

Reading Journal for “LITCOMP: Some Rhetoric Addressed to Cryptorhetoricians about a Rhetorical Solution to a Rhetorical Problem,” Wayne C. Booth

This article was the second I had chosen from this book, *Composition & Literature: Bridging the Gap*. The first article I was drawn to because the author was Richard Lanham, from Q Question fame. This second article, however, provides a concrete example assignment, so I think it fits better. Much of the start of the article focuses on the same issue explored by Lanham. There is a gap between literature and composition instruction. Instructors want to teach literature, but administration (and society) want them to teach composition. Booth argues they are the same. To give an example, and also to introduce the assignment I am proposing, Booth says you will always look for the voice when reading literature. He gives many examples, but I will just share the ones that connect with me. Socrates voice in Plato’s *The Apology*. Ted Kennedy’s speech at the 1980 Democratic National Convention. Robert Browning’s poems (Booth does not name them, “My Last Duchess” and “The Bishop Orders His Tomb” comes to mind). Benjamin Franklin as Poor Richard. T.S. Eliot as J. Alfred Prufrock. Students should understand the voice they are aiming for when they write. Booth suggest some voices students try to write with on their own. Students try to write with the voice of a bright college student who is trying to impress their instructor. They also might try to write with the voice of their natural self. In both circumstances, Booth suggests the writer should be emotionally prepared for critical responses (that they did not come off as a bright student, or that their natural self is bullying, pedantic, ignorant, dull, sycophantic, etc). So here is the assignment that Booth proposes (and my example). Students should create a voice and write with that voice. Then they should make multiple copies of their paper and let the class read their work and give critical responses to their voice. Booth suggests this sort of discussion could hurt feelings, but the students will survive. Most of all, Booth suggests the students will take a greater interest in their writing by focusing on the voice they are trying to create. They will care more about being successful with their writing.