacognition across the disciplines.
3. According to the program website, "Students in the Minor experiment with writing in numerous ways, including (but definitely not limited to!) multi-modal projects, traditional papers, professional writing, and creative work. They can make use of what they have learned in their major and other courses within their writing projects for the minor, as well as explore new ways of writing that they might not otherwise encounter" (under "Minor in Writing," University of Michigan Sweetland Center for Writing, <https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/undergraduates/minor-in-writing>).
4. Sweetland Minor in Writing students are required to post to this blog (<http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/>) during enrollment in their Gateway and capstone courses for the minor program and are invited to post in the semesters in between and subsequent to their completion of the program.

5. Dylan Baig, December 4, 2013, "My Blogging Voice," *Sweetland Minor in Writing Blog*, <http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/2013/12/my-blogging-style/>.
6. Joseph Ostrow, comment on Baig, "My Blogging Voice."
7. Toby Fulwiler (1987) notes an interesting similarity in *The Journal Book*, describing an analog form that has much in common with the blog genre in what he lists as its language features, cognitive activities, and formal features that facilitate students' free rein in expression and conceptual exploration (see, e.g., 2–3). One key feature this form lacks in relation to the blog, however, is its built-in availability to other readers and its promotion of easy dialogic reflection.
8. The student blog posts mentioned in this paragraph all appear on the *Sweetland Minor in Writing Blog* and can be found on Joseph Ostrow's author page: <http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/author/jstro/>.
9. Kathleen Blake Yancey, Stephen McElroy, and Elizabeth Powers note this problem, too, writing, "There is a line of research, small but growing, suggesting that asking students to perform [reflection] . . . (as 'proving' they have learned) might in fact be counterproductive because in such a context, ironically, they can be required to dissemble in order to succeed, with the result that portfolio-as-site-for-authentic-assessment becomes another platform for the game of grades" (Yancey, McElroy, and Powers 2013, under "The Take-Away").
10. These interviews comprise one dataset from an ongoing longitudinal study of student writing development conducted by the Sweetland Center for Writing at the University of Michigan, on which I am a coinvestigator. I cite only a tiny fragment of interview language coded as *Reflection*. I am grateful to the study research team for permission to make use of this material here.
11. The Insert Comment tool in the student's word-processing platform is so commonplace as to be almost "low-tech," but it does provide a digital space, which enables a level of detail in both student comment and instructor or peer response, as the examples suggest, that would be quite difficult to achieve with handwriting in the margins.
12. I have been asking my students to insert self-reflective comments in the margins of their working and final drafts regularly since 2008, when I and colleagues from UM's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching proposed their use as one intervention in this study, titled "The Impact of Metacognitive Strategies within Writing in the Disciplines," funded by the Spencer and Teagle Foundations. The study found overwhelmingly that students and instructors are engaged by and learn from use of these comments: "Our analysis suggests that the [self-reflective] monitoring comments had the largest impact. They were the most highly rated of our interventions, both by instructors and by students. In fact, between 83% and 95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the monitoring comments were useful" (Meizlish et al. 2013, 11; see also LaVaque-Manty and Evans 2013, particularly their discussion of the dialogic function of these comments, 135–36 and 138–39).
13. J. Elizabeth Clark also notes a similar effect in her comments on student ePortfolios at LaGuardia Community College, as cited in Cambridge, Cambridge, and Yancey 2009.
14. See Yancey et al. 2013 for a critique of excessive length in video reflections as well as important questions regarding establishment of the genre conventions for video and audio reflections (199–200).
15. This chapter was completed prior to the publication of *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies* by Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes. Nonetheless, I want to acknowledge their important contribution to a new theory of "the essay" in a multimodal, multimedia compositional world as well as their critique of the field of composition studies' "fetishization" of this form (Alexander and Rhodes 2014, 43).

APPENDIX 9.1.

My Drawn Out Storyboard

📅 November 4, 2013 (<http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/2013/11/my-drawn-out-storyboard/>) 👤

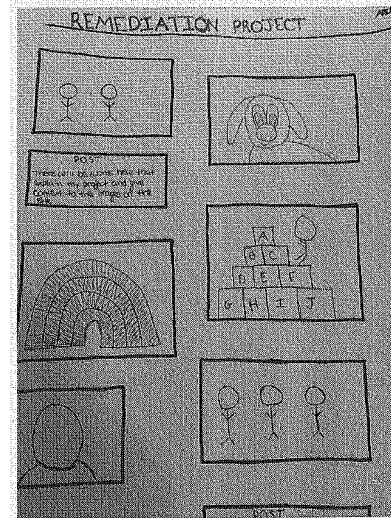
I just figured out how to get this drawing to be the right size in here, that was a small tech challenge in itself. But this is my storyboard, which is very subject to change. I learned that you have to ask yourself a lot of questions to simply create the storyboard, so I'm glad it forced me to think through the details more thoroughly. I hope I will have the proper amount of time to create this video and make it the way I am imagining it, but if I do not, it will definitely be a simpler version of this. I need to spend some more time coming up with good questions and considering how I will phrase the argument, but it should be fun.

Some questions I am currently considering are, "What do you think the overall message in pop music is?", "Do you think the message in Pop Music matters?", "What Pop song do you like most?", "What do you think the message is?" and more. I am hoping to show that Pop Music does have a message and if people are aware of it, than what do they think of it? Songs have different messages of course, but there are definitely some common styles and patterns that are used to make Pop Music that creates some overarching messages. I am a Communications major so I am interested in this ha.

APPENDIX 9.2.

Storyboarding Part 2

📅 November 7, 2013 (<http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/2013/11/storyboarding-part-2/>) 👤



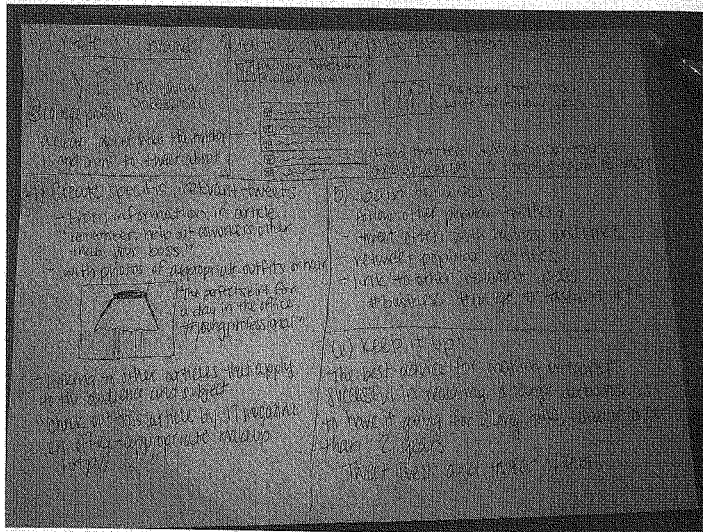
I wrote before about loving the storyboard experience (mostly after the fact) of the e-portfolio, so I was actually looking forward to storyboarding my Re-Mediation project. For this project, I was going to create a collection of animated GIFs, on the topic of gender socialization.

I planned to make a BuzzFeed-type article about breaking gender stereotypes, with most of the information presented visually through animated photos or video clips. Creating my storyboard was pretty straightforward – I typed a list of what images or

APPENDIX 9.3.

My First Storyboard

📅 November 4, 2013 (<http://writingminor.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/2013/11/my-first-storyboard/>) 🐼



For my remediating project, I plan on taking the advice and information I have learned through my repurposing project (a magazine spread on being a young professional) and turning it into an anonymous advice twitter. I have experience many of these as an avid twitter user and find them a successful medium for getting information across to girls of my age.

APPENDIX 9.4.

3 thoughts on "My First Storyboard"

It looks like you have a pretty good plan for creating a successful twitter! I like how you addressed the less obvious things that can influence the success of a twitter, like the description, background, and twitpic. Do you plan on updating the twitter even after the semester is over? It would be interesting to see its progress months/years from now.

Excited to see your final product!

REPLY (/2013/11/MY-FIRST-STORYBOARD/?REPLYTOCOM=1890#RESPOND)

Dang, your storyboard looks really good! I really like how you are branding YP and plan to provide lots of links/pictures/etc. in your tweets. This is definitely a unique and interesting project to be working on, and I can't wait to see more in class!

REPLY (/2013/11/MY-FIRST-STORYBOARD/?COM=1893#RESPOND)

APPENDIX 9.5.

Appendix 1: Inserting Self-Reflective Comments in Essay Drafts Handout

Asking students to comment on their own writing in progress and identify bottlenecks and areas that are working well promotes the kind of metacognitive self-assessment that supports writing development. Responding directly to student comments promotes focused dialogue about writing, and aids overall writing assessment. This handout is adapted from a study of successful writing strategies being conducted by the Sweetland Writing Center and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. The study is funded by the Spencer and Teague Foundations.

Instructions

Once you've written your draft, take a step back and think about any questions or comments you have about what you've achieved in your writing. Use the "comment" function in Word to insert 3 to 5 questions or comments in the margins of the paper. This is your opportunity to communicate with me "backstage" about the choices you've made. You might note places where:

- you've tried to draw on key concepts from the readings or course materials,
- you think you've expressed an idea or posed an argument particularly well,
- you feel uncertain about whether you've gotten your point across,
- you are struggling with or confused about a particular concept,
- you've incorporated suggestions for revision from me or your peers.

Make sure your questions and comments offer enough information to allow the reader to know how to respond to you—e.g., explain why you're confused (not just that you're confused), or why you've used the concepts you've chosen; refer to specific ways you think you've expressed something well; and so on.

Here are two examples—one of an appropriately specific question for this activity and one of an overly broad question:

Specific Question

Here's an example of an appropriately specific question: "I originally had this section, and a few others later in the paper, in italics. I wanted to differentiate the lines that are more of an inner monologue from the primary narrative of the piece, but thought the italic style might take the reader's focus away from the content of my paper. As a reader, do you think several interjections in italics would enhance the flow of the piece? Or would it be too much of a distraction from my main ideas?"

Overly Broad Question

Here's one that is too broad: "Does this make sense? Or should I go deeper into that idea? Or leave it out completely?"

Note: To use the "comment" function in Word, use your mouse to select the portion of your text you want to comment on. Then select "insert" from the menu at the top of your screen. (This will open a drop-down menu; select "comment" from the list of options you find there.)

Comment [1]: Once you've selected "comment," Word will place a bubble like this one in your margin. Type your comment or question there. When you've finished, use your mouse to click anywhere in your main document; this will allow you to exit the bubble.

APPENDIX 9.6.

Appendix 2: Student Self-Reflective Monitoring Comments asking questions about organization and clarity

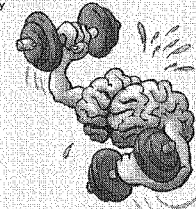
Your Brain, The Muscle

Like the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease (AD), the early physiological changes are nearly as subtle. It is only at the severely progressive stages of the disease that changes become noticeable. The changes occur in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain which are the two lobes primarily responsible for executive functioning tasks such as decision-making, the ability to adapt in novel situations, multi-tasking, working memory, and planning. A loss of volume in these areas is an indicator of AD onset. The loss of volume occurs because neurons die. Why these neurons die is still being investigated. These lobes show the fastest rate of age-related cognitive decline, therefore physical activity (PA) has the greatest chance to be of benefit there.

However, the neurological benefits from PA are not global; they are specific to brain structures associated with executive functioning. Exercise exerts a unique protective role in not only preserving, but maintaining cognitive functioning. A 2006 study found that aerobic training actually increased brain volume for previously sedentary individuals. When you engage in aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, anything that increases heart rate), your body releases a growth factor that induces angiogenesis, or the birth of new blood vessels. In your brain, increased blood vessels in your brain means increased blood flow and increases in cerebral blood flow are a measure of cognitive processing. Increased cerebral blood flow allows for neurogenesis, or the birth of new neurons which in turn increases brain volume. Furthermore, PA stimulates the release of brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that maintains neural integrity. This entire process can take place in as little as three months post workout. Importantly however, for this processes to occur, the exercise must be aerobic in nature. Studies that compared anaerobic to aerobic exercises, found that no neurological effects correlated with the anaerobic workout groups.

Though the above findings are encouraging, studies by Bixby and Lytle further corroborate and give more clout to the results. One important factor to consider in analyzing brain volume is IQ. Higher IQ is associated with more education which in turn is indicative of more neurons and dendrites and therefore a higher brain volume at baseline. However, the Bixby study rigorously controlled for IQ, socioeconomic status (SES), and education level and a positive association still remained between PA and increased cognitive functioning. Furthermore, the Lytle study looked at rural populations in Pennsylvania that reported cognitive functioning problems at younger ages, were of lower SES status, lower IQ levels, and fewer years of completed formal education. This was an atypical population for scientific studies and the fact that a correlation still remained for PA preventing the onset of dementia really lends to the generalizability of these results.

According to the research, keeping your wits about you may be as simple as taking a 30 minute walk each day, five days a week... if you're following the guidelines set forth by the American College of Sports Medicine. What about standing, taking the stairs, or even cleaning the kitchen? You burn more calories engaging in these activities than sitting or watching TV.



Comment [1]: Student: New lines of research suggest that plaques and tangles are the culprit of AD—is this worth mentioning here or do you think it is too much of a tangent from the exercise focus?

Comment [1]: Student: New lines of research suggest that plaques and tangles are the culprit of AD—is this worth mentioning here or do you think it is too much of a tangent from the exercise focus?

NS: I think a quick and casual reference could be useful. Also, avoid the passive voice in this sentence ("will be investigated") – it reads too formally.

Comment [2]: Student: I didn't know if I should spend this paragraph explaining all the background stuff... what Alzheimer's is, what's known, etc. or if I should assume a reader of TIME would be familiar... the articles I read varied on the level of detail they went into explaining or not explaining general knowledge topics.

Comment [2]: Student: I didn't know if I should spend this paragraph explaining all the background stuff... what Alzheimer's is, what's known, etc. or if I should assume a reader of TIME would be familiar... the articles I read varied on the level of detail they went into explaining or not explaining general knowledge topics.

NS: As a reader, I felt the broader background info was sufficient (though adding a bit about plaques, etc. would be good, I think), but I'm a bit confused by your last sentence, because it's less clear to me why physical activity has an impact on neuron life or death... Another connective sentence would be useful here (I see that you get into the explanation below, but it doesn't come quite quickly enough – perhaps a bit of reorganization here, or a preview phrase or sentence).

Comment [3]: Student: Is the association between IQ and brain volume and why it matters to make these results legitimate clear? I don't think I did a good job of explaining the correlation, but again, I don't know how much to assume a reader knows. I feel like I should explain things more thoroughly.

Comment [3]: Student: Is the association between IQ and brain volume and why it matters to make these results legitimate clear? I don't think I did a good job of explaining the correlation, but again, I don't know how much to assume a reader knows. I feel like I should explain things more thoroughly.

NS: This section feels too academic, really. In some ways, I wonder if you need it, or if you could paraphrase the key ideas more quickly? I'm not clearly getting the correlation you want to convey...

Comment [4]: Student: Are you clear on what exactly the new research is? Did I make it explicit enough what the correlation/benefits of exercise and cog functioning are?

Comment [4]: Student: Are you clear on what exactly the new research is? Did I make it explicit enough what the correlation/benefits of exercise and cog functioning are?

NS: Yes, for the most part, though I think it can be clarified some, as I mention above. The main point has been conveyed, though.

Page 1: [1] Comment [3] Naomi Silver 5/18/14 11:58 PM

Student: Is the association between IQ and brain volume and why it matters to make these results legitimate clear? I don't think I did a good job of explaining the correlation, but again, I don't know how much to assume a reader knows. I feel like I should explain things more thoroughly

NS: This section feels too academic, really. In some ways, I wonder if you need it, or if you could paraphrase the key idea more quickly? I'm not clearly getting the correlation you want to convey... How do your model articles handle this kind of thing?

APPENDIX 9.7.

Appendix 3: Student Self-Reflective Monitoring Comments noting strengths and weaknesses in the paper's argument and style

But not so fast. There is something too simplistic about the causal relationship between investment and improvement, and perhaps too narrow. How, exactly, does one tangibly and sustainably invest in women, actually? In developing nations in the midst of severe economic crises, prolonged civil unrest, and environmental disasters, investments made by the Western world, or lack thereof, is perpetuating the development crisis. The World Bank, the UN and the IMF have, albeit unsuccessfully, have strategized loan systems and other various economic strategies to uplift the developing. Needless to say, development is not a simplistic issue, and the benefits and failures of current strategies have not yet been realized—we are still trying to figure out the most effective policies. Drawing the conclusion that investment in women is the answer to this crisis is not only a vague and an abstract rhetorical ploy, but it completely undermines the complexity of strategies currently being assessed.

It is easy to pinpoint where and to what degree vulnerable populations of women are suffering throughout the world, and perhaps even easier to recommend strategies that would elevate the level of political participation, economic independence and social empowerment. The United States of America has figured it out, after all. Is it not our duty as a developed country that reaps the benefits of a three-wave movement to spread our knowledge, our insight, and our resources to those women who aren't as fortunate as us!

You see what I'm getting at here? There is a sentiment vaguely demonstrative of imperialistic superiority that we are applying to our understanding of global women's rights. There is a fundamental conflict in approaching global gender inequality as we do humanitarian aid—with a paternalistic concept that our values as a Western democracy are inherently more developed and legitimate.

Comment [1]: Student: Again, another sweeping conclusion that I haven't justified enough! I need to talk a little bit more about current economic development strategies, and how focusing JUST on women may not be the most effective way to create foundational and sustainable change for a country.

NS: Yes, sounds good. It seems like one of the issues may be leaving out the economic from the empowerment issue? When activists like Clinton claim that investing in women is good for the economy, is this a way of kind of dressing up the call for women's equality in language that will appeal more broadly (to men)? I.e., you men with power probably wouldn't want to bother with women just for the principle of it, but see, you can get something from it too... I guess for me as a reader the tension comes down to what the main aim is -- if it's 'foundational and sustainable change for a country,' then yes, you're probably right -- though I guess the argument could be made that greater social equality in general should be (needs to be) part of that equation, no? ... Lots of really great food for thought here!

Comment [2]: Student: Okay so my argument is not NEARLY as refined and specific as I need it to be. There is a lot more thought, evidence and specific examples that I need to elaborate on in this essay before I can make this a compelling argument. However the tone and style of this is what I'm going for... resembling an argumentative journal article.

NS: I like this last paragraph a lot. It states a main point clearly and contentiously, and it opens up room for debate. What if you were to lead with something like this before circling back to Clinton and that background?

APPENDIX 9.8.

Josh Kim
student. writer. nerd.

Contact

Portfolio

Writing as Process

About

Home

I've always believed that writing was more of an action than a thing, a verb rather than a noun. Over these last few months, I've really been exposed to writing as a process and how self-reflection leads to clearer, more expertly composed pieces. Here's an example of what I'm talking about.

I may not be a professional writer, but I've been writing for a long time. I've written for my school newspaper, my blog, and even for a few magazines. I've also written a few books, including a novel and a non-fiction book. I've been writing since I was a child, and I've never stopped. I've always loved the process of writing, and I've always loved the idea of sharing my stories with others. I've always believed that writing was more of an action than a thing, a verb rather than a noun. Over these last few months, I've really been exposed to writing as a process and how self-reflection leads to clearer, more expertly composed pieces. Here's an example of what I'm talking about.

The piece to the left started as a creative-nonfiction piece, written for an English class I took in the Fall of 2010. Though creative-nonfiction oriented, the assignment required me to do a significant amount of independent research. I was however allowed to choose any topic that suited us.

The piece to the left started as a creative-nonfiction piece, written for an English class I took in the Fall of 2010. Though creative-nonfiction oriented, the assignment required me to do a significant amount of independent research. I was however allowed to choose any topic that suited us.

At the time, I was pretty enamored with zombies and the idea of surviving a zombie apocalypse scenario like that which is presented in various forms of media: movies, television, video games, and even books so they were the obvious choice to write on. The presence of zombies across such a variety of media got me thinking about why it was they were such a prominent force in our pop cultural identity.

Loosely framed around my own history and experience with zombies in the media, the piece is more than anything an exploration of the undead and the cultural implications our culture's obsession over them that comes with our fixation.

Though the project was obviously a blast to work on, I felt like I didn't do the essay justice after I'd turned it in. I struggled with how to structure the essay, and even with the subject matter: sometimes it seemed so ridiculous to be studying, and other it felt almost like what I wanted to say had already been said, but more intelligently by people like Chuck Klosterman.

Fast forward a year, and I found myself given an opportunity to redeem myself. For my introduction to the writing minor, I was required to rewrite a previously written piece for a new audience. Jackpot! I knew this was my chance to make *Z-Day* the essay it should have always been.

I struggled for awhile with how I actually wanted to approach this new piece, since this new audience was to ideally be reached through an already established form of media (e.g. a popular magazine, an academic journal, etc.). After running through a couple ideas and ultimately failing, I decided to shake up my process. Instead of focusing on the zombies, I'd focus on the humans they prey on.

In *Z-Day*, I discovered that the fascination with zombies seemed to be, at the center of everything, the humans and how they established communities and worked together to survive. From there, I began drawing parallels to the Occupy Wall Street movements in Zuccotti Park. Though the metaphor might be a little loose and abstract, there are definite similarities between surviving a zombie apocalypse and fighting for the right to be heard on Wall Street.

Rolling Stone seemed to be the perfect cross-section of pop-culture and



APPENDIX 9.9.

Beixi Li home read watch listen imagine contact
/investigation into self

From Memoirs to Blogs

The major project for our Writing 220 semester was a multi part project that asked us to start with a source piece, and then adapt it for other mediums and other audiences. My source writing was a series of memoirs written during Sophomore year of college that reflected on rushing through life and not living in the moment.

The first part of my project focused on repurposing these originals into works presented in a different light. I chose to turn my memoirs into two short stories that would make my story anybody's story. By casting it into a plot with characters other than the narrator, I hoped to bring these stories to life and to show people how relatable the message could be to everyone.

The second part of the project was called remediation, using a different medium to illustrate our writing. For this part, I worked with Emily Schell and we developed a blog, Ann Arbor Awesome. The goal of this blog was to meet strangers on the street and to ask them two questions to see the variety of answers that we got.

From this project, I've seen so many changes in my perspective, in my writing, and in how I reflect on myself. It's tested me beyond self constructed borders, and has asked me to be creative in communicating with writing. Through ups and downs, successes and challenges, it's been a journey from memoirs to blogs.

Memoirs

Our first prompt was to choose a writing that we had previously completed, and to turn it into something aimed at a different audience.

Choose a piece of writing.

I hemmed and hawed, opened up just about every writing file available, and almost crashed my computer in the process. There were essays about the Odyssey, responses to short stories, analytical philosophy papers, persuasive business memos. But having looked through my entire archive of literary work from the moment I got this computer, there wasn't anything that I wanted to work with again so much as my reflections.

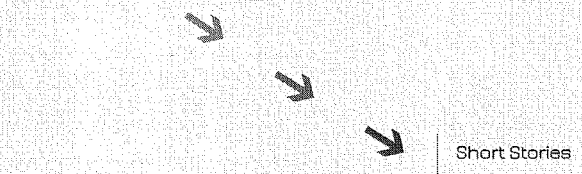
Having had a year without looking at the memoirs that I had written Sophomore year, I wondered whether, at the time, I truly understood or believed the messages that I was writing in them. I wonder if I, even now, truly understand or believe the messages that I continue to pump out on word documents, on online portfolios, on blogs. But the message is real. Every step of the way I've seen how it impacts my life even further.

My message: Stop, look at the present and absorb the details. Look at how beautiful everything is when we're not rushed, hurried, and stressed.

Take this time for myself to evaluate myself so that I can figure out where I want to go.

I wrote this message a year ago, and now I wanted to rewrite it for an audience that wasn't me. I wanted to stretch my writing, play with different genres, different voices, and different mediums.

It was going to be a challenge.



Lost Battle
Drafts

My goal was to create two short stories out of two of the three memoirs I had chosen, and to write each story in a different voice so that it would also seem like they came from two separate authors.

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IV

Reflective Conversations outside the Writing Classroom