



The Lure of Literacy: A Critical Reception of the Compulsory Composition Debate

Michael Harker

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Examines proposals for freshman composition's abolition and reform while providing a new model for courses.

The Lure of Literacy promises to transcend the stale and unproductive debate on freshman composition that has gripped English studies for more than a century. It is the first book to chart the origin of the discussion from the early twentieth century to the advent of the New Literacy Studies. Michael Harker recontextualizes proposals to abolish compulsory composition and reimagines pedagogical conditions in English studies in order to present a different model for first-year writing. This new model for compulsory composition programs focuses on students' attitudes about composition and interrogates the very idea of literacy itself.

"Required reading for anyone with a stake in the compulsory composition debate ... *The Lure of Literacy* demonstrates that curriculum reform with an eye toward the improvement of student learning is both necessary and achievable ... Highly recommended." — *CHOICE*

"Harker clearly builds on current scholarship and brings his inquiries down to the very pragmatics of the classroom. In a field full of critiques, but little substance, his voice is refreshing in that what he has been arguing about is fully fleshed out in his lesson plans at the end." — William H. Thelin, author of *Writing without Formulas*

"*The Lure of Literacy* presents an incredibly accessible account of New Literacy Studies scholarship, which serves the book's larger purpose (i.e., to propose a First-Year Literacy Studies curriculum) extremely well. Unlike a lot of books that rush through a discussion of an assignment or course that illustrates the pedagogical impact of the theory or historical research, this book presents a carefully thought-out course, complete with identifiable outcomes and lessons, that really does seem to have the potential to address the persistent misconceptions of literacy that fuel the abolition debate." — Chris Warnick, College of Charleston.

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