

WPAs: Tell Your Stories!

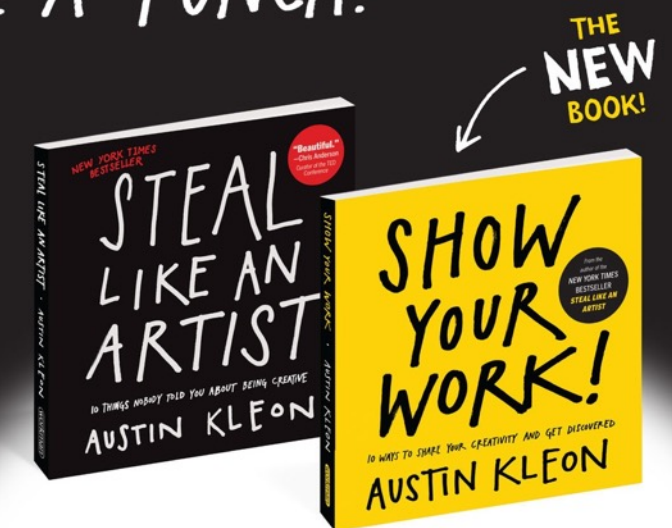
David Blakesley
Carolina WPAs, Wildacres Retreat
15 September 2014

SHARE LIKE AN ARTIST

Tell Your Stories!

WPAs Have Plenty of Them

- ① YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GENIUS.
- ② THINK PROCESS, NOT PRODUCT.
- ③ SHARE SOMETHING SMALL EVERY DAY.
- ④ OPEN UP YOUR CABINET OF CURIOSITIES.
- ⑤ TELL GOOD STORIES.
- ⑥ TEACH WHAT YOU KNOW.
- ⑦ DON'T TURN INTO HUMAN SPAM.
- ⑧ LEARN TO TAKE A PUNCH.
- ⑨ SELL OUT.
- ⑩ STICK AROUND.



Directed Self-Placement in the University

What a Story!

Directed Self-Placement in the University

David Blakesley

When the institutions make classifications for us, we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had. This thought is one that we have every reason, as individuals, to resist. Living together, we take individual responsibility and lay it upon one another. We take responsibility for our deeds, but even more voluntarily for our thoughts. Our social interaction consists very much in telling one another what right thinking is and passing blame on wrong thinking. This is indeed how we build the institutions, squeezing each other's ideas into a common shape so that we can prove rightness by sheer numbers of independent assent.

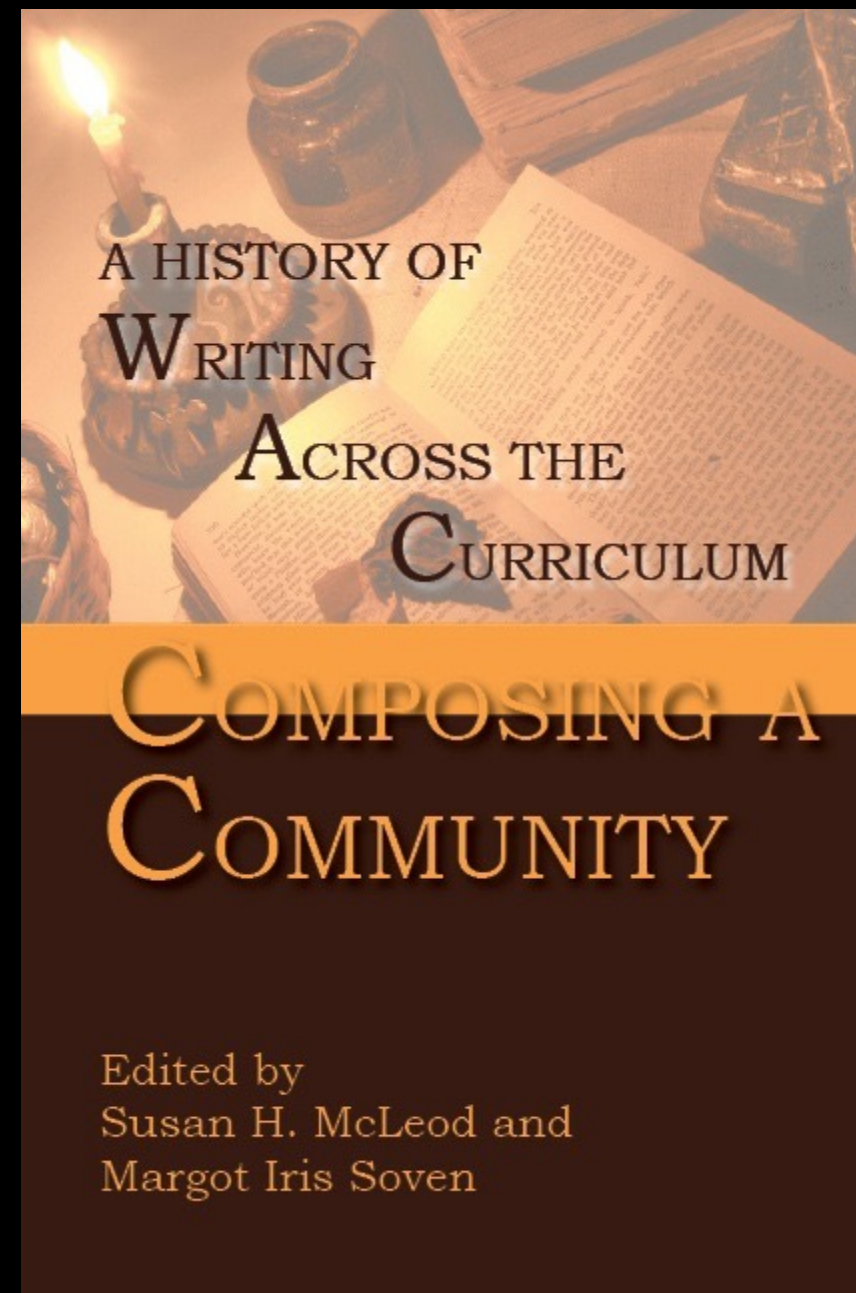
—Mary Douglas (91)

In whatever form it takes, the placement of students in university composition courses is fundamentally an act of socialization.¹ As such, and as Mary Douglas suggests, placement or classification, i.e., *being* placed or classified, naturally breeds resistance among those who feel its effects. On the one hand, placement itself is the most social of acts whereby individuals adjust to the values and judgment of the group with which they identify or aspire to join, all in the interest of social harmony. On the other hand, individuals also sacrifice some aspect of individual responsibility or identity in making such accommodations, regardless of whether their adjustments to social conditions are prompted by self-knowledge and the desire to “fit in” or by the institution that has the power to confer such group identity. Even as we are, in Kenneth Burke's words, “goaded by the spirit of hierarchy” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 15) that perpetuates and rationalizes social groups, we sacrifice allegiance

“My Story of Wildacres, 1983–1998”
Sam Watson

WAC and Wildacres

What a Story!



WAC and Wildacres

Sam Watson

“This article is largely my story of the writing retreats at Wildacres, over a sixteen-year span—the conditions under which they began, the nature of the Wildacres place and the retreats we held there, the reception they met back on the university campus. That is the story I am telling.”

WAC and Wildacres

Ron Lunsford Reflects

What drew me to these retreats? It wasn't the programs, per se. I must confess that I often came to retreats without noticing who the guest speaker(s) were. Sometimes I was thrilled to find who they were after I got there—people like Peter Elbow, Nancy Martin, and Patti Stock. But the Wildacres experience was not defined by the speaker. It was the people who attended: teachers of writing, of course; but also, accountants; mathematicians—one year I roomed with a Russian mathematician from UNC Charlotte; scientists; philosophers; historians, and more. Where else in the academy do we have time to sit and talk, at length, with people who are about the same business as us—teaching—but who have such varied teaching fields?

What story will you tell,
and where will you tell it?