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Source: *The French Review*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (May, 2009), pp. 1255-1267

Published by: American Association of Teachers of French

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25613826>

Accessed: 26-01-2017 14:31 UTC

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A Writing Design: Using Abstracts in the Writing Process

by Stacey Weber-Fève

IN LATE 2004, the College Board's National Commission on Writing issued a number of reports to the American Congress regarding the writing skills of today's American university graduates. The widespread perception among many faculty members at America's colleges, universities, and high schools of students not arriving on and/or leaving the campuses of higher education with the writing skills needed for success in their college and professional careers had seemingly prompted the commission's investigation. According to Budig, this investigation took heightened importance when many leaders of major United States corporations began to share this same perception by "complaining about a serious deficiency in the writing skills" (663) of their entry-level, freshly-out-of-college new hires. The commission estimated that businesses were spending as much as \$3.3 billion a year in remedying their employees' writing deficiencies and emphasized in their report the words of College Board president and commission member Gaston Caperton that today's students must "know how to communicate clearly and concisely" (Budig 663). At the time of writing this article (early May 2008), this report still appeared on the College Board's National Commission on Writing's home page (www.writingcommission.org), and no post-2004 updates or subsequent reports or bulletins appeared on the web site at this point in time.

We, French-language educators, know the value of good writing skills and recognize the importance they play in the long-term successes of both the academic and professional careers of our students. We generally prize and emphasize writing skills in our classrooms. In our world today and tomorrow, the need for students to learn how to express themselves, their ideas, their critical interpretations, their thoughts, and their reactions successfully in writing will only grow in importance as the demand for clear, concise, and meaningful communicative exchanges also increases. Continued technological advancements in the field of global communications and the variety of cultural, social, and interpersonal changes effected by increasingly-intercultural modes of communication will multiply the quantity

of global communicative exchanges and diversify the modes in which these exchanges are delivered; thereby boosting the need for the teaching and learning of writing skills in our classrooms. Thus, how do we prepare students for the professional demands of the twenty-first-century workplace that requires sufficient (if not excellent) professional employee writing abilities whilst still holding true to traditional areas of French program instruction and course content; for example, composition or stylistics courses and literature courses? How do we impart the important value and professional relevancy of and life appreciation for writing onto a diverse body of students (with an even greater diversity of French-language [L2] abilities and even first-language [L1] writing abilities) and who may not see much value at all in writing beyond electronic forms of communication that in most instances require their own contemporary abbreviated language, as in the case of text messaging?

In my view and experience, I have found that one form of writing—the abstract—reaches such a diverse group of students, mainly because the abstract surfaces in almost all academic domains: humanities, natural and social sciences, business, and technological fields alike. Moreover, the abstract, which has different appellations in various languages, is cross-cultural and international. In the context of France and many other French-speaking cultures, many French-language academic journals often employ the term “*sommaire*” for the English word “abstract.” However, in the university milieu and scientific and technological industries in France, the term “abstract” is preferred.¹ Although degrees of variations exist across and in-between French-speaking and English-speaking (and other) academic and professional cultures, the abstract overwhelmingly, and almost universally, shares a quite similar (if not identical) formulaic structure. Furthermore, the abstract forces students to express themselves clearly, precisely; directly, and meaningfully through its very concentrated nature.

The abstract is a basic kind of formulaic writing with a specific set of parameters (or limitations and restrictions), but in this article I would like to postulate its potential to help students with generating, organizing, scaffolding, and evaluating their research, interpretations, analyses, and critical reflections during the writing process. I postulate that the abstract can play a valuable role in three contexts: in any kind of literacy-building exercise (literary, cultural, professional, and so forth), in a number of different kinds of French courses (literature, culture, film, business, composition, and so forth), and at both secondary and post-secondary levels of education. Although I will propose a demonstration of my approach to using abstracts in the writing process in an upper-division post-secondary French literature course, my discussion and presentation, with some modification, would be suitable in other types of French courses and in upper-division French courses at the secondary level of education. Concerning lower-level French courses, certain aspects of the abstract

formula may be suitable for beginning-level writing (such as the thesis statement) or could certainly be used in a first-year French course as authentic reading texts (for example, an abstract of a popular culture periodical like a magazine or newspaper article).²

Research studies (primarily in the fields of English as a Second Language, Literacy and Language Teaching, Rhetoric, English Language for Special or Academic Purposes, and Applied Linguistics and to a lesser extent in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Pedagogy) have long examined the notion of formulaic modes and models of writing and the questions they raise and roles they play in developing learners' academic writing, higher-level critical thinking skills, and creative thinking/creative writing abilities. Researchers of formulaic writing models have generally composed two methods of approaching the learning and teaching of writing in the first- and/or second-language classroom. Historically-speaking, the first group of researchers (beginning in the 1940s) has largely given shape to what has become known in the field as a *product approach*, in which a focus on *textual form* is emphasized. Drawing from findings and observations of the product approach a few decades later (in the late-1960s), a second group of researchers and their work have largely informed the so-called *process approach* to writing instruction, for which a focus on *the individual* remains key.

It is important to stress that I am concerned in this article with the context of *academic writing*, and particularly with academic writing at the advanced foreign-language levels, for this specific context unintentionally slants my discussion in this article. By academic writing (and not personal writing), I am speaking about the kinds of writing—usually in the form of essays or other form that makes use of rhetorical writing conventions—that “[hold students] responsible not only for grammatical precision, but also for their ideas, their style, and their ability to develop a lucid argument” (Kern 185). Thus, one may clearly see how an emphasis on form and structure—but not at the sake of meaningful and communicative content (!) as we shall see in this article—underpins my enthusiasm for the use of abstracts in the learning and teaching of (French-language) writing.

In the remainder of this article, I would like first to provide a brief overview of some of the literature addressing these two writing approaches (the product approach and the process approach) and second to discuss ways in which French language educators may, to borrow Richard Kern's expression and suggestion, “coordinate approaches” in the learning and teaching of writing. I will then discuss more specifically a “coordinated approach” in regards to the abstract as an academic writing tool that may also prepare students for future professional forms of written communication. Finally, I will provide some sample materials that concretely illustrate how I have integrated the abstract into a writing workshop day and a *dissertation* end-of-semester writing assignment in a third-year introductory French literature survey course at a large comprehensive Midwestern state

university. Let us begin with a brief introduction to the two aforementioned writing approaches.

As I just briefly glossed, the product approach has focused primarily on textual form in the writing exercise. This is to say that product-oriented approaches, characterizing most writing instruction from the 1940s–1960s and still in rather common practice today, emphasize the “structural well-formedness of students’ writing” (Kern 180). Kern explains:

Based on an autonomous text model, product-oriented teaching ascribes intrinsic value to a text primarily by virtue of its formal properties, placing less explicit emphasis on how well it addresses a particular audience and fulfills a particular communicative purpose. (186–87)

Kern suggests that product-oriented writing instruction typically involves grammar study, error analysis, and practice in reworking problematic sentences or joining together short sentences into complex longer sentences (181). In the product approach, the instructor generally concentrates instructional efforts on the arrangement of topic sentences and supporting sentences, in inductive or deductive patterns, to fulfill particular functions such as comparison, contrast, illustration, definition, and so on (Kern 181). At the essay level, Kern notes that product-oriented writing instruction often focuses on prescribed features or patterns for the introduction, body, and conclusion of essays in the four modes of description, narration, exposition, and argumentation (181). In the product-oriented approach, students often read a model text with the purpose of analyzing its organizational structures and are subsequently asked to imitate the model’s structures in their own writing, quite often at the expense of personal or meaningful/communicative engagement with the content of their writing. Thus, the message(s) students want to communicate in their writing generally take(s) a backseat to *how* this content is formed, shaped, and structured. In assessing this kind of writing, instructors would be able to follow a checklist of sorts, ticking off the required components or mechanisms of the conventional rhetorical writing pattern structuring the students’ writing samples without really needing to engage with students on *what* they are saying or arguing in their composition.

During the 1960s, attention began to move from texts to writers. New theories developed that emphasized a cognitive root to the learning and teaching of writing. Kern explains that, “Moffet (1968) popularized the idea that writing was about thinking, and that learning to write was learning to think about increasingly abstract topics and to think about the communicative needs of increasingly broad audiences” (181). In other words, writing came to be seen no longer simply as a means of recording thoughts, feelings, and ideas after the fact, but rather as a key way of generating and exploring new thoughts and ideas (Kern 181). In a process-oriented approach, students take the driver’s seat in writing exercises intended first to foster their

creativity and second to guide them through the process of reformulating and refining their writing (Kern 181). Kern explains that today:

...process-oriented writing classrooms are generally characterized by the use of collaborative brainstorming, freewriting, choice of personally meaningful topics, peer-group editing, and strategy instruction in the stages of invention, drafting, revising, and editing. (181)

Kern underlines that what is modeled in the process approach is not a text but rather the writer's process and textual construction. Grammar, spelling, and other issues of linguistic and structural form still play a critical role in process-oriented approaches, but instructors do not emphasize them up front—"so as to encourage students to express themselves freely" (Kern 182)—and are kept for the editing phases. The expectations are that students will naturally address problems with form as they revise their content through multiple drafts and socially through peer-editing and/or instructor guidance and feedback.

It is essential to note that the process approach still makes use of conventional rhetorical writing patterns, but that there is a "reduction in the emphasis on rhetorical models, such as compare-and-contrast and cause-and-effect essays, and instead, a greater interest in issues such as planning, audience, purpose, and author's voice" (Williams 33). This lack of explicit models in process-oriented approaches has led to one of its major criticisms in the foreign language teaching profession: this lack can make it especially difficult for second language learners to discover the tacit expectations for various types of writing (Kern 182). A process-only-oriented approach has tended to favor students who are already familiar with a variety of culturally-appropriated academic genres (meaning writing forms or composition formats that students have appropriated or learned in their first or second culture through implicit or explicit instruction) over those who are not (Kern 182).

In the case of advanced levels of foreign language academic writing, students who have not yet mastered or who are not familiar or comfortable with rhetorical writing conventions are much more at ease with the deductive approach put forth in product-oriented approaches to writing (Kern 182). Kern asserts that foreign language programs, which have gradually incorporated features of process-based teaching, have not yet adequately addressed the writing demands of advanced language study; and as a consequence, students often find themselves ill-prepared to write essays in advanced-level courses (185). Students' perceived ease with deductive approaches to writing and Kern's observation of foreign language instructional tendencies are two crucial findings to bear in mind in the remainder of this article's discussion, especially vis-à-vis the College Board's National Commission on Writing's conclusions as outlined in this article's introduction.

We commonly agree that there is room for all types of approaches in language teaching and that different pedagogical techniques will reach different students in different ways and with varying results. Thus, we adopt a variety of approaches in our classrooms. However, in academic programs—"where discussing ideas, supporting opinions, and constructing coherent arguments are at the heart of the curriculum" (Kern 191)—essay writing seemingly preoccupies an almost primordial curricular space in the development, demonstration, and assessment of students' L2 writing abilities. As Kern reminds us, "writing analytical essays... involves striking a balance between an emphasis on formal conventions and an emphasis on original ideas" (191). However, how do we successfully arrive at the learning and teaching of writing analytical essays in the target language and culture?

Kern's literacy-based "coordinated approach" may put us on the path to answering this question, for it integrates elements of product- and genre-based writing instruction (for example, rhetorical writing conventions, modes, and models alongside contextualized analysis of message, purpose, audience, and voice) with process-based instruction (that is to say, the teaching of the writing process itself)—thus striking a balance between an emphasis on formal conventions and an emphasis on original ideas.⁴ Williams puts forth a heuristic list of guidelines for developing classroom writing activities that strike such a balance. She proposes that: learners should write a lot, writing tasks should reflect authentic purposes and genres, there should be guidance and scaffolding for all tasks and activities, content and activities should be recycled, expectations should be clear, and the course should reflect the dual goals of learning academic writing and improving L2 proficiency (39–40).

Regarding academic writing activities, Williams notes, "it may be surprising to teachers that many students just out of high school have had relatively little experience with expository (essay) writing," and "it is especially important for L2 writing instructors to emphasize this type of writing if their students' primary experience has been with personal writing" for "students majoring in a foreign language will soon find that they need to engage in expository writing" (50). In my French literature teaching experience, one of the most difficult tasks critical to expository writing with which I have often seen students struggle has been summarizing.

Dorothy Margaret Guinn observes that, "Freshmen students, if asked to summarize a piece of non-fiction, usually know little about how to produce what is needed, an effective abstract" (380). She elucidates:

Our minds can follow and summarize a chain of events more easily than a sequence of ideas. Yet the ability to produce effective abstracts is an indispensable skill, vital not only in terms of practical performance in the classroom and on the job but in terms of intellectual development. (380)

Thus, although basic and formulaic in nature, abstracting is a cognitively difficult task or exercise and does require a certain degree of more sophisticated language mastery. Fortunately though, abstracts are very common in academic and professional writing (thus there are many existing examples,) and they have a fairly standard form (Kies, par. 2).⁵ In my third-year introductory French literature survey course abstract assignment, I instruct my students to summarize their proposed essay by answering five general content questions: (1) What are you going to do in your essay?/ What did you do?; (2) Why are you going to do this?/ Why did you do this?; (3) How are you going to do this?/ How did you do this?; (4) What do you anticipate finding?/ What did you find?; and (5) What do you think your conclusions will bring to discussions of your topic in the field and/or in our classroom? (See Appendix A for an in-class or homework activity example that connects these five major content questions with the smaller categories of information that constitute an “official” abstract.) The five general content questions when written in the future tense are useful at the pre-writing stages of composing; whereas the same questions expressed in the past tense play a role in post-writing stages of composition.

In this *dissertation* assignment, students must contextualize their answers within the literary profession and classroom discussion. In other words, I ask students to role-play the functions of a literary critic or scholar as well as a student reporting on their research and close reading to classmates. Students may repeat or summarize information or interpretations shared in class, but their *dissertation* must extend beyond classroom discussion. They must conduct a small amount of individual research (using two to three outside sources); and then in their essay, they must articulate their own personal close reading of the primary text, support their interpretations with textual evidence and research, and then suggest the significance or implications of their findings in relation to professional or scholarly studies on that particular writer and/or his/her particular work or literary genre and in relation to class discussion. The abstract and its five overarching content questions help students think through and organize these various required aspects of the *dissertation*.⁶

David Roberts observes that “abstracts can make unexciting subject-matter, but teaching abstracting is important for at least five reasons” (12). He delineates these five reasons in the context of his technical writing course, but I postulate that his reasons also fit the foreign language writing context in the same ways. Roberts writes that first, “of the specific forms we teach in technical writing, abstracts are the most frequently used [. . .] in the world of work—they appear with reports, proposals, articles and essays of all kinds” (12). Second, “good abstracts can be indispensable to technical writers trying to ‘sell’ their work—whether to an editor, to a boss, or to a customer” (12). Third, “by writing abstracts of

others' work, writers can indirectly sharpen their own skills [as] abstract-writing forces one to discover the underlying patterns of thought that have shaped a piece of discourse, and in doing so will be able to note effective writing techniques" (12). Fourth, "by doing abstracts of their own work writers can gain a valuable check upon clarity, both of content and of structure" (12). Fifth, "abstracts can serve as gauges for the technical writing instructor, since they can lend solid clues about problems likely to pop up in the paper itself—particularly in terms of inattention to focus, weak arrangement of ideas, or unsatisfactory development of points" (13). In addition, abstract-writing (when managed through a "coordinated approach") may also help students' overall writing skills development at each stage in the writing process. As Kern puts it, "it is hoped that [. . .] students can come to see constraints in a new light: as resources that establish broad limits on what they can do, but that also create new pathways for personal expression" (218).

As a *dissertation* pre-writing activity, the abstract can play a useful *scaffolding*-like role. Williams defines scaffolding as "instructional support that helps learners accomplish tasks that might otherwise be too challenging" (59). In this regard, by first conceptualizing (only very roughly) their answers to the abstract's five (or as many as possible at this stage but usually at least one to three) overarching content questions, students are beginning to "map" their forthcoming essay. At this stage, students are not required to have a fully developed and organized set of ideas but are encouraged to break down the essay question into as many categories of information required by the abstract as possible at the moment. Students are encouraged to put their responses into paragraph form and are told that these initial ideas will develop and can (rather should!) change as they advance in the literary essay writing process. In my experience, as scaffolding, the abstract (albeit a writing product itself but in a premature state at this stage) has seemed less daunting to students than the *dissertation* in its entirety and has helped many cope with the challenges of writing a longer piece of academic writing, quite often for the first time in French. It also provides a helpful point of departure in appointments with individual students who are struggling with their chosen essay topic and are not sure where and how to begin. As we move on to the writing stages of this process, they bring their abstracts along and recycle their content, almost like an outline.

Quite often, instructors suggest that writers make a formal outline before they write, and indeed, some writers find this useful (Williams 79). However, as Williams cautions, "requiring an outline in advance assumes that writers know what they are going to write about, and this is not always the case" (79). In the same respect, requiring a "finished" abstract before students are writing and have written their essays is a bit like putting the cart before the horse. Although there are professional instances where someone may need to submit an abstract before writing

the report or paper, there is no guarantee that the report or paper will end up in the same shape as predicted in the abstract. Bearing in mind Williams's observation, I emphasize to students that—at this point in the writing process—the abstract is serving as an organizational tool and is not in its final form. Thus, when students begin drafting their first version of their full-length essay, they are encouraged to refer to their abstract as they write (as if it were a *fil conducteur*) but are instructed to revise it as their thinking changes during the writing stage. It is important to tell students explicitly that they do not need to follow their pre-writing abstract if they no longer believe that idea to be true or no longer wish to make that particular argument. They may not always realize that they may deviate from their original plan and rewrite their abstract and will sometimes (rather irrationally) feel compelled to follow their original plan because they already put it into writing in the abstract and for some reason feel bound to it like a contract of some sort.

Once students have drafted their first version of their literary essay, as a post-writing activity, students are then asked to re-write their original abstract based on what they actually wrote in the *dissertation*. With their freshly composed second abstract in hand, I follow Kern's advice and ask students to evaluate how well their essay does what they intend it to do, to evaluate their ideas and argumentation in their essay, and to notice the particular ways in which their ideas are expressed. Rewriting the abstract brings these tasks to the fore. This process of rereading and rewriting their abstract contributes to students' development as more critical readers. In adding the social and cognitive dimensions of Kern's coordinated approach, I then give students a class day for peer-editing language activities, peer-negotiation of content and ideas, and peer-evaluation of structure and rhetorical form. Students bring their second abstract to class and are paired with a partner. They exchange their abstracts and then respond to a series of questions that draw their attention to their partner's mastery (or lack thereof) of balancing an emphasis on formal conventions (the abstract format, which by extension is also telling of their partner's mastery of the *dissertation's* structure) and an emphasis on original ideas (their partner's critical interpretations expressed in the abstract).⁷ (See Appendix B for the sample activity.) The students are then told to use their partner's feedback (if relevant and appropriate) in preparing their second version of their literary essay. In addition to extending the abstract writing activity into the social dimension of the writing process, it also helps as extended practice in learning to read with a "writerly eye."

Should instructors fear that the fifth abstract content question—which pushes students to extend their topic and close reading into the realm of professional academic literary studies—might be too challenging for students, instructors could adopt a modified approach to the use of abstracts and ask students to situate their conclusions solely within the context of classroom discussion. This changes one of the required components of a professional

or "official" abstract; therefore I would encourage instructors none-the-less to gloss the professional dimension of the fifth component of an abstract in their teaching. Yet, in modifying this component to the context of classroom discussion, students are still being asked to contextualize their conclusions. This act of contextualization of the conclusions is a critical cognitive element of the abstract and must be accounted for in some way.

An alternative workshop day activity to consider, time permitting, would be to have students actually abstract their partner's first draft of his/her literary essay. An instructor could have students bring their first versions of the *dissertation* to class, have partners exchange their essays, ask the students to abstract their partner's essay, and then have the pairs engage in a compare-contrast activity examining what each member of the pair writes in relation to the partner's and his/her own work. Having students read their partner's entire first draft could also allow instructors to develop additional cognitive and social dimensions of the post-writing process by creating activities that ask students to identify and evaluate their partner's purpose, audience, and voice in his/her essay. These activities would also provide additional extended practice in learning to read with a "writerly eye."

Some instructors in the profession argue against the use and instruction of rhetorical writing conventions in the learning and teaching of writing because they feel "rubric assessment, the creation of outlines that precede the writing itself, and the use of tools such as Power Point as a method of forced organization will not allow [students the opportunities] to explore their topics and discover what it is they wish to say" (Duxbury 17). I suppose such colleagues would also throw the use of abstracts into that category of forced organization, but as I have shown in this article, the abstract can (and should!) be amended and be re-written and by no means denies students the opportunities "to explore their topics and discover what it is they wish to say." The abstract, when used throughout the writing process in all of the ways described above, can put students on the path to finding their own solution to a particular communicative problem and/or get them started in their writing. The key is using abstracts (and other rhetorical writing conventions) in a "coordinated" way, not as restrictive ideals that are to be emulated in structure and style and against which students are evaluated but as "resources for students' design of meaning" (Kern 200); for "in designing meaning through writing, learners develop their ability to think explicitly about how to organize and express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in ways compatible with envisioned readers' expectations" and since "working deliberately toward making one's thoughts understandable to others who may not share similar backgrounds is of course at the heart of communicability" (Kern 172), whether that be in the classroom or in the workplace.

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Appendix A

In-Class or Homework Pre-Writing Abstract Activity

Instructions: Répondez aux questions ci-dessous dans 1-2 phrase(s) bien concise(s) en FRANÇAIS.

Titre: Le même titre que celui de votre dissertation.

Introduction: Quel est le sujet de votre dissertation? Pourquoi votre dissertation est-elle intéressante ou importante?

Hypothèse: Que comptez-vous trouver dans votre dissertation? Pourquoi?

Méthodes: Expliquez brièvement votre démarche; c'est-à-dire, quel schéma prendrez-vous—dialectique, thématique, ou analytique—et pourquoi?

Résultats: Que trouvez-vous en explorant le sujet ou la question de votre dissertation?

Discussion: Vos résultats sont-ils en harmonie avec votre hypothèse? Pourquoi (pas)?

Conclusion: Votre interprétation de ces résultats, quelle importance représente-t-elle? Pourquoi quelqu'un devrait-il s'intéresser à vos conclusions ou à vos constatations?

Appendix B

In-Class Abstract Partner Feedback Activity

Partie A, Instructions: Echangez votre abstract avec votre partenaire. Discutez ensemble de vos réponses aux questions ci-dessous. Notez de nouveaux commentaires, questions, ou idées supplémentaires qui proviennent de votre discussion.

1. Ecrivez le titre de votre partenaire: _____
2. Ecrivez l'**hypothèse** de votre partenaire. Pour trouver cette hypothèse, cherchez des informations dans son abstract qui répondent aux questions suivantes. Quel est *l'objet* de cette dissertation? Quelle est *sa déclaration d'exposition*? De *quoi* est-ce qu'il s'agit dans la dissertation et *pourquoi* est-ce que votre partenaire en discute?

3. Ecrivez **les méthodologies** de votre partenaire. Pour ces renseignements, cherchez dans son abstract du contenu qui parle de *comment* il/elle traite ou aborde l'hypothèse. Quel est le plan indiqué ou la structure de la dissertation proposée?
4. Ecrivez **les constatations** préliminaires ou **les conclusions** anticipées de votre partenaire. *Qu'est-ce qu'il/elle trouve* dans sa discussion de l'hypothèse dans la dissertation?

Partie B, Instructions: Continuez dans la même manière que pour Partie A mais donnez une réaction plus *personnelle* ou *subjective* à l'abstract de votre partenaire.

1. Si vous avez laissé des vides dans la Partie A, donnez à votre partenaire des remarques plus détaillées qui expliquent pourquoi vous n'avez pas répondu à ces questions; par exemple, *informations manquantes, manque de clarté ou de précision, contenu ambigu, idées peu claires, langue incompréhensible*, etc. Soyez spécifique.
2. Donnez des critiques (ou des commentaires) constructives [par exemple, *arguments qui pourraient être renforcés, suggestion d'un titre plus intéressant, où vous n'êtes pas convaincu(e) de ses arguments*, etc.] et posez une question basée sur le contenu qui aidera votre partenaire à stimuler une analyse critique plus profonde sur son sujet (comme: "Tu veux peut-être aussi considérer...", "As-tu pensé de/ à...", "Je crois que X peut soutenir d'avantage ton argument Y," etc.)

Notes

¹For a discussion of three exploratory studies regarding English and French journal abstracts in the language sciences and citation for the term "un sommaire" as a French-language translation of the English term "abstract," see Van Boon and Swales 93–108. For a discussion of how the English term "abstract" is translated and used in contemporary academic practice in France, see <http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=63803> and <http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=699467>.

²In one example, students could visit the web site for the French newspaper *Le Monde* (www.lemonde.fr). On the newspaper's home page, students will encounter article titles and a one to two sentence summary (or essentially the thesis statement) of the article's content. In a second example, students could visit the web site for the French magazine *Paris Match* (www.parismatch.fr). On the magazine's home page, students will see the current issue's table of contents of sorts: photos of the people who are featured in the magazine with the title of their corresponding article or interview and summary of article/ interview content. Students may click on the person who interests them and then be redirected to the corresponding article. In many cases, an abstract of the article or interview appears (as the first paragraph) underneath the photo of the individual but before the title of the article or interview.

³For a definition of "composing," see Williams 31–32.

⁴For extended discussion of the genre approach, see Kern 182–85.

³For a presentation of the six categories of information in an abstract, see Kies, par. 2.

⁴For excellent instructional support materials and presentation of the *dissertation*, see Chapter 5 of H. Jay Siskin et al.'s *Tâches d'encre* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

⁵Since students must speak to their "methodologies" in their abstract, they can gauge if their partner is using the appropriate contextualized expository form (analytical, thematic, or dialectical) for his/her chosen topic and critical interpretations.

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