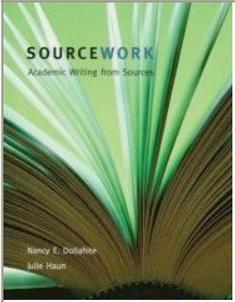


Sourcework: Academic Writing from Sources

Author:	Nancy E. Dollahite & Julie Haun (2006)		
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Pp. xvi +223	0-618-41287-5	\$27.57 U.S.	

Designed for advanced students who have been exposed to basic rhetorical styles and have had experience writing academic essays with a thesis statement and supporting ideas, *Sourcework* aims at guiding them in writing academic research papers by making use of outside sources. The book is supplemented by a website with additional themes and sources for students as well as an instructor site with chapter notes, answer key, assessment tools and example essays.

Sourcework adopts a process-oriented approach to academic writing and comprises two complementary parts:

- Part 1, where students are introduced to the basic processes behind writing academic research papers, is divided into five chapters, each corresponding to a step in the writing process: Explore, Focus, Organize, Create, Refine. It also has an additional chapter, Independent Research. The first five chapters enable students to write a guided research paper, while the additional chapter, as the title implies, gives students a chance to work independently on a research project of their own choice.
- Part 2 highlights four themes--Heroes, Globalization, Social Change and Bioethics--which seem to have been carefully chosen to reflect what university-level students might be interested in exploring. Each topic has source articles for students to explore and make use of while writing their guided research paper through the first five chapters of Part 1.

Chapter 1 in "Explore" introduces and gives students a chance to practice paraphrasing, summarizing, and responding to an article, three important strategies for making optimal use of a source. The next chapter "Focusing" intends to help students generate suitable research questions, do a focused reading, take notes and

make a rough outline for their research paper. In the third chapter students learn how to write effective research-oriented thesis statements, find supporting evidence for their thesis statements, and develop a detailed outline, all essential in organizing their paper. When they come to the fourth chapter, students now begin to "create" their paper by improving their skills in integrating topic sentences and supporting evidence into well-written paragraphs. In the last chapter of the guided writing practice, students learn how to "refine" their papers by revising the introduction and the conclusion of their papers as well as checking their papers for cohesion. In Chapter 5, they practice documenting sources properly and compiling reference lists and get feedback from the teacher and their peers on their paper. Moving toward greater independence, students (in the last chapter) are guided on how to find sources, evaluate them and write a research proposal.

Each chapter in Part 1 of *Sourcework* is structured in the same way:

1. Brief summary of what the chapter title indicates and why this step is important in the writing process.
2. Objectives of the chapter and, inside a box, what students are going to learn.
3. This typical introduction to a chapter is followed by explanations of writing concepts: methods, techniques, characteristics, or strategies with examples from authentic student writing.
4. At the end of each explanation comes 5- to 10-minute controlled or semi-controlled "Now you try" activities for students and teachers to do a quick and immediate comprehension check.
5. After students learn about and practice a writing concept, they then have a chance to evaluate the related skills through more complex, feedback activities.
6. "Building Your Paper" boxes, where students are presented with assignments enabling them to apply the writing concepts to their own developing research papers..

The four units in Part 2, on the other hand, have a different purpose and layout. The units in this part serve as sources for the students to benefit from while constructing their research papers. Teachers are also recommended to start with choosing a theme from Part 2 or the accompanied website with the students to explore more through the chapters in Part 1. Each unit in this part has several articles on a particular theme, which helps students get ideas, information and perspectives on that theme. A short discussion to help students start thinking about the theme and an introduction including one-sentence summaries of the articles related to the theme precede the articles in each unit. At the end of each unit, the book presents possible research questions for students to explore, discuss and write on by referring to the articles they read.

The most noticeable aspect of *Sourcework* is that it directs students toward working on their academic papers both individually and in groups. Thus, it is obvious that the authors highly favor the idea that collaborative feedback is essential to process-oriented writing and writing should not be seen as a solely individual activity. Giving and getting feedback from peers and the teacher assist students considerably in improving their writing skills to gradually become independent writers. I concur with the authors that this approach is effective, even though it requires a lot of time and effort on both the students' and the teacher's part. Close observation of this activity over the years has also convinced me that interacting students are also having

fun.

The other feature of the book that I, as an ESL instructor, find very useful for both teachers and students is that the authors have made extensive use of guidelines while explaining writing concepts. Moreover, they put "a guide for students" at the very beginning of the book, which directs students to specific chapters and page numbers for answers to a number of questions about writing a research paper. For instance, one of the questions is, "How do I find good evidence from sources?" In parentheses, the student is directed to "Chapter 3, pages 49-60". Such consistently easy-to-follow guidelines along with the preliminary guide for students not only help learners grasp a point quickly but also enable them to easily find what they need when they refer back to the book at a later time.

Dollahite and Haun have also not forgotten to include sample essays from their previous students for study and evaluation. Consequently, students later using this book might avoid pitfalls by identifying weaknesses in the samples and, more importantly, picking up pointers from previous students' strengths. I support the idea of making use of previous essays. However, I would recommend that teachers who choose to follow *Sourcework*, or any other academic writing coursebook, collect both weak and strong examples of their own students' papers. Such samples might be more meaningful for their present students, as they were created in the same particularized context.

A humble suggestion for the authors to consider for future editions would be to include authentic samples of different note-taking methods. I have noticed that note-taking skills take time to improve and every student has his or her own style of note-taking. Nevertheless, they still appreciate samples of different note-taking methods to make concrete the strategies presented.

It is obvious throughout the book that the authors of *Sourcework* have made great use of their combined experience teaching the academic research paper. It can easily be seen that they have thought of all the helpful responses to possible questions, solutions for possible problems, and justifications for their detailed guidelines. For instance, as a writing teacher, I have had difficulty making my students understand the ethics behind writing academic papers. Therefore, it is satisfying to see that Dollahite and Haun mention why certain rules should be observed in writing academic papers and why plagiarism, for example, is a serious problem.

Sourcework covers a range of topics and concepts not only about writing research papers but also relevant to academic writing in general. It has a consistent, easy-to-follow structure and thus can be used for future reference. *Sourcework* should prove a good textbook for writing instructors who believe that collaboration facilitates writing and would dedicate the necessary time and effort to initiate and maintain it among their students as they produce their research documents.

References

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