writing & pedagogy

Research Matters

Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences

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Abstract

Instead of focusing on students' citation of sources, educators should attend to the more fundamental question of how well students understand their sources and whether they are able to write about them without appropriating language from the source. Of the 18 student research texts we studied, none included summary of a source, raising questions about the students' critical reading practices. Instead of summary, which is highly valued in academic writing and is promoted in composition textbooks, the students paraphrased, copied from, or patchwrote from individual sentences in their sources. Writing from individual sentences places writers in constant jeopardy of working too closely with the language of the source and thus inadvertently plagiarizing; and it also does not compel the writer to understand the source.

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Introduction

Writing from sources is a staple of academic inquiry. It plays a key role in publications in every scholarly discipline, from the literary criticism of English studies to the literature review in scientific publications. It plays a key role as well in the assignments given to both graduate and undergraduate students. The research synthesis helps graduate students survey and participate in the conversations of their discipline, and the term paper, despite criticisms, persists as a common undergraduate genre. Hence writing from sources looms large in composition curricula, in introductory writing courses devoted to researched writing, critical reading, analysis, and argument.

At the same time, many educators worry that students are accomplishing their writing from sources by illicit means. It has become commonplace for students to be described as would-be plagiarists, with unacknowledged copying as their primary strategy of writing from sources. Indeed, contemporary culture – including media discourse and academic discussions – asserts that we are in the midst of a "plagiarism epidemic." As David Callahan tours the college lecture circuit talking about what his book calls our "cheating culture" (Callahan, 2004) and as headlines announce an "'Epidemic' of Student Cheating" (BBC News, 2004), the academy and indeed culture itself seem collectively poised at a precipice over which we will surely slip.

The Center for Academic Integrity (http://www.academicintegrity.org/) conducts surveys asking students about whether they have engaged in a variety of "cheating behaviors," including unacknowledged copying from sources. However, little research has inquired into the range of students' techniques for writing from sources. Do they represent their source through copying (whether cited or uncited), summary, paraphrase, or *patchwriting* – "[c]opying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (Howard, 1993: 233)?

Although no descriptive research has studied the whole range of students' techniques for writing from sources, some valuable research on summary-writing has been conducted. Brown and Day (1983) report on six "rules" that writers follow when summarizing: two involve deletion of material from the source text; two involve generalizing from specifics in the source text; and two require invention of sentences that capture the gist of one or more paragraphs. Students from elementary school through graduate school use deletion techniques. The more advanced a student's education, the more he or she is likely to apply the generalization rule for summarizing. Not until tenth grade do students employ invention as a means of summarizing, and only in graduate school do they do so in all appropriate cases (Brown and Day, 1983).

Three years after Brown and Day's experimental study, Sherrard (1986) asked ten paid undergraduates to alternately summarize or recall seven texts which were ordered randomly. She discovered that their most common method of summarizing is not to combine multiple sentences from the source but to paraphrase a single key sentence.

Brown and Day, and also Sherrard, were working prior to the Internet era and thus prior to the time when educators were consumed with concerns about plagiarism. The more recent research in the Internet era is predictably contextualized by these concerns. Much of the recent research on summary explores the relationship between summary, plagiarism, and patchwriting. Whereas many institutions' academic integrity policies classify patchwriting as a form of plagiarism – a moral failure – recent research indicates that it occurs as an intermediate stage between copying and summarizing: inexpert critical readers patchwrite when they attempt to paraphrase or summarize. Roig (2001) finds that 22% of psychology professors patchwrite when presented with the task of summarizing complex text from an unfamiliar field. Howard (1993: 233) posits patchwriting as a learning strategy rather than an act of academic dishonesty. Pecorari (2003) provides empirical verification of this hypothesis in her discovery that non-native speakers of English (L2 writers) patchwrite, even when writing doctoral dissertations. Shi (2004) reports that the Chinese college students in her study copied longer sequences of words when summarizing than did their native-English-speaking (L1 writers) counterparts.

What is now needed, we believe, is a great deal more information about what students are actually doing with the sources they cite. What source uses are being marked by citations? Are students copying from, patchwriting from, paraphrasing, or summarizing the texts they cite? Are they accurately representing what is in the source? Are they fully citing their sources each time they use them? These questions have been addressed in the field of applied linguistics by Pecorari (2003, 2006, 2008), who studied the writing of L2 graduate students in U.K. universities. But the scholarship of composition and rhetoric, the discipline in which we work, has been largely silent on these issues. Little is known, then, about how either L1 and L2 college students use the sources they cite. Yet only when we have such information will writing instructors be able to craft good pedagogy for students' writing from sources.

Our Inquiry

We began our inquiry with an exploratory hypothesis: that college students, both L1 and L2 writers, patchwrite. Our research was an intensive exploration of a small sample of college students' researched writing, to discover how

many of the papers drew on which of the four source-use techniques: copying, patchwriting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

We refer to our work as an *inquiry* rather than a formal research study. We began our work in the belief that large-scale, quantified data collected in naturalistic rather than controlled environments is needed to answer questions about students' uses of their cited sources. Our inquiry was intended as a means of identifying what questions should be asked and what methods should be used to answer them. Since ours was a preliminary inquiry, we did not quantify our results but instead worked collaboratively to decide on the issues that should be investigated in a formal study for the future that we are now designing.

Having secured IRB clearance and course instructors' permission, in Spring 2007 we visited 15 sections of a required sophomore research writing class at what the Carnegie Foundation classifies as a large, private, not-for-profit, comprehensive doctoral university. We asked students to allow us to study the researched writing they did in the course. At the end of the term, we collected final researched papers from the instructors; removed students' names from the papers; established separate piles for each section; randomized papers within each pile; and began working our way down each pile until we found a paper whose sources we could retrieve. Students' uneven success with source documentation made this an often-challenging task, and sometimes the sources cited were not available online or at our libraries. Once we found a paper whose sources we could retrieve, we included it as a paper for our research. Because we worked with full anonymity for the participating students, we did not control for demographic factors such as race, gender, and home language. At the university where we collected data, 10% of students are international students and 29% are from what the university calls "underrepresented groups." The university does not collect data on students' home languages.

We chose 18 papers for two reasons: first, we designed our research after studying that of Pecorari (2003, 2006), who chose a similar number for her study. Second, the same constraints faced us as did Pecorari: our methods are labor-intensive. Reading not only student papers but also the sources they cite, and then coding each source use in each student paper, is time-consuming, involving 3–5 hours' work per paper. Moreover, in our research, each student paper was coded by two researchers. We therefore decided on a relatively small sample size, 18 papers, before our research began.

Once we had found sources for 18 papers, we read the sources and the papers. Our questions were simple:

Does the paper contain one or more incidences of patchwriting?

Does the paper contain one or more incidences of paraphrase?

Does the paper contain one or more incidences of summary?

Does the paper contain one or more incidences of direct copying from sources?

Does the paper contain one or more incidences in which direct copying is not marked as quotation?

For this research we defined *summary* as restating and compressing the main points of a paragraph or more of text in fresh language and reducing the summarized passage by at least 50%. The 266-word Gettysburg Address (Lincoln 1863),1 for example, might be summarized (by Lincoln or another person of his time) this way: "The civil war that we are now fighting tests the principles on which our country was founded. We must pursue this war as a way of honoring the men who fought and died on this battlefield."

We defined *paraphrasing* as restating a passage from a source in fresh language, though sometimes with keywords retained from that passage. Paraphrase does not involve a significant reduction in the length of the passage. The first sentence of the Gettysburg Address, for example, might be paraphrased this way: "The United States was founded in 1776 on the principles of liberty and equality."

Following Howard (1993), we define *patchwriting* as reproducing source language with some words deleted or added, some grammatical structures altered, or some synonyms used. The first sentence of the Gettysburg Address, for example, might be patchwritten this way: "Eighty-seven years ago, the founding fathers created a new nation that was conceived in the principle of liberty and was dedicated to the equality of man." If quotation marks are used for the copied bits, the text is marked as quotation, not patchwriting. However, a passage may be patchwritten even when it is properly quoted and referenced.

By *copying* we mean the exact transcription (though perhaps with occasional minor errors) of source text. As we categorized passages of student text into the four of types of source use, whether the passage was referenced did not affect its category. *Copying*, then, can include both quotation and unacknowledged copying. Regardless of whether quotation marks and referenced citation were present or absent, exact copying was classified as *copying*.

In searching for these four methods of source use (summary, paraphrase, patchwriting, and copying), we were also searching for indications of source

comprehension – or difficulties with source comprehension. Scholarly and textbook literature asserts that patchwriting is a sign of uncertain comprehension of the source (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Roessig, 2007; Roig, 2001) and that summary is a sign of source comprehension (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Brown and Day, 1983; Harris, 2006). Copying and paraphrasing are not necessarily a sign of either. Copying does not require comprehension of what one copies, regardless of whether the copying is marked as quotation and cited. Paraphrase does require comprehension, but usually only of a sentence or two.

Findings

From the 18 papers we read, we derived the following answers:

1. Does the paper contain one or more incidences of patchwriting?
   - In 16 of the 18 papers (89%), the answer is "yes."

2. Does the paper contain one or more incidences of paraphrase?
   - In all 18 papers (100%), the answer is "yes."

3. Does the paper contain one or more incidences of summary?
   - In all 18 papers (100%), the answer is "no."

4. Does the paper contain one or more incidences of direct copying from sources?
   - In 14 of the 18 papers (78%), the answer is "yes."

5. Does the paper contain one or more incidences in which direct copying is not marked as quotation?
   - In 13 of the 18 papers (72%), the answer is "yes."

In addition, as we read, we made two further discoveries:

6. Of the 18 papers, 17 (94%) contained non-common-knowledge information for which no source was cited.

7. Of the 18 papers, 14 (78%) attributed information to a source that either did not contain that information or said something different from what the student was attributing to it.

Despite the widespread pedagogical belief that summary is important to source-based writing, our reading of 18 undergraduate research essays, along with the sources those essays cite, uncovered not a single incidence of summary. We found copying, paraphrasing, and patchwriting – but no summary. A paragraph from one student paper, 8.10,2 compactly illustrates the sorts of

writing from sources that we encountered. Before we read the sources it cites, this paragraph looked like a good research synthesis:

> Studies show that children, as well as parents, in low-income families have very few assets, so eliminating asset tests for coverage could increase enrollment (Cox, Ray, and Lawler). Also, states could use 'presumability eligibility for pregnant women and children' covered under Medicaid or SCHIP. Through this, children or pregnant women who seem eligible for the programs can be immediately enrolled until a final determination of eligibility can be produced. To determine who 'seems' eligible for health care coverage, school staff could be trained to judge who should be enrolled. Studies show that children with health insurance have fewer sick days from school, so this could 'yield educational benefits' (Broaddus). With the increasing diversity and immigration status of our society, Medicaid and SCHIP should also provide information on eligibility and enrollment in many different languages, and in both documentation or letters and personal visits. In every state, many lose coverage by Medicaid and SCHIP when it is time to renew. In order to change this trend, the programs should change their period to a 12-month plan, rather than the 6-month plan now. Also, to eliminate confusion and difficulty for a family, states with separate Medicaid and SCHIP programs should coincide their renewal times and conduct renewal by mail or telephone. States with call centers, and reminder letters for renewal should increase recertification of coverage. Lastly, they should consider enforcing a grace period of about one to three months for renewal (Cox, Ray, and Lawler). Some states have finally begun to take an initiative on solving these low enrollment problems.

The paragraph appears to handle sources well, using quotation marks, providing in-text citations to acknowledge sources, and citing two different sources, one of them (Cox, Ray, and Lawler, 2004) in two different parts of the paragraph. (Both sources are Web sites, so the absence of page references is not an issue.)

A reading of its sources, however, reveals that the paragraph is extensively patchwritten. Figure 1 below places a succession of sentences in the apparently well-cited paragraph above side-by-side with the corresponding sentences in the sources. (We should note that in almost every case in all 18 papers, we were easily able to locate the exact sentence from which the student writers were working.) Underlining indicates where the paper is using the exact or near-exact phrasing of its source. For the sake of brevity, Figure 1 illustrates just the first few sentences, though the remainder of the paragraph continues in the same vein, with only one sentence that does not contain copying or patchwriting.

Paper 8.10	Cox, Ray, and Lawler (2004)	Broaddus and Ku (2000)
Studies show that children, as well as parents, in low-income families have very few assets, so eliminating asset tests for coverage could increase enrollment (Cox, Ray, and Lawler).	Studies have shown that most low-income families have few assets. Eliminating asset tests…	
Also, states could use 'presumability eligibility for pregnant women and children' covered under Medicaid or SCHIP.		(quotation not in the cited source, though the keyword 'presumptive [not *presumability*] eligibility' is)
Through this, children or pregnant women who seem eligible for the programs can be immediately enrolled until a final determination of eligibility can be produced.		This temporarily enrolls children and pregnant women in SCHIP and Medicaid as soon as they apply for benefits, pending a final eligibility determination.
To determine who 'seems' eligible for health care coverage, school staff could be trained to judge who should be enrolled.		School staff could be trained in how to conduct presumptive eligibility determinations and how to carry out the necessary follow-up activities.
Studies show that children with health insurance have fewer sick days from school, so this could 'yield educational benefits' (Broaddus).		In addition to helping school children gain better access to health care and prevention services, presumptive eligibility may yield educational benefits; recent research suggests that children who are insured have fewer sick days and miss school less often than children who lack health insurance.
With the increasing diversity and immigration status of our society, Medicaid and SCHIP should also provide information on eligibility and enrollment in many different languages, and in both documentation or letters and personal visits.	Write Letters reminding families to renew SCHIP. Go door-to-door to help families in the renewal process. . . . Give families materials about renewal in multiple languages.	
In every state, many lose coverage by Medicaid and SCHIP when it is time to renew.	In virtually all states, many people lose Medicaid and SCHIP when it is time to renew or recertify for benefits.	

Figure 1: Sentence-by-Sentence Comparison of a Paragraph from Paper 8.10 with its Sources (Instances of exact copying, whether cited or uncited, and patchwriting are underlined)

All eighteen of the student writers whose papers we analyzed engaged in the sorts of textual strategies illustrated in Figure 1. A passage from student paper A.1, interspersed with our comments in italics, demonstrates the fine level of myriad difficulties that the writer faces in producing this text:

Medical students must possess knowledge. Aspiring to be a doctor is not an easy career endeavor, in fact, it requires a lot of work and dedication. According to Weinberger, the object of knowing requires more than being right. [*This misrepresents Weinberger's definition of knowledge.*] It is necessary for doctors to be right because they do have a lot at hand, which can be a patient's life and even just his or her immediate health. [*This incorrectly applies Weinberger to the paper's investigation of a medical students' blog; it attempts to make a connection, yet is unable to do so as it misinterprets the Weinberger source.*] Knowledge is 'justified true belief.' [*Despite these quotation marks, the phrase is not a direct quotation from the source. We can only speculate about the possible semiotic intent of these quotation marks.*] So what does this have to do with medical students and the web? From the medical students' side, medical students are justified in believing that they will become doctors because they have the capability to do so, but on the web side according to Weinberger the web is 'a hodgepodge of ideas that violates every rule of epistemological etiquette.' [*This is a direct quotation incompletely cited; a page number is not supplied.*] Ideas that are posted on the web are wrapped in individual voices that make it harder to dig out exactly what is being said (Weinberger 139). [*This sentence is copied directly from the text. No quotation marks are used, though the source is cited.*] The idea of individual voices allows people to express themselves whether it is factual or opinionated. This is exactly what blogging is focused on and what it is basically about. In reading Anna's blogs, we only 'hear' about her life, feelings, and thoughts and not anyone else's. [*This passage also suggests a lack of understanding of the source, as it does not adequately apply Weinberger's theory of the web as a social network and site of dialogue to the medical students' blog.*]

Figure 2: Paragraph from Paper A.1, with Our Comments in Brackets and Italics (Our comments are based on reading not only the student's paragraph but also its source)

The source in question is David Weinberger's *Small Pieces Loosely Joined* (Weinberger, 2002), a 240-page complex theoretical text. Paper A.1 cites two of those 240 pages, and its uneven representation of the Weinberger text suggests the possibility that these may be the only two pages that the student read. The paper endeavors to deploy Weinberger's theory of knowledge, which may

have been accessed by consulting the Weinberger index rather than by actually reading *Small Pieces Loosely Joined*. This is our primary concern throughout our analysis of these 18 papers: they cite sentences rather than sources, and one must then ask not only whether the writers understood the source itself but also whether they even read it. As teachers – and as writers ourselves – we are not unfamiliar with the quote-mining approach to complex texts: the search for a "good sentence to quote" – or to paraphrase or patchwrite – and perhaps to cite. The absence of summary in these papers does not necessarily mean that the student writers did not read the whole text being cited, nor does it mean that they did not understand what they were reading. But the absence of summary, coupled with the exclusive engagement of text on the sentence level, means that readers have no assurance that the students *did* read and understand.

When the source treats a technical topic or when it lists concrete items, the writer working exclusively on the sentence level predictably struggles to write from those sentences. Here, for example, are two passages from paper 3.6, side-by-side with their sources:

Paper 3.6	Bainbridge (2007) source
After the materials are separated they are melted down and mixed together. Then they <u>undergo</u> a complicated <u>inverse polymer reaction from the one used to make it</u>, resulting in a <u>mixture of chemicals which are then synthesized to form a new polymer of the same kind</u> (Bainbridge).	The obstacles of recycling plastic can be overcome by using an elaborate monomer recycling process wherein the polymer <u>undergoes</u> an <u>inverse polymer reaction of what was used to manufacture it</u>. The end product of this procedure is a <u>mix of chemicals</u> that form the original polymer, <u>which is further purified and synthesized to form a new polymer of the same type</u>.

Paper 3.6	West (2007) source
<u>Plastic labeled number two is a high density polyethylene plastic</u>, also known as HDPE. These plastics are most commonly found in <u>containers holding heavier liquids, such as milk cartons, shampoo bottles, and laundry detergents</u>. The plastic is a much softer texture and is much more flexible that PETE. HDPE is also very commonly, and fairly easily recycled but can only be recycled once. HDPE is <u>often recycled into toys, plastic lumber, and piping</u> (West).	<u>Number 2 is reserved for high-density polyethylene plastics</u>. These include <u>heavier containers that hold laundry detergents and bleaches as well as milk, shampoo and motor oil</u>. Plastic labeled with the number 2 is <u>often recycled into toys, piping, plastic lumber and rope</u>. Like plastic designated number 1, it is widely accepted at recycling centers.

Figure 3: Comparison of Two Passages from Paper 3.6 with Their Sources (Exact copying, whether cited or uncited, and patchwriting are underlined)

We have chosen these three papers – 8.10, A.1, and 3.6 – not because they are extreme incidents but because they are concise illustrations of the struggles that were in evidence in all eighteen papers. Similar struggles are documented in prior research, especially in applied linguists' studies of second-language writers' work with English-language source texts (Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003, 2006, 2008; Shi, 2004).

Discussion

We offer these side-by-side comparisons not to suggest that the writers are mis-using sources (though sometimes that is indeed the case) but to demonstrate that *these students are not writing from sources; they are writing from sentences selected from sources.* That leaves the reader with the unanswered question: does this writer understand what s/he has read? And it leaves the writer in a position of peril: working exclusively on the sentence level, he or she is perforce always in danger of plagiarizing. When one has only the option of copying or paraphrasing, one can easily paraphrase too lightly, producing a patchwritten sentence too close to the language of the original. This is a particular peril for inexpert writers: From his review of scholarship in citation analysis, White (2004: 105) concludes that, in general, it is only advanced writers who write from sources without using any language from the source. Howard (1993) argues that patchwriting should be considered a transitional stage in writing from sources, rather than plagiarism, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (2005) labels patchwriting a misuse of sources rather than plagiarism.

Still, many institutional codes of academic integrity – and indeed, many writing handbooks and textbooks – persist in treating patchwriting as a form of plagiarism. To complicate the matter, as Sandra Jamieson demonstrates, the extent to which patchwriting counts as plagiarism can vary according to academic discipline (Jamieson, 2008). Moreover, when one has only the option of copying or paraphrasing, the copying may become so extensive that the writer feels the need to withhold complete citation, for fear of appearing too dependent on the source language. Or the writer may simply not know how often to cite persistent use of source language.

Our inquiry does not answer the question of why none of these 18 students summarized their sources, nor why so many of them patchwrote, misinter-preted what a source said, or offered non-common-knowledge information without citing a source. Perhaps they did not understand the sources. Perhaps they didn't care enough about the research project to invest themselves in the task of source comprehension. Perhaps they did not conceive the research

project as one in which they should engage with their sources, but instead saw it as one in which they should find isolated sentences that might be useful in their own texts. Qualitative research will be needed to answer these questions.

This work also does not indicate whether the 18 students whose written work we studied are representative of all students at the institution in which the data were gathered, much less whether they represent college students in the aggregate. A larger, quantified, multi-campus study will be needed to make such generalizations.

Our inquiry does not contradict Keck's (2006) observation that patchwriting occurs in most college students' writing. Keck also found that the incidence of patchwriting is higher among second-language writers. Because we did not control for first language, we cannot affirm the latter observation, but all of the college writers in our pilot research patchwrote.

This pilot study suggests that issues of source selection may be significant as well. In the examples we have given, the students were striving to reproduce extended information rather than argument, technical information on topics that they may never have previously studied. These were papers being written in a general composition class, not in discipline-specific instruction, which means the student writers did not necessarily have any prior expertise in the topics they chose to research. Nor, in the traditions of most composition instruction, does the instructor necessarily have any expertise in the topics the students are researching. Faced with reproducing extended technical information and not wanting to copy long passages, the students might not have had the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to do anything but patchwrite the passages.

Our observations also raise questions about problems students may have with source-based writing, problems that are both prior to and foundational to their correct citation of sources. Citation counts for little if what is being cited is a fragmentary representation of the source. Plagiarism is difficult to avoid if one is constructing an argument from isolated sentences pulled from sources.

Our observations affirm the difficulties that all students have when using language from sources – or trying to avoid doing so. In fact, Roig (2001) establishes that all writers, even research faculty, struggle when writing from unfamiliar sources on unfamiliar topics. In Roig's experimental research, psychology professors were given the task of paraphrasing text. Roig found that the more difficult the source text, the more the professors appropriated language from it. Twenty-two percent of the professors patchwrote: they made syntactic changes to the original language of the source text. Twenty-four percent distorted the meaning of the source (Roig, 2001: 315).

What we are illustrating in Figures 1, 2, and 3, then, are issues with which all writers seem to struggle. However, despite the accumulating body of research on writers' intertextual struggles with their sources, these are not widely recognized as global issues; instead, they are widely regarded as malfeasance committed by ignorant, indifferent, or unethical writers.

Conclusion

From this research, we are left with a compelling question: when writers work from sources, to what extent are they accessing the entire source, and to what extent single sentences from it? In the eighteen papers we examined, it is consistently the sentences, not the sources, that are being written from. Perhaps some or all of these writers had a comprehensive understanding of those sources but chose to work only with isolated sentences within them. Or perhaps some or all of these writers did not understand or did not engage with some or all of their sources. Instead, they may have searched for "good" sentences and then decided whether to paraphrase, copy from, or patchwrite from them. Again, qualitative research will be needed to test these hypotheses.

Clearly, more research into the nuances of writers' uses of sources is needed. Interviewing or observing writers as they make their source-use decisions will illuminate why they make the choices they do, and how committed they feel to the educational ideals embedded in the task they have been given. Studying writers in a variety of contexts will discourage fallacious overgeneralizations about writing techniques. Do advanced undergraduates working in their majors, for example, draw on sources in different ways than do sophomores taking a required generic course in researched writing? Studying writers who are reading a variety of genres will explore another possible factor. Do writers, as Sherrard (1986) suggests, use sources differently when those sources are narrative rather than expository? And how does source use vary according to the genre in which the writers are working? Further issues involve approaches to instruction that might improve students' use of sources. What effects do various pedagogies have on writers' practices of source use?

All of our research questions will be pursued in the large-scale, quantified study now called the Citation Project (CitationProject.net). But special attention will be paid to the question of source comprehension and summary and the relationship between the two. Clearly our preliminary inquiry suggests that we have much more to learn about whether students understand the sources they are citing in their researched writing, whether they choose to summarize those sources and the reasons for their choices, and the extent to which the absence of summary correlates with a lack of source comprehension.

About the Authors

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Notes

1   The entire text of the Gettysburg Address is as follows:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. (Lincoln, 1863)

2   We collected student papers with full anonymity for the writers; hence we do not attach their names to the texts. In addition, our study works exclusively with student texts and not students; hence we do not attach pseudonyms to the papers. Like Shi, we are studying student texts, not students, so (again like Shi) the texts are numbered rather than pseudonymed.

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