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Nancy Sommers – Reading Questions

Nancy Sommers, within her article, *Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers* described the process in which most students believe is correct revision and participate in. According to Sommers, this process is merely a practice of spotting grammar mistakes and a shallow response to the text. This rewording as she states, does not advance the reader or the text in anyway, but simply rephrases the text to provide the exact same meaning. The students she described are most likely exposed to linear revision, the separation of writing into discrete stages similar to speech, and have not had the seed method stressed to them by their mentors/teachers. She argues that writing should be primarily a direct response to the text. How does this relate to the reader? Who would understand this? What does the main idea present itself as? Is there any way to make my ideas clearer? Does this represent my own beliefs accurately? These types of questioning are the key to a higher level of critical thinking and analysis of one’s own work and cannot become isolated from outside influences.

When Sommers states that for experienced writers "a process of more than communication; they are a part of the process of discovering meaning altogether”, she means to present the idea that the main concern of writing is not to simply state your ideas/positions and allow them to float randomly anywhere, the purpose is to allow others to view your work and attempt to interpret it from different perspectives and also to review your own work and try to find new meaning in what you had previously written. This can only be done with a deep analysis of the text and an understanding of the context of when the text was written, the author’s state of mind, and any outside influences which may have been present. With this in mind, it becomes a very simple process to revert back to the text and read for experiences/feeling as well as core content/theoretical questions.

It is evident through the statement “good writing disturbs; it creates dissonance” that Sommers interprets the revision process as reworking through the text to remove and rearrange parts to find new meaning within the text. Text should not be static and meaningless, the reader should always be actively engaged within the text, looking for key pieces of knowledge or new experiences in which he/she may try to analyze. Within the revision process, there should always be dissonance as you should look back at your previous drafts and see some sort of change in ideas/ core concepts and work towards creating nuances which will guide both you and your reader to a new conclusion. Sommers definition of good writing differs from that of which I have learned throughout my school career. I learned to focus good writing on following prompts, presenting a clear thesis and staying with only one idea. This is not the case with all writing as it should continuously present new ideas and within the revision process, should also work to change the author him/herself.