
A Writer's Workbook

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A WRITER'S WORKBOOK. 2nd Edition. Trudy Smoke. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 333. Paper. US \$24.00.

A Writer's Workbook is an excellent text for a semester-long advanced writing class in a university setting. It even has enough, and good enough, readings that it could be used for a combined reading/writing class, with some supplementation. In fact, this second edition emphasizes the connections between reading and writing.

The book contains five units, dealing with such themes as family and growing up, language and communication, society and playing roles, and each unit consists of three chapters. Each unit contains a journalistic reading, a textbook excerpt, and a short story or excerpt from a novel. Thus students are exposed to a wide variety of types of readings, all of the level and type they might encounter in other university classes, and they can see the connections among the readings and between the readings and their own writing. The readings are very well-chosen, multicultural, and thought-provoking. They relate well to the students' own experiences, both as young people and as immigrants or international students. Some of the best readings are Maria L. Muñiz' "Back, but Not Home" and Nahid Rachlin's "Foreigner," both of which inspired thoughtful discussions and written responses in my classes.

This text presents the steps in the writing process well, with useful instruction in prewriting techniques, editing, and revising. There are also helpful sections on grammar in each chapter. The chapters build well on each other, with many linking mechanisms and logical progressions. The alternate tables of contents help the instructor plan the best use of the material.

The book is very accessible and inviting. Although it does not use flashy graphics, it is well laid out, with intriguing illustrations, wide margins, and a clear format. It is a well thought out combination of a textbook and a workbook. The instructor's copy of the book contains a bound-in instructor's manual, which is useful but not essential.

The author strikes just the right note in this book; she treats the students with respect, not condescension. She explains everything carefully and well, but does not talk down to them. I have used this text, in its first and now second editions, for several semesters, and recommend it highly. It is attractive, flexible, usable, useful, and holds the interest of both instructors and students.

About the Reviewer

Stephanie Vandrick is an assistant professor in the ESL Dept. at the University of San Francisco. Her interests are in writing, literature and sociopolitical issues.