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| **Myths of Writing** |
| 1. **Writing is for the transmission of information**.  **Reality**: While in the end the writing may convey information, it’s major function is to explore ideas. The danger of the information-transmission myth is that it focuses on how texts are presented from the point of view of the reader rather than on what the act of writing can accomplish for the developing thought of the writer. The writer is overlooked. 2. **Writing is for communication**. **Reality**: The writer is always the FIRST reader and may often be the only reader. 3. **Writing involves transferring thoughts from the mind to paper**.  **Reality**: Thoughts are created in the act of writing, which changes the writer and changes the emerging text. 4. **Writing is permanent**.  **Reality**: Speech, once uttered, can rarely be revised; writing can be reflected upon, altered, and even erased at will. 5. **Writing is a linear process**.  **Reality**: Writing can be done in several places and directions concurrently and is as easily manipulated in space as it is in time. Texts can be constructed from writing done on separate pieces of paper; words, sentences, paragraphs, whole sections can be shuffled into different sequences. Writing is recursive. 6. **Writing is speech plus spelling and punctuation**. **Reality**: Every kind of writing has its own conventions of form and expression quite different from speech. Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, indentation, word-dividing, layout, and so forth, are necessary aspects of transcription necessary to make written language readable for readers. For all writers, undue concern with transcription can interfere with the exploratory aspects of writing. 7. **You must have something to say in order to write**. **Reality**: We need to write in order to have anything to say! Thought comes with writing, and writing may never come if it is postponed until we are satisfied we have something to say. Write first, see what you had to say later. 8. **Writing should be easy**. **Reality**: Writing is often hard work—it requires concentration, physical effort, and a tolerance for frustration and disappointment. 9. **Writing should be right the first time**. **Reality**: Writing generally requires many drafts and revisions to get ideas into a form that satisfies the writer. A separate editorial polishing is required to make any text appropriate for another reader. 10. **Writing should be unambiguous**. **Reality**: There is no way writing can be unambiguous. “The” meaning of a text is not embedded in the words on the page but constructed by readers. The sense a reader constructs depends on what the reader knows and brings to the text. There is no way for any writer to know exactly what any reader brings to a text. 11. **Writing can be done to order.** **Reality**: Writing is most often reluctant to come when it is most urgently required, yet quite likely to begin to flow at inconvenient or impossible times. 12. **A fixed period of “prewriting” should precede composing**. **Reality**: Writing involves a lifetime of preparation—of experience, reading, reflecting and arguing. It is only from a transcription point of view that an author can say that work began on a particular text at a particular time. In fact, writing itself can be prewriting. As we draft one part of a text, we reflect on what we might write next or on what we have written already. 13. **Writing is a solitary activity**. **Reality**: Writing often requires other people to stimulate discussion, to listen to choice phrases, to provide feedback of various kinds. 14. **Writing is a tidy activity**. **Reality**: Writing is messy, it spreads itself all over the writing surface, in many different files. 15. **Writing should be the same for everyone**. **Reality**: Each of us develops an idiosyncratic set of strategies we’re comfortable with and that work for us. |