

Feature Book Review & Citations

Prescott, R. (2010). *Why to Major in English If You're Not Going to Teach*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt. 156 pp., \$32.00. ISBN-978-0-7575-8130-4.

On a daily basis, I am asked what one can do with a BA in English. The question, so common and loaded with emotive implications, even inspired the opening number for the hit Broadway musical "Avenue Q." Many assume that the only path for English majors leads to teaching in the secondary school system, and students expressing a love for literature and writing often are dissuaded—even forbidden—from building upon these passions by parents who feel their child should choose a major more "enterprising."

In *Why to Major in English If You're Not Going to Teach*, Robert Prescott offers a convincing response to the perennial question about the prospects for the English major. He refers to the following U.S. Bureau of Labor (as cited by Fogg, Harrington, & Harrington, 2004, p. 8): Of degree holders in English, 42% work in private for-profit companies, 14% own their own businesses, 10% are employed by government agencies, and 7% hold jobs in the nonprofit sector; furthermore, 27% work in education (but not necessarily teaching), 17% have chosen not to work, and 3% cannot find work. Although most graduates find successful ventures outside of teaching, the perception clearly prevails: An English degree lacks practical value. Perhaps this opinion remains popular because most people—English faculty members and students included—do not articulate the tremendous usefulness of the skill set as used in nonacademic realms. The short shrift given to English as a major may also reflect the career trajectories of faculty members that markedly differ from those considered by students of English. Prescott advocates for increased promotion of the practical application of English skills learned by undergraduates: "When we look out on a classroom, we are only seeing our students for who they are in the moment, not for the successful working people they will someday be, and thus we are not helping them see how their work with us is tied to their future careers" (p. 1).

Prescott demonstrates the utility of English in a thorough examination divided into three broad sections. In section I, he explores the job market and the critical thinking, open mindedness, oral communication, interpersonal, writing, research, and computer skills learned through the courses of

the English major. Section II highlights his examination of marketable skills gained through literary study, composition, creative writing, and internships. Prescott uses section III to show the bridge between English skills and careers, discussing important uses in the creation of targeted resumes, facility to research jobs and companies, and the ability to align skills, education, and experience with job descriptions.

Through well-organized and highly readable prose, Prescott explains the practical links between academe and the work environment. He illustrates these connections through multiple case studies and shares the hard work of others, refraining from indulging in self-exultation. Perhaps most important, the less grandiose stories about English student success feature very tangible outcomes to which students can aspire.

The book has small drawbacks. While showing clear evidence of English skills successfully promoted and implemented at liberal arts institutions (e.g., Bradley, Hanover), the book fails to provide commensurate evidence of its perceived relevance at large research institutions, where limited one-on-one interactions among students and faculty members seldom feature conversations on the value of the English curriculum. Also, at times, the author, so focused on selling his argument, overstates his case and loses some credibility. For example, after explaining (convincingly) the reason English majors make good insurance agents, financial advisors, and realtors, he suggests that they enjoy significantly less success in sales. He then indulges in unfounded speculation that puts him on the defensive. Repeatedly, Prescott makes broad, sweeping generalizations about all English majors: "English majors want_____." With this overreaching, he inappropriately places students into an artificial English-major allegiance. Finally, the last chapter describes a "Highly Incomplete English Major Hall of Fame," a relatively uninspired add-on that weakens the ending of an otherwise outstanding book.

This book—suitable for anyone working with students in the liberal arts—equips advisors to suggest the many different directions students can, and do, take with an English degree. When convinced that their only options lie in teaching and law, students need to hear the words of

Antonio Machado: "Travelers, there is no path. Paths are made by walking" (p. xi).

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Reviews posted since the last *Journal* issue include (members may find complete reviews for referenced books on the *Journal's* web site at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Journal/Book-Reviews.aspx>):

The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking. (2012). Book by Edward Burger and Michael Starbird. Review by Brandon Kroll. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 168 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-691156-66-8.

10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College. (2012). Book by Bill Coplin. Review by Emily DeLano. New York, NY: Random House. 272 pp., \$14.99. ISBN 978-1-58008-524-3.

2009 National Survey of First Year Seminars: Ongoing Efforts to Support Students in Transition (Research Reports on College Transitions, No. 2). (2011). Book by Ryan Padgett and Jennifer Keup. Review by Eileen Doyle Crane. Columbia: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. 176 pp., \$35.00. ISBN 978-1-889271-80-4.

The A Game: Nine Steps to Better Grades. (2011). Book by Kenneth J. Sufka. Review by Comfort Sumida. Taylor, MS: Nautilus. 80 pp., \$12.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-936946-02-0.

American Universities in a Global Market. (2010). Book by Charles Clotfelter (Ed.). Review by Deborah Wyatt. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 512 pp., \$75.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-226-11047-9.

Appreciative College Instruction: Becoming a Force for Positive Change in Student Success Courses. (2011). Book by Jennifer Bloom, Bryant Hutson, Ye He, and Claire Robinson. Review by Shannon Telenko. Champaign, IL: Stipes. 200 pp., \$34.95. ISBN 978-1-60904-063-5.

Asperger's Syndrome Workplace Survival Guide: A Neurotypical's Secrets for Success. (2010). Book by Barbara Bissonnette. Review by Jean C. Fulton. Stow, MA: Forward Motion Coaching. 162 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 978-1-84905-943-5.

Assessing 21st Century Skills: A Guide to Evaluating Mastery and Authentic Learning. (2012). Book by Laura Greenstein. Review by Leila Chavez Soliman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 264 pp., \$39.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-452218-01-4.

Campus Crime: Legal, Social, and Policy Perspectives (2nd ed.). (2007). Book by Bonnie Fisher and John Sloan, III. Review by Andrea Weber. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas. 347 pp., \$74.95. ISBN 978-0-398-07736-5.

College and Career Success (5th ed.). (2011). Book by Marsh Fralick. Review by Benjamin Todd. Dubuque, IA: Kendal Hunt. 524 pp., \$75.00. ISBN 978-0-7575-8658-3.

Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument (2nd ed.). (2011). Book by Stella Cottrell. Review by Brittany Siemens Chrisman. New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan. 282 pp., \$25.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-230-28529-3.

The Damn Good Resume Guide: A Crash Course in Resume Writing (5th ed.). (2012). Book by Yana Parker and Beth Brown. Review by Bobbi Kassel. Emeryville, CA: Ten Speed Press. 77 pp., \$11.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-60774-265-4.

Danger to Self: On the Front Line with an ER Psychiatrist. (2010). Book by Paul Linde. Review by Sharriette Finley. Berkeley: University of California Press. 280 pp., \$16.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-520-26983-5.

Enhancing Sustainability Campuswide. New Directions for Student Services, No. 137. (2012). Book by Bruce Jacobs and Jillian Kinzie (Eds.). Review by Gerry Meenaghan. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 102 pp., \$29.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-1183-4580-1.

Fall Down 7 Times, Get up 8: Teaching Kids to Succeed. (2012). Book by Debbie Silver. Review by Jill Flees. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 240 pp., \$33.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-412-99877-2.

A Family Guide to Academic Advising (2nd ed.). (2008) Book by Donald Smith and Virginia Gordon (Eds.). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association and Columbia, SC: The National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students in Transition. 31 pp., \$3.00. ISBN 978-1-889-27163-7. *The Quick & Easy Parent's Guide to College*. (2012). Book by Ryan McRae. 63 pp., \$1.99. n.p.: Ryan McRae. Reviews by Damian Whitney.

First Generation College Students: Understanding and Improving the Experience from Recruitment to Commencement. (2012). Book by Lee Ware, Michael Siegel, and Zebulun Davenport. Review by Susan Aguiar. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 176 pp., \$40.00. ISBN 978-0-470-47444-0.

First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students: Your High School Years. (2005) Book by Kathleen Cushman. Review by Angela Sexton. Providence, RI: Next Generation Press. 88 pp., \$8.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-9762706-3-3.

First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students: Your College Years. (2006). Book by Kathleen Cushman. Review by Jessica King. Providence, RI: Next Generation Press. 124 pp., \$9.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-9762706-6-8.

The First Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success, Vol 1. Designing and Administering the Course. (2011). Book by Jennifer Keup and Joni Webb Petschauer. Review by Kyle Ross. Columbia: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. 102 pp., \$25.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-889271-75-0.

The First Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success, Vol. 2. Instructor Training and Development. (2012). Book by James Groccia and Mary Stuart Hunter. Review by Jennifer Rybski. Columbia: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. 138 pp., \$25.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-889271-76-7.

The Global Achievement Gap. (2008). Book by Tony Wagner. Review by Anthony M. Ramos. New

York, NY: Perseus. 290 pp., \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-465-00230-6.

The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy Seal. (2011) Book by Eric Greitens. Review by Jessica L. Hollstein. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 320 pp., \$27.00. ISBN 978-0-547-42485-9.

The Ingredients of Challenge. (2010). Book by Carrie Winstanley. Review by Alicia Cobb. London, UK: Trentham. 222 pp., \$32.95. ISBN 978-1-85856457-9.

The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education From the Inside Out. (2011). Book by Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Erying. Review by Christi L. Hutchison. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 512 pp., \$32.95. ISBN 978-1-1108-6348-4.

Inquiry Guided Learning. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 129. (2012) Book by Virginia S. Lee (Ed.). Review by Karen S. Markel. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 128 pp., \$29.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-1182-9923-4.

Inspire, Empower, Connect: Reaching Across Cultural Differences to Make a Real Difference. (2010). Book by Anne Chan. Review by Helen Wilson. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littefield. 174 pp., \$33.95. ISBN 978-1-60709-604-7.

An Interpersonal Approach to Classroom Management: Strategies for Improving Student Engagement. (2012). Book by Heather Davis, Jessica Summers, and Lauren Miller. Review by Brenda Banks. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 256 pp., \$27.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-1412986731.

Leadership as Lunacy: And Other Metaphors for Educational Leadership. (2010). Book by Jack Lumby and Fenwick English. Review by Lydia Cross. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 176 pp., \$31.95. ISBN 978-1-412-97427-1.

Listen to Me Now or Listen to Me Later: A Memoir of Academic Success for College Students. (2012). Book by William Hoston. Review by Jessica P. Creel. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt. 82 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 978-1-4652-0137-9.

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Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls. (2002). Book by Rachel Simmons. Review by Carly Taylor. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 432 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 978-0-547-52019-3.

Other Ways to Win: Creating Alternatives for High School Graduates. (2006). Book by Kenneth Gray and Edwin Herr. Review by Stephanie Elliott. 264 pp., \$36.00. ISBN 978-1-412-91781-0.

Peer Leadership in Higher Education. New Directions in Higher Education, No. 157. (2012). Book by Jennifer Keup (Ed.). Review by Jason P. Barkemeyer. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 106 pp., \$29.00. ISBN 978-1-4039-3467-3.

Resume 101: A Student and Recent-Grad Guide to Crafting Resumes and Cover Letters that Land Jobs. (2010). Book by Quentin Schultze. Review by Rose Rezaei. Emeryville, CA: Ten Speed Press. 136 pp., \$12.99. ISBN 978-1-60774-194-7.

Say This, Not That to your Professor: 36 Talking Tips for College Success. (2012). Book by Ellen Bremen. Review by Kyle Bures. Bedford, IN: Norlights. 170 pp., \$15.95. ISBN 978-935254-68-3.

Social Media for Educators. (2012). Book by Tanya Joosten. Review by Kay Hopkins. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 144 pp., \$38.00. ISBN 978-1-1181-1828-3.

The Start-Up of You. (2012). Book by Reid Hoffman and Ben Cashnocha. Review by Melissa L. Johnson. New York, NY: Random House. 216 pp., \$26.00. ISBN 978-0-307-88890-7.

Stepping Up to Stepping Out: Helping Students Prepare for Life After College. New Directions for Student Services, No. 138. (2012). Book by George McClelland and Jill Parker (Eds.). Review

by Deborah Mayhew. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 110 pp., \$29.00. ISBN 978-1-1184-4397-2.

Student Development in College: Theory, Research and Practice (2nd ed.). (2009). Book by Nancy J. Evans, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton, and Kristen A. Renn. Review by Joshua L. Brittingham. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 480 pp., \$60.00. ISBN 978-0-7879-7809-9.

Teaching and Learning from the Inside Out: Revitalizing Ourselves and Our Institutions. New Directions for Teaching & Learning, No. 130. (2012). Book by Margaret Golden (Ed.). Review by John Gipson. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 129 pp., \$29.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1118365267.

Teaching Low Achieving and Disadvantaged Students (3rd ed.). (2006). Book by Charles H. Hargis. Review by Renee Ryan. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas. 182 pp., \$38.95. ISBN 978-0-398-07646-7.

Thriving in Transitions: A Research Based Approach to College Student Success. (2012). Book by Laurie Schreiner, Michelle Louis, and Denise Nelson (Eds.). Review by Dani Kvangvig-Bohn-sack. Columbia: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. 216 pp., \$35.00. ISBN 978-1-889271-83-5.

We're Losing Our Minds: Rethinking American Higher Education. (2011). Book by Richard P. Keeling and Richard H. Hersh. Review by Stephanie Bibbo. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 205 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-230-33983-5.

Why to Major in English If You're Not Going to Teach. (2010). Book by Robert Prescott. Review by Craig M. McGill. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt. 156 pp., \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-7575-8130-4.

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