

# Reading Journal

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## The Brief Bedford Reader: Chapter 1

The Brief Bedford Reader, hereafter referred to as BBR, starts with the assertion that good writing is dependent on good reading. The first chapter introduces concepts that readers use to read a work and determine several qualities of the work. BBR then goes on to briefly utilize these concepts to introduce a student's work about a specific piece written by Nancy Mairs. A brief outline of these concepts is as follows:

- **Previewing**: gather information before reading the work, such as:
  - Title
  - Author
  - Genre
  - Publisher
  - Time of Publishing
- **Annotating**: creating notes about the work
- **Summarizing**: allows the reader to ensure a grasp of the work
- **Thinking Critically**
  - Analyze
  - Infer
  - Synthesize
  - Evaluate
- **Analysis of Written Works**
  - Meaning: Thesis, Purpose

- Writing Strategy: Audience, Method, Evidence, Structure
- Language: Tone, Word Choice, Imagery

BBR then extends the definition of a Text to include other mediums, such as the example photo. The same concepts outlined above should be applied to all works.

Applying these concepts to the first chapter results in an interesting thought: my natural instinct was to read the work of Mairs that is presented under the light of the above concepts. However, that is contradictory to the intent of the first chapter. The presented work is simply a demonstration, and the authors apply the concepts and present their own results.

### ***Camping Out* by Ernest Hemingway**

Hemingway is known to be one of the great writers of the 20th century, and the preamble to this article points out that while this work was written before his novels it is a clear demonstration of his style. The work's primary intent is instructional advice for being able to spend a week in the bush, for the person who has not used it as a vacation prior. The work imparts a lot of knowledge, written in a way that implies that the writer has experienced this firsthand. The writing is a product of its time as well, not only through references to different products, but through little sayings and societal ideologies like the quip of an average man being at least as capable as his wife. It's written in a light style, as if spoken informally between an experienced woodsman and a rookie.

Hemingway approaches his instructions in a recommendation sort of manner. Tips for preparing the campground and suggestions that are relateable and typically readily available to the average person are of the sort in this article. Warnings of the challenges and solutions to them are the primary focus: repelling insects, sleeping soundly, and eating well. The cooking tips are simple and easy to follow, with minimal ingredients as would be available in the bush.

## January 25, 2022

The focus of class today was on turning an idea into a written work. This was through the common idea of a “favorite word” and each chose one. I began this assignment exploring what it meant to be a favorite word. Eventually, I decided on ‘bookkeep’ and the reasons for it.

We explored free writing, a quick revisions pass, and then forming the idea into three separate styles: persuasive, informational, and entertaining. The informational is perhaps the easiest to write and my preferred style. Persuasive was a bit more difficult as I found the entire concept to be rooted in a deep, personal preference akin to belief, and am reminded of a quote: [something something about convincing someone a thing built on reason when his understanding has no reason]. The entertaining paragraph was mostly fun and I concocted a story around it.

It was interesting to consider how different people would interpret the concept of a favorite word. I focused on the word itself, free of its context and definition. The structure of the word and its unique property is what drove me to ‘bookkeep’.

The purpose of writing the different paragraphs was to explore different tones and audience that a writer would engage. The progression of going through each of these styles and techniques helps my writing.

## January 27, 2022

Missed class.

The readings were focused on the initial stages of writing a paper, Discovery and Drafting. It can be difficult to take an idea or prompt and turn it into a solid, focused work.

For me, this will mainly come through asking questions. My personal preference is writing a paper focused on a specific topic, something more informative. Having an open ended, creative, vague prompt leaves me usually lost.

It's important to continue questioning your notes to find more specific answers and more detailed information about the prompt. Every relevant point should be justified and consistent. It's important to keep within scope, however, which is something that can easily be missed and led astray. This is the time to lay the foundations of a paper, and gain knowledge of the subject area.

It occurs to me that my idea of papers is mostly focused around a more informative, research style. Some of these ideas of preparation that I have cannot be applied in the same way to a more creative or fiction work.

## February 1, 2022

We examined a piece written by Ben Healy today about gossip. This piece was interesting because it takes something that often has a negative connotation and flips that assertion. Essentially Ben Healy is arguing that gossip is good, and provides evidence.

It's a good example of starting with looking at the information about the author and text. Looking into who wrote it and where it was published reveals its audience, which is targeted at more educated people. That knowledge can mean different things to different people (ie, liberal or snooty or upper class or whatever).

This does form the goalposts for Healy's argument and the way it must be constructed. It uses an evidence based format, backing up a these of three separate reasons why gossip would be good. These are generally done with statistical studies, by experts in their fields. Healy namedrops some very well known and prestigious universities, which his audience would regard the studies as very reliable.

This type of article is appealing to me, as evidence and numbers are generally unbiased. It's also a good reminder to look into the claims and make sure they are not taken out of context. However, the reputation and credentials of Healy should allow the reader to believe in the argument.

Perhaps I will gossip more.

## February 8, 2022

Class today was focused on the MLA standards for citing works and standards in papers. This standard is seems focused more on the soft sciences and liberal arts. It's not what I'm used to in the hard science and math realm. However, the ideas are the same, where attributing work to a person is incredibly important. Not doing so is plagiarizing their work.

It's not going to be difficult to understand and apply, as it's mostly just a formatting issue.  $\text{\LaTeX}$  should be able to handle the formatting properly for me, I'll have to explore that.

There's a lot of little details to make sure a works cited page is correctly formatted, and I'm likely to miss some of the details.

## February 10, 2022

Today's class was centered around the activity of using a writing prompt to tell a story. The prompt was fairly simple, and very open ended, leaving room for a lot of creativity. I ended up going with a fiction, sci-fi themed story of a captain with illicit cargo.

After we wrote our story, we swapped the opening line and prompt with a classmate. Then we wrote a story based off their opening line and interpretation of the prompt. This was followed with comparing the stories each wrote about their prompts.

This was done in order to explore the different motivations and purposes for writing. We each wrote with a specific audience in mind. I wrote a fiction work, targeting people that are familiar with the themes and ideas of science fiction. My partner used my same prompt, and turned it into a story about baking cookies.

The stories took a different philosophical approach, as mine explored the actions and left open character development for the character. My partner's was more focused on the doubt a person has when working hard on a new skill, and the feelings that come from finding success. I believe it to be a bit more of a reflective piece by the author, with a lot of emotions probably ones that the author has explored personally.