A Short History of Writing Instruction

From Ancient Greece to The Modern United States

FOURTH EDITION

EDITED BY JAMES J. MURPHY AND CHRISTOPHER THAISS

A Short History of Writing Instruction

This newly revised Thirtieth Anniversary edition provides a robust scholarly introduction to the history of writing instruction in the West from Ancient Greece to the present-day United States.

It preserves the legacy of writing instruction from antiquity to contemporary times with a unique focus on the material, educational, and institutional context of the Western rhetorical tradition. Its longitudinal approach enables students to track the recurrence over time of not only specific teaching methods, but also major issues such as social purpose, writing as power, the effect of technologies, orthography, the rise of vernaculars, writing as a force for democratization, and the roles of women in rhetoric and writing instruction. Each chapter provides pedagogical tools including a Glossary of Key Terms and a Bibliography for Further Study. In this edition, expanded coverage of twenty-first-century issues includes Writing Across the Curriculum pedagogy, pedagogy for multilingual writers, and social media.

A Short History of Writing Instruction is an ideal text for undergraduate and graduate courses in writing studies, rhetoric and composition, and the history of education.

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Fourth Edition

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Fourth edition published 2020
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

First edition published by Hermagoras Press in 1990
Third edition published by Routledge 2012

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-34979-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-34980-6 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-02089-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Swales & Willis, Exeter, Devon, UK

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Contents

Before You Read This Book

What is the Story Here?

This is an account of the ways that members of Western civilization have worked for nearly 3,000 years to develop practical methods for teaching people how to write.

In a broad sense this effort was a linear progression, with ancient Greeks moving on from an oral society to develop an alphabetic mode to preserve language in inscribed form, then passing on their teaching ideas to the conquering Romans, who standardized them in "schools" and used public money to spread these ideas throughout the known world as part of their program to Latinize their Empire. Segments of these Roman plans continued during the Middle Ages, but there was an explosion of European interest in humanistic education during the so-called "Renaissance" period (roughly 1450–1700), especially after the re-discovery of long-lost ancient treatises on rhetoric and education like the *Institutio oratoria* of the Roman educator Quintilian. It was these Renaissance concepts of writing instruction which informed English schools and then their American colonial descendants beginning in 1636 in Massachusetts with the foundation of New College (later Harvard University). The movement toward distinctly United States approaches to "composition," beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the present, is the latest chapter in this progression.

On another level, though, apart from the chronology, this is an instructive story of human beings throughout the ages striving to find the best ways to teach writing. It has been observed that every person who has ever lived has lived in what was—for him or her—"modern times." The following chapters, then, are not mere antiquarian curiosities looking at quaint old teaching methods, but rather descriptions of each generation's efforts to solve the problems of what to teach and how to teach it. Every person discussed in these pages considered writing to be an important human activity and therefore one worth doing well.

This task is complicated by the vast variety of methods used both for the physical inscription of words and for the instruction in how to prepare ideas for the inscriptions. Writing is both a mental and a physical activity, setting out thought in visible images.

The powerful human urge to record has taken many physical forms over the ages. While we in the West rely largely on a Roman alphabet to do this recording, countless other cultures have developed sophisticated systems using everything from knotted cords to baked tablets, notched sticks, and pictographs. Even the genus "alphabet" has many species beyond the Greek and Roman ones so familiar to us—Ogham, Runic, Coptic, Etruscan, Slavonic, and Phrygian, to name a few. The point is that the urge to record, to pass on information, seems so universal that humans everywhere have struggled for thousands of years to find ways to do so. While many "oral" cultures—that is, those without a writing system—have used oral memory as a recording device for their histories and literatures, it is also true that many such cultures eventually developed a writing system that supplanted the oral.

It is our belief here that we cannot understand the present state of affairs unless we also understand how that state of affairs came to be. Moreover, as the linguist Louis G. Kelly is quoted as saying at the end of Chapter 2, we can learn useful things for present use by examining what has been done before in language instruction. It is possible, for example, that a modern teacher can use in the classroom some specific methods employed in Roman, medieval, or American colonial schools.

The primary thesis of this book therefore is that, because writing is something that needs to be taught, we owe it to ourselves to discover how people have been and are teaching this powerful human tool. In other words, we can look to the past history of "instruction" to learn how to write today.

It is important to note at once why the term **Instruction** is a key element in this history. The basic principle of the European–American tradition is that writing must be taught. For example, one of the major influences in the European phase of this history, the Roman educator Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, writing about CE 95, observes that writing, unlike speech, has to be acquired through education by someone other than the learner. Small children, he notes, can acquire oral language simply by listening to and imitating those around them. But the child cannot acquire writing ability in this way. The tremendous investment of time and resources in writing instruction over many centuries would seem to reinforce Western belief in this principle.

A second major principle in the tradition is that such instruction should take place in "**schools**." We are so accustomed to schools today that we may overlook the fact that this concept was accepted in ancient times only after a major debate about whether individual tutors should teach writing in the home, as opposed to gathering students in groups for instruction by a teaching master. The debate was still going on during the first century of the Christian era (as Quintilian tells us), but the Roman Empire quickly moved to support schools with public money and, in fact, used the schools as a means of Latinizing their conquered lands. The

acceptance of standardized teaching methods made it possible for Roman schools scattered around the world to have substantially the same classroom regimes—not because of any mandated curriculum ordered from above, but simply because the methods worked. The school tradition itself has proved so strong that even dissident or excluded groups have organized writing schools for their own purposes, from illegal "hedge schools" in occupied Ireland to mechanics' institutes in nineteenth-century England and female academies in the U.S. of the same period. The school thus serves both the established and the non-established, simply because it works.

This is not to say that every school in every place and time has done the same thing. And, as we see in Chapters 7 and 8, valiant instructional efforts have been made outside the school setting. Yet the key point is that school as mechanism has served the Western world quite well over the years, regardless of variations in detail. What is important is the continuity of writing instruction itself as a desired goal.

This book also aims to describe the various changes in writing instruction that have occurred over time. Certainly, for example, the social and cultural objectives of a Roman classroom teacher were vastly different from those of a classroom teacher in eighteenth-century Wales or a U.S. high school teacher in the 1950s. One of the objectives of this book, therefore, is to discover whether the instructional methods differed as much as their environments did. That is why each chapter seeks to outline the dominant cultural milieu in which instruction occurred in order to measure the extent to which such forces affected the instruction. It is for this reason that the chapters are arranged chronologically—not to argue a presumptive continuity, but rather to allow readers to determine for themselves how each generation decides either to follow a traditional path or to move in some new directions.

It would not be fair, even if it were feasible, to attempt to summarize here the eight chapters that follow. Each chapter covers a unique period in human history, each with its own complexities. In the same sense that it is said that every translation is a lie, so any short summary of such intricate sub-histories would undoubtedly result in a kind of unconscious misrepresentation.

Instead, it might be worth calling attention to two themes that cut across chronological lines: power and the physical task of inscription.

Writing and Power

In all the periods covered in these studies, the ability to communicate well was a source of public power. In many societies, including the ancient Greek, the cultural memory of the group was reserved originally to an elite. When writing became accessible to the non-elite in Greece, as Richard Leo Enos demonstrates in Chapter 1, a powerful force of

democratization was unleashed. While we see in Chapter 2 that the paired faculties of speaking and writing were important to the Romans, each supporting the other, in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages writing by itself became the dominant transmission mode. The revolutionary decision of Benedictine monks in the sixth century to begin copying antique manuscripts preserved a vast treasury of ancient thought for later use; in turn, the need to train scribes for this purpose made writing instruction an integral part of monastic life for the next millennium. In Chapter 3, Carol Dana Lanham and Irina Dumitrescu describe the rise of the new *ars dictaminis*, or art of letter-writing, introducing the practical application of writing skills for the specific needs of chancery offices and other official bodies; in fact the practitioners of this art wielded great power for centuries, acting as transmitters of messages sent out by Popes, kings, and all sorts of governing bodies, especially since they dealt with the language not available to the common people—that is, Latin. In the later Middle Ages, as we see in Chapter 4 by Martin Camargo and Marjorie Curry Woods, the detailed exercises based on written texts became a means of encouraging the composition of prose and poetry in both Latin and the emerging vernaculars.

With the Renaissance and its revival of Roman educational practices, the systematic pairing of the oral and the written returned as a means of upward mobility; both the English "grammar school" and the Jesuit educational program stressed careful writing, as Don Paul Abbott indicates in Chapter 5. In this same period, writing in the vernacular also became increasingly popular, vastly expanding the range of readership beyond the Latinate few and thus empowering larger and larger segments of populations across Europe. The English grammar school was exported intact to colonial America. While this European model prevailed in the colonies and the United States well into the nineteenth century, the last two chapters of this book deal with a multitude of specifically U.S. responses to the challenges of providing writing instruction for the citizens of a democracy; these responses are predicated on the deeply ingrained presumption that writing leads to power.

One measure of writing as power is that it is independent of time and place. An oral statement (if not recorded) is time-and-place-bound and evaporates with the last sound uttered. An oral protest, for example, can be quashed by batons and tear gas, but in written form, it can be anywhere, anytime. One of the most famous examples of this power is that of Martin Luther. When he posted his famous 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, calling for a public debate about indulgences, nothing much happened. But two weeks later, when the theses were printed in pamphlet form, a wave of support sprang up. Both Latin and German vernacular versions were circulated. Scores of pamphlet writers on both sides of the issue soon entered the fray. While it is true that books were later to become the main tools of the ensuing

Reformation debates throughout Europe, it was the vernacular pamphlet that informed the initial struggle for power. Often badly written and poorly printed, the pamphlet nevertheless engaged, and hence empowered, masses of lay people in an unprecedented shift of power from the clerical establishment. Suddenly, it was no longer necessary to ask ecclesiastical permission to write about religion. Both Protestant and Catholic leaders saw the urgent necessity of capturing this source of power, and it was not long before systematic educational programs emerged to serve their respective causes—Melanchthon and Sturm for example on the Protestant side, the Jesuits on the Catholic. It was a classic case in which recognition of power created a demand for the pedagogical means to achieve that power. Chapter 5 outlines some of the instructional consequences of that recognition.

It must be recognized, too, that the power to encourage or to tolerate writing is also the power to deny it. In early modern England, for example, both poverty and a rigid social class system excluded masses of people from any education at all. Women were usually kept out of classrooms. In the United States, slave owners prevented their human properties from attending school for fear of the power that education might give them.

Writing as a source of power has many other examples in the chapters that follow. They need not be detailed here, but it seems important to alert the reader to keep an eye out for the many instances that occur throughout the book.

The Physical Difficulty of Inscription

Writing is both a mental and a physical human activity, setting out thought in concrete visible images on some sort of surface. Hence a major factor in our history is the speed of thought compared to the slowness of the inscription of that thought. The mind is fast; the hand is slow. While not every chapter here cites complaints about this problem (possibly because the matter is so obvious to each generation that it hardly needs saying), the complaints that emerge from time to time indicate that it is not far from writers' minds. Consequently, it might be useful to look briefly at the technology of writing over the centuries.

Surprisingly little has been written about the sheer physical difficulty of inscribing alphabetic characters on some sort of surface. Nevertheless, until very recent times, this difficulty has been a factor in the writing process and therefore in the instructional process. This matter deserves more attention.

The earliest widely used writing surface was woven from the papyrus plant and manufactured on long sheets, which were then rolled up for storage after the writing was inscribed on one side. The *codex*, or "book" as we know it, was not developed until late antiquity; in this form,

written pages were stitched together at one edge. Since it was not necessary to roll the sheets, writing could be placed on both sides.

Another surface was the scraped hide of an animal, known as *parchment* from the supposed place of its invention in Pergamum. The finest form of parchment was also known as *vellum*. A complete book could require the hides of a herd of sheep and was therefore extremely expensive. It has been estimated, for example, that the cost of a medieval parchment book of 200 pages would be the equivalent of a modern luxury automobile. The cost of parchment was important for two reasons: first, it restricted parchment writing to rich foundations, universities, or patrons, making such writing a product of elite groups; but second, it militated against classroom use for exercises or practice.

Instead, wax tablets, thin pieces of wood with a thin layer of wax, were in use in classrooms from ancient times until at least the Renaissance period. A stylus was used to scratch letters in the wax. The wax could be erased by heating it with the palm of a hand and then smoothing it over. One problem with the wax was that it did not work well with cursive writing (i.e., writing using connected letters) because of wax build-up in front of the stylus after a few letters.

Paper from wood pulp or that of other plants, though extremely expensive in the beginning, was a revolutionary advance in the democratization of writing and the broadening of classroom uses. Apparently it was invented in China in the year 105 CE, but did not reach Europe until the twelfth century. The first American paper factory was set up in 1690 at Germantown near Philadelphia. Printing created a high demand for paper, which in turn encouraged the increase in the number of paper mills and a subsequent reduction in prices. By the late nineteenth century, paper was so common that it ceased to be mentioned as a factor in writing.

The instruments for inscribing on a page, however, remained a problem until very recently. Early tools were the stylus, a simple scratching rod, or the pen, a tool for laying ink on a surface. Pens were made from metal or wood, then later with quills of birds like the goose; any non-metal pen required constant sharpening, so that a knife became a constant companion of the writer. (This is the origin of the term *pen knife*.) Note in Chapter 5 that English grammar school students are enjoined to keep sharpened pens. The fountain pen, a pen containing a reservoir of ink that is fed automatically to the nib, appeared only in the 1880s. It was prone to leakage, however, with disastrous consequences for clothing as well as the papers of students and their teachers, and many schools preferred to use regular steel pens; even after World War II, it was common to see school desks with recesses to hold ink bottles.

While wooden pencils using carbon fillers are mentioned as early as 1565 in Switzerland, the practical pencil as we know it today was perfected only in 1898. Very little has been written about the use of pencils and the effect of erasable writing in writing instruction.

The now-ubiquitous ball-point pen, using a rotating ball to draw on an interior ink supply, came into common use only as recently as 1946 (though it had been used by professional draftsmen seven decades earlier). It solved both the leakage problem and the inkwell problem, and its cheapness made it available at all economic levels. It has become the most democratic of writing tools.

In terms of machine writing, Mark Twain was the first major American writer to use a typewriter. (Ironically, the much-berated "QWERTYUIOP" sequence of keyboard letters was introduced initially as a way to slow down the fingers of typists who might have gone so fast that they would jam the machine.)

These technological factors are important to note because, until recently, they were limiting factors for both the would-be writer and the writing instructor. Today, when digital electronic composition is so easy, and a whole class's compositions can be posted on a web site for all to see, it may be difficult for a modern generation to understand the inscription difficulties faced by their writing forebears.

The history of **punctuation** is another neglected aspect of the writing process. Modern punctuation is essentially a product of the print age, when habits of rapid reading created by the flood of printed material made readers reluctant to use traditional methods of interpreting texts. Ancient Greek and Roman texts did not usually have word separations, since the reader sensitive to oral patterns could easily work out the sounds intended by the written words. In addition, it must be remembered that "reading" in ancient times (and medieval times as well) was vocalized, that is, sounded out. Note in Chapter 2 that Quintilian advises his students about the methods of reading their texts in this way. Concepts like a visual "paragraph" appeared in the Middle Ages, though first-line indentation did not, but complexities like colon/semi-colon were standardized only with printing. The quotation mark, for example, was a post-printing device, but even in sixteenth-century texts, quotation marks can be found opposite every quoted line, unlike the present practice of using them only at the beginning and the end of the quotation.

For the historian of writing instruction, then, it is critical to understand, for each period, the writing technologies and the linguistic presuppositions (e.g., punctuation) which have a bearing on teaching methods and their intended results.

Finally, the reader is warned once again that everyone who has ever lived has lived in what was to him or her "modern times." The following chapters, to repeat, are not mere antiquarian curiosities looking at quaint old teaching practices, but descriptions of each age's effort to solve the problems of what to teach and how to teach it, for every person discussed in these pages considered writing to be an important human activity and therefore one worth doing well.

Chapter 1

Ancient Greek Writing Instruction and Its Oral Antecedents

Richard Leo Enos

Key Concepts

Abecedaria • *Aoidoi* • Casuistry • Craft Literacy • Curriculum • Declamation • Epigraphy • *Hupogrammateus* • *Letteraturizzazione* • Logography • *Melete* • *Paideia* • *Phronesis* • *Progymnasmata* • Rhapsodes • Rhetoric • Sophists • *Sumposium* • Syllabary • *Technē* • *Thetes.*

Synopsis: The Scope of Writing Instruction in Ancient Greece

Conventional approaches to understanding writing instruction in ancient Greece typically draw upon well-established literary sources. Since the last edition, new sources of material evidence—such as statuary, pottery, **epigraphy**,* and continuing excavations at archaeological sites of instruction and performance—have brought to light new sources for study. These new contributions have enriched our understanding of the types and range of writing instruction in ancient Greece. As with the previous edition, Athens is an understandable focal point of study, not only because this powerful and enduring city-state is widely regarded as the first literate community in ancient Greece and offers a substantial amount of evidence for examination, but also because new sources of evidence have come to light in recent decades that tell us a great deal more about Athens as a literate community. Archaeological excavations in the Agora, for example, have unearthed inscriptions and related artifacts that provide material evidence about everyday writing habits and how they were learned. These new resources—often in the form of graffiti and dipinti—expand and deepen our knowledge of what community **literacy** meant in

* Glossary terms are printed in bold in their first appearance in the text.

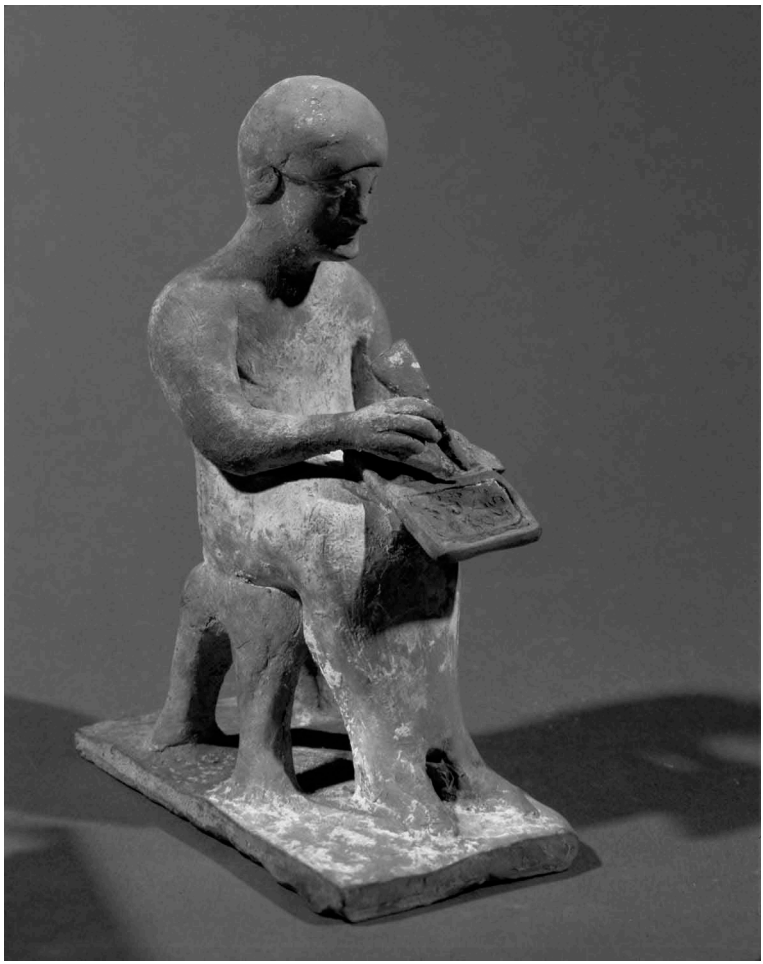

Figure 1.1 Sitting scribe. Greek terracotta figurine from Thebes, Boeotia. 1st quarter of the 6th century BCE. Location: Louvre, Paris, France.

Photo Credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY. By permission of Art Resource: image reference, ART58134 (© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY).

ancient Athens and, correspondingly, the attendant modes of instruction that accompanied a variety of writing functions.

In addition to discussing writing instruction at Athens, this chapter also includes perspectives on writing instruction from other prominent Greek city-states ranging as far east as the Ionian cities of Western Anatolia. The reach for understanding writing instruction in Greece extends beyond Athens because in the last decades archaeological contributions have revealed that there were centers for the study of **rhetoric** in ancient

Greece that were lost, and rediscovering these centers has enriched our understanding of the spectrum of writing instruction across the Hellenic world. For example, extensive study at Rhodes, Sparta, Thebes, Teos, and Halicarnassus reveals not only rival manifestations of **rhetoric** but also correspondingly different approaches to the teaching of writing. For city-states such as Athens, writing for civic purposes was important. For others, as with Sparta, effective written communication in military situations was critical. For still others, such as Rhodes, rhetoric that stressed cross-cultural issues was emphasized. Some sites, such as Halicarnassus (i.e., the modern Turkish city of Bodrum), are currently under study.[1] The instructional approaches vary at these and other sites in ways that correspond to the orientations of rhetoric. Such examples illustrate the diversity of writing instruction and explain why certain educational approaches emphasized different features of writing in their instruction, and make clear the necessity of more fieldwork.

The ever-widening spectrum of writing instruction expands not only in sites other than Athens, but also with respect to history and in gender. The long-held belief that women were not literate needs to be reconsidered and qualified. There is evidence that writing instruction occurred even during Greece's Bronze Age (*c.* sixteenth to twelfth centuries BCE) and that the training and use of writing involved women to a much greater degree than had previously been realized.[2] Evidence examined a few years ago at the British Museum suggests that literacy was not uncommon among certain classes of Athenian women (see also Figure 1.2).[3] Further, epigraphical evidence reveals that education for women in Athens was not representative of all of Greece. Co-educational systems were known to have existed on both Teos and Chios and, as Marrou notes, "in Hellenistic schools sexual discrimination tended to disappear."[4] We often assume, for example, that writing is for the privileged few. We now understand, however, that some writing was done as a functional **craft** practiced by artisans of the ***thetes*** class with instruction in the form of teaching a labor-skill. Such new evidence provides a more comprehensive view of both civic

1 Richard Leo Enos, "Was There an Art of (Asiatic) Rhetoric at Halicarnassus? A Plea for Rediscovering the Lost Centers of Classical Rhetoric," *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative and World Rhetorics*, ed. Keith Lloyd (New York, NY and London: Routledge, *forthcoming*).

2 Richard Leo Enos, Natasha Trace Robinson, and Heidi Gabrielle Nobles, "Rhetorical Decipherment and the Archaeological Implications of Field Rhetoric for the Recovery of Women in the History of Ancient Rhetoric: A Note on the Bronze Age Women of Linear B Scripts from Pylos," *Journal for the History of Rhetoric*, *forthcoming*.

3 Richard Leo Enos. "The Archaeology of Women in Rhetoric: Rhetorical Sequencing as a Research Method of Historical Scholarship." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (Winter 2002) 65–79.

4 H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956 [reprinted in 1983]) 222, esp. ns. 1 and 2.

Figure 1.2 Painter of Bologna 417 (5th century BCE). Two schoolgirls, one holding a writing tablet. Terracotta kylix (drinking cup) *c.* 460–450 BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, U.S. By permission of Art Resource: image reference, ART367355.

literacy and also the spectrum of writing instruction ranging from writing as an aspect of early education, writing in everyday social interaction, writing as a trade-skill, and writing at the most sophisticated and highest levels of advanced education. Finally, and because ancient Greeks faced the challenge of communicating effectively with other social groups, this chapter also examines writing instruction for such cross-cultural purposes as a commercial transaction with Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Etruscans.

Issues of Historiography and Writing Instruction in Ancient Greece

At first glance, the study of writing instruction does not appear to seem complex, but there are issues of historiography that must be noted. If we consider "literacy" to be nothing more than acquiring the skill of how to

read and write, then writing instruction would be nothing more than learning the rudiments of a recording technique that would serve as an aid to speech. However, it is important to stress the complex, endemic relationship that existed among reading, writing, and speaking in ancient Greece. We tend to think of writing instruction as a separate category from oral instruction, but the interrelation of orality with literacy was much closer than our current perspectives reveal. Writing instruction was integrated with, and a part of, "oral" instruction, as is clearly evident when we examine Greek **declamation**.[5] Writing developed for reasons other than as an aid to memory for speech. Writing also served as a technology for developing not only tally systems to facilitate quantitative memory but also problem-solving in early mathematical accounting. In the past, insights into the cognitive processes that structure meaning have been through the study of theory and performance. An understanding of instruction provides another critical perspective on the relationship between thought and expression, between wisdom and eloquence, in ancient Greece.

The Homeric Tradition of Oral Education and the Development of Writing Instruction

Before writing, of course, Greece was exclusively an oral culture or, in the terms of Walter J. Ong, a culture of primary orality.[6] Ancient Greeks relied on oral discourse to express thoughts and sentiments; their culture, including their educational practices, was oral. If we were to use three adjectives to characterize what we know about the earliest forms of Greek education they would be: oral, musical, and athletic. The earliest known educational practices in Greece were direct and personal, often associated with family relationships. Elders of the family—both male and female—participated in educating their children personally and directly. Such knowledge, especially at this earliest, preliterate phase of instruction, was oral, aural and physical. At the heart of this education was the ***sumposium***. That is, wisdom was imparted to youth from family elders; in the case of young boys, education passed through elder males and was seen as a means for not only imparting wisdom but also strengthening kinship bonds. Females had parallel forms of instruction, primarily directed toward learning domestic skills. In both instances, and before writing began to be introduced, the family-bound education was cemented through orality.

5 D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (London and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

6 Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York, NY: Methuen, 1982) 6, 11, 31–75.

While the earliest Greeks did not have an education that could be described as communal or systematic, the "**curriculum**" was fairly common, at least among the higher classes of citizens. The one clear exception was Sparta, whose citizens had their own mode of communal education and chose to de-emphasize literacy to the point that some Spartans even bragged about their inability to read and write.[7] In most other settings, however, the responsibility for education centered on the family. In addition to the skills necessary for managing the economy of property and (in many cases) animal husbandry, youthful citizens were "educated" by learning Homer, by engaging in athletic contests that were oriented toward military and agonistic skills, and by acquiring (to some degree) proficiency in music. Eventually, education would be de-centered away from the family and home in two respects. First, centers such as the gymnasium would evolve from sites of military and athletic training to include other forms of education. One of the most important aspects of this education was elementary rhetorical exercises called ***progymnasmata***. Although these early exercises are most closely associated with the more formalized educational practices of the later Hellenistic and Roman periods of writing instruction, scholars such as D. A. Russell strongly argue that they were evident early in Greek education.[8] Second, instruction from the home would be extended by foreign educators (*metics*), who would be attracted to cities such as Athens. In fact, many of the most famous **Sophists** were often non-Athenian but saw in Athens a site that offered both the freedom and the reward for their pedagogical skills.

Understandably, the mode of expression that dominated these earlier forms of education was oral. Orality is apparent even in the transmission of what we know as "literature." For centuries, the transmission of this literature had been oral. Tales woven out of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed for oral performance in which virtue was lauded and vice was condemned. Homeric bards or ***aoidoi***, and later ***rhapsodes***, emerged as experts skilled in the telling and preservation of Homeric "literature." The cultural values and social standards of Homeric literature became the ***paideia*** or the virtue of intellectual excellence. Over the centuries, this Homeric *paideia* that served as the standard for education would not only be challenged but skills such as writing would become a central feature in the transformation of the concept of *paideia* or what it meant to be educated. Greek writing instruction is a study of the evolution of *paideia*, for as writing became part of the education of ancient Greeks, their notion of what

7 Richard Leo Enos, "The Secret Composition Practices of the Ancient Spartans: A Study of 'Noncivic' Classical Rhetoric." *Renewing Rhetoric's Relation to Composition*, eds. Shane Borrowman, Stuart C. Brown, and Thomas P. Miller (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2009) 236–247.

8 Russell, *Greek Declamation* 3.

paideia meant changed dramatically, influencing the very fabric of their society. Writing became a part of the *paideia* of Greek education when it was considered to be a pedagogical value and not merely a craft-skill. That is, writing became a medium for attaining intellectual excellence, as we will later see exemplified in the school of Isocrates (436–338 BCE). Yet, writing was not initially seen as an intellectual source of power but rather as a functional skill that served, at best, as a facilitator to the oral tradition of education.

The history of writing instruction in ancient Greece is a history of the gradual transition from oral to oral and literate educational practices. This relationship was fostered in part because of the epistemic relationship that existed among reading, writing, and orality. In the most literal sense, writing instruction in ancient Greece was oral *and* literate, one and the same. Compositions were written to be recited aloud and were meant not only to be seen but also to be heard. At its highest and most polished levels, writing instruction pointed toward compositions that were intended to be performed aloud. We must also understand that to discuss writing instruction is implicitly to discuss reading instruction. Most of us see the association between writing and reading as a natural connection but, as we will see, the emphasis and expertise between writers and readers differed as writing was introduced and as writing/reading instruction evolved in ancient Greece. That is, some groups—and here we are speaking principally of Athenian social classes—received writing instruction for varying purposes. Some became composers as a trade; others were principally readers who learned only rudimentary skills of writing that would carry them through their daily business; still others recognized writing as facilitating the expression of complex cognitive skills.

In order to understand this evolution in (alphabetic) writing instruction, we must first understand its historical antecedents. Standardized writing instruction as a form of higher education before the Homeric oral period did not exist. The orientation for teaching writing was pragmatically task-driven and not intellectual development. The objectives of writing as a functional task did impact the earliest stage of instruction. We think of the oral period as "preliterate" but that notion needs qualification. The writing that followed the Homeric period is alphabetic. However, earlier pre-alphabetic **syllabary** writing, in the forms of Bronze Age Linear A (*c.* 1800–1450 BCE) and Linear B (*c.* 1450–1100 BCE) scripts, did exist before the Homeric period (*c.* 1200–800 BCE). These syllabary forms of writing were lost, resulting in the return to orality during the Homeric period. Yet, even these pre-alphabetic forms of writing did have their own modes of instruction.

During this oral, pre-alphabetic period, thoughts and sentiments were preserved by long-term memory and transmitting those thoughts from mentor to **apprentice** as a form of oral instruction. While long-term memory was valued in Greek culture, it was hardly a widespread trait and

required considerable skill and training. Mastering the craft-techniques of oral composition and memory-training led to the guild of Homeric *aoidoi* and eventually to rhapsodes; these experts, memorizing massive amounts of language for preservation and transmission, viewed their ***technē*** as a specialized craft requiring years of training.

Controlling Greek "literature" through orality was considered to be a god-blessed gift of the expert rhapsode and not a broad-based public skill. During this purely oral rhapsodic stage, heuristics for oral composition were developed and taught long before rhetoric became a discipline. Eventually, when scripts evolved to an alphabetic system, writing came to complement, and later replaced, the need for long-term memory of oral discourse. Many rhapsodes eventually used writing to record and preserve Homerica. Even at that stage, however, the ties between writing, reading, and speech remained particularly strong in ancient Greece and persisted for centuries. In fact, there is very good reason to believe that most ancient Greeks never learned to read silently.[9] Of course, even from this perspective, writing instruction would be a tremendous benefit if it were nothing more than simply a recording device. Yet, writing evolved into much more than an aid to memory, particularly with the evolution of the alphabet, and these cognitive benefits had enormous consequences for writing instruction in Greece.

Alphabetic Influences on Early Writing Instruction and the "Literate Revolution"

As already mentioned, the earliest evidence of writing in Greece appears as Bronze Age syllabaries called Linear A and Linear B. Writing in these pre-alphabetic scripts was an aid to memory and was used more for economic and mathematical functions than prose recording. Writing instructors were those who transmitted skill in using tally systems for accounting purposes. When these syllabaries were lost, Greece returned to an exclusively oral culture before the introduction of the alphabet. In one respect, writing itself is a technology and, in ancient Greece, the alphabet is the engine driving that technology. By modification and adaptation of earlier Semitic scripts, ancient Greeks were able to construct a writing system that evolved to only 24 letters, each of which was intended to capture a discrete but essential sound of the utterances of their language. When arranged together, these discrete sounds could be echoed to mimic the vocal patterns of everyday speech. The alphabet was ingenious in its simplicity and monumental in its impact. Earlier pre-alphabetic writing systems were, by comparison, slow, cumbersome, complex, and imprecise, often requiring extensive writing instruction to the point of having a scribe. The

9 W. B. Stanford, *The Sound of Greek: Studies in the Greek Theory and Practice of Euphony* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1967) 1–5; H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, rpt. 1983) 19.

alphabet, in contrast with such earlier scripts, could be easily learned and written—even by children—and readily remembered. Because the alphabet as a recording device was very easy to learn and to use, instruction moved accordingly from a specialized craft-skill done for purposes of tally, accounting, and computation, to a skill easily mastered by non-experts involved in public discourse for daily, functional purposes. In short, writing instruction, with the alphabet, moved dramatically from being a specialized craft-skill to a public skill valued for the ease of its everyday use and utility. As a consequence of the alphabet's public utility, writing could provide the conditions where not just an expert but an entire community—such as Athens—could be literate. Eventually, this shift would culminate in writing instruction evolving from a specialized craft-skill to an aspect of civic education. With the alphabet, instruction in writing would be "democratized" in the sense that it could easily be taught to the public as a way of facilitating and stabilizing civic affairs, as is evident with inscribed law codes and recorded political policies. With the alphabet, writing took on rhetorical functions and, in turn, the instruction of writing changed dramatically from a craft-skill to also include what would eventually evolve into an art or *technē* of social power, one that facilitates reasoning (***phronesis***) and especially situational argument (**casuistry**).

Writing Instruction and Civic Power

Paideia, as mentioned earlier, is a Greek concept that means the virtue and value of intellectual excellence.[10] Writing as a source of power (*dunamis*) soon became apparent to Hellenic practitioners, educators, and politicians. The alphabet was the medium that both stabilized and unleashed thoughts and sentiments that were otherwise constrained when limited to oral expression. Ancient Greeks realized that writing could do much more than label and serve as an aid to memory; writing could also function as a heuristic, an aid to creating discourse and to refining patterns of thinking and structuring reasoned argument. Writing instruction using the alphabet was a source of civic power in Athens, but Greeks also found that the alphabet facilitated effective communication across cultures. Comparative studies of shared alphabets—especially with Phoenicians, Romans, and Etruscans—reveal how writing could facilitate cross-cultural communication needed for trade and supply.[11] Correspondingly, from this perspective, we can see that instruction in writing was an indispensable aid in recording commercial transactions and

10 Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, three volumes (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1943–1945).

11 Richard Leo Enos, *Roman Rhetoric: Revolution and the Greek Influence* (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2008) 3–22. Richard Leo Enos, "Scriptura Etrusca: A Prolegomenon to Roman Rhetoric," *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West*, eds. Shane Borrowman, Robert L. Lively and Marcia Kmetz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 35–60.

trade agreements across cultures. Although there is no substantial body of evidence, it is likely that such instruction was done by informal/personal mentor–apprentice interaction as a feature of commercial trading. Alphabetic writing instruction became not only a source of civic power but a necessity for cross-cultural communication.

The Evolution of Writing Instruction from a Functional Craft-Skill to an Intellectual Art

Not the least of the alphabet's public consequences was that the need for a scribe became less essential. This type of **craft literacy**—such as the vocation of a scribe necessary for mastering the intricacies of Egyptian hieroglyphics—shifted to largely civic and administrative functions. Yet, the increased dissemination of writing brought into existence another kind of craft literacy: the need for artisans who could inscribe and engrave this new writing for widespread public reading. The evolution to public literacy in ancient Greece took several hundred years. As indicated above, alphabetic writing existed around 800 BCE and was probably in existence quite some time prior to that date. Knowledge of alphabetic writing and its widespread instruction, however, are two different matters. During this early period, the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, Greece was in a transitional phase known as "preliterate."[12] Alphabetic writing had some

Figure 1.3 Bone Styli used for writing.
Courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

12 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 13 *et passim*.

use and its familiarity was spreading—doubtless due to its utility in trade and commerce—but was not widely employed. In brief, writing is apparent throughout Greece but there is little evidence that most people knew how to read and write to any extent that widespread, public literacy could be claimed. In this respect, writing instruction itself was in a transitional period, evolving from a specialized craft into what would later become a public skill. By the Archaic Period (late seventh century to early fifth century BCE) early manifestations of writing instruction as a craft are apparent in two dominant groups.

The first group of (writing) composers are the Homeric rhapsodes who were mentioned earlier. These bards were the artists who orally transmitted the tales of Homer and other forms of poetry. As the etymology of their Greek name implies, they were "stitchers of odes" who wove their compositions into tales. Rhapsodes evolved into a specialized guild out of the early Homeric *aoidoi*, the earliest balladeers that appear within the works of Homer.[13] As the singers of Homeric tales, rhapsodes took pride in being the linguistic guardians of the "proper" pronunciation of Homeric Greek, acquiring their reputations from their ability to orally chant recitations of Homeric "literature" and to do so in a tongue that was becoming increasingly distant from the numerous, evolving dialects of Greece.

Eventually, Homeric rhapsodes began a system of writing instruction that was designed to preserve the words—which also meant the oral quality—of the Homeric tongue. In an effort to record, and thereby preserve Homer, as well as capture the euphony of Homeric speech-patterns, many rhapsodes began to use writing as an aid to memory and soon saw writing instruction as a part of their craft. Rhapsodes transmitted Homeric literature from mentor to apprentice. Such a form of writing instruction was far from public. Rhapsodic composition was more akin to the specialized craft-skill mentioned earlier, an orthographic system used to preserve the oral features of epic poetry. Accounts indicate that the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that we have today came about because a group of rhapsodes gathered to codify and transcribe the spoken tales of Homer called the Pisistratean Recension (*c.* 565 BCE), thus stabilizing and establishing the inscribed text.[14] Instruction in the writing of Homeric discourse was pragmatic but, as evidenced by Plato's *Ion*, this instruction was learned for the purposes of preserving semi-divine (oral) literature. The *Ion* further helps to reveal the mentality of rhapsodes toward composing and writing instruction, because the dialogue-character Ion believes that his abilities come from divine inspiration.[15] Hellenic rhapsodes are among the first

13 For a Homeric example of an *aoidos*, see the early passage of *Odyssey* IX.

14 Richard Leo Enos, *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle*, revised and expanded edition (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2012) 38–39, 70.

15 Plato, *Ion* 533D–535A.

Greeks to show expert ability in writing and its instruction as a group. Their educational practices, however, were not directed to the public but rather to other apprentice rhapsodes, who learned reading and writing as a technology to help sustain Homeric oral features of expression.

The second major group of individuals to demonstrate any sort of expertise in writing that required specialized instruction was the artisans of the Archaic Period, the public workers, or *demiourgoi* of the *thetes* (labor) class.[16] A few inscriptions, possibly dating back to the Homeric period, have been discovered on objects that have words and phrases scratched on the surface. As we move through the Archaic Period and into the Classical Period, this form of writing becomes much more stylized and even a part of the art itself. In one example from the British Museum, a neck-amphora storage jar portrays a rhapsode with words "spoken" from the figure's mouth (Museum number: 1843, 1103.34). As Greek plastic art evolved, writing became a common trait and was associated with physical features of artistic expression. In short, the sort of prestige of stylized writing associated with earlier Egyptian hieroglyphics or later medieval calligraphy became (to a limited degree) part of the art of ancient Greece. Names of gods and heroes were included on pottery, and artisans dedicated objects of art—probably at the request of their patrons—to beneficiaries of these precious gifts.

The association of writing with fine art also applies to architecture. Existing monuments and public structures reveal that artisans inscribed buildings; lists of individuals and chronicles of events label important structures throughout Greece.[17] The ever-increasing occurrence and popularity of this form of public writing makes it apparent that artisans, coming from the *thetes* or labor class, learned to write first as a part of their building trade and later as a trade in its own right. Thus, in two specialized occupations that seem somewhat distant from each other—the Homeric rhapsode and the common laborers of the *thetes* artisans—writing was learned as craft literacy.

The writings of Homeric artists and common artisans provided material that nurtured public literacy and more popular forms of writing instruction. The proliferation of writing was directed more and more toward public readers; while writing was done by craft experts for defined tasks, the reading was often directed toward larger audiences. There should be little question about the connection between these early forms of writing instruction and the spread of literacy, but we should be cautious about making generalizations about instruction. While the presence of writing is

16 Kevin Robb, *Literacy & Paideia in Ancient Greece* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 129, 200.

17 See, e.g., James Fredal, *Rhetorical Action in Ancient Athens: Persuasive Artistry from Solon to Demosthenes* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006).

Figure 1.4 Abortive Abecedarium.
Courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

a sign of some sort of instruction, it is not a basis for inferring that such instruction was widespread or systematic, just as we cannot infer widespread literacy because some evidence of writing is known and discovered to be "public" at various sites throughout archaic Greece. These two forms of specialized literacy, however, should compel us to ask questions about the increasing spread of literacy, for while these two forms of writing comprise the bulk of our evidence, it is clear that there was some sort of ever-increasing literate public who were the beneficiaries. That is, the rhapsodes and artisans were the "composers" but they were composing for listeners and readers.

What writing we do have from "non-expert" writers during the Archaic Period is little more than child-like scratch marks (e.g., Figure 1.4). There is some evidence of ***abecedaria***—fragments of the alphabet written out for practice—that has been excavated this century from the Athenian Agora, which shows that the learning of "letters" did begin to have a place in the *sumposium* education of Athenian citizens. It is likely, however, that this education could better be classified as reading rather than writing instruction, for, with the exception of short, pithy phrases of dedication and brief messages, the literacy instruction of most Athenians was undertaken to benefit from what was written by the two groups of experts: the artists and the artisans of the Archaic Period. By degree of emphasis, writing was being composed and produced as a craft of a select group with reading being the emphasis for the remaining citizenry.

The Classical Period: Writing Instruction in the Service of Orality

As Athens moved from the Archaic and into the Classical Period of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the nature of writing instruction, and even its

purposes and benefits, altered dramatically. We have seen that writing during the Archaic Period was little more than a recording device learned as a trade in the service of the upper classes. The wealthier and more aristocratic classes of Athens did, as we have discussed, learn to write. During this early period, however, these classes learned writing as an aid in carrying out the routine and mundane tasks of the day. The emphasis in literacy for these upper-class Athenians was more in reading, and there is some anecdotal evidence to support the belief that reading knowledge was fairly widespread during the Classical Period, such as the labeling of voting disks by *deme* and the naming of individuals on **ostraca** (e.g., Figure 1.5).

The Classical Period ushered in significant changes in writing and, accordingly, altered its instruction dramatically. Writing-in-order-to-read was still (by degree) the orientation of the upper classes; however, that emphasis was shifting during the Classical Period. The Classical Period continued to utilize artisan writers but newer, more specialized writing tasks developed and with them more specialized writers emerged. The distinguishing feature of this emerging form of writing instruction is that it was done in the civic service of orality. The *progymnasmata* mentioned earlier provided elementary drills and exercises to students in general. In these sessions, students typically developed skills in composing narratives, fables, rudimentary issues and points of law, and argumentation. What is persistent in the exercises of *progymnasmata* is the close ties between oral and written composition. Later we will discuss how this close association between oral and written composition would be extended into the more sophisticated and advanced educational exercises that Greeks called ***melete*** and Romans called *declamatio*.

Figure 1.5 Ostraca used in fifth-century BCE voting.
Courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

Figure 1.6 Model of water-clock in use.
Courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

Athens offers the most explicit examples of writing in the civic service of orality. As democracy stabilized political procedures in Athens, the need for writers to record specific events of oral and civic functions increased. Writing was helpful in recording the oral deliberations necessary in the operations of the *polis*. That is, writing was used to record civic events that had more immediate and pragmatic impact. For example, during this period the ***hupogrammateus*** emerged as a secretary charged with the responsibility of recording oral transactions of civic deliberation. Such recordings were, on occasion, subject to time constraints since orators were limited by the *klepsydra* (water-clock) and, correspondingly, so were those who had to transcribe their speeches.[18]

The new conditions of civic-based writing in the service of orality modified the nature of writing instruction, at least writing instruction

18 Richard Leo Enos, "Inventional Constraints on the Technographers of Ancient Athens: A Study of *Kairos*." *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, eds. Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002) 77–88.

done for these specialized tasks. The momentary and fleeting discourse that is the nature of speech prompted the *hupogrammateus* to develop shorthand systems of writing called tachygraphy. Diogenes Laertius claimed that Xenophon was the first Athenian to use such shorthand symbols.[19] Unfortunately, we have no extant evidence of Xenophon's work—or any direct examples of systematic tachygraphy—until the early Christian centuries.[20] Even these artifacts, unfortunately, come from Egypt not Athens. If the account of Diogenes Laertius is accurate, however, we have a very important piece of evidence about the (r)evolutionary emphasis of writing moving into the upper classes. Xenophon was from an old and established aristocratic family. The fact that he would "create" a writing heuristic to aid orality provides an instance of the diminishing stereotype of writing as a lower-class functional craft while, at the same time, demonstrating its use by a member of the upper classes of Athenian society.

There is, however, other, more abundant evidence of writing in the service of orality and its ever-increasing emphasis among the upper classes of Athens during the Classical Period. Much of the credit for integrating higher-level writing functions goes to the Sophists. One of the most important aspects of this advanced, and often, foreign education is that many of these Sophists readily assimilated writing into the course of advanced studies, thereby encouraging the view that writing was a part of advanced instruction. Practice in compositions for the law courts, public, and ceremonial occasions, and the writing of history all revealed more sophisticated dimensions (and benefits) of the writing process. These educators, concentrating on advanced studies, encouraged extending education into young adulthood.

Logography is one illustration of how a long-established pragmatic skill evolved into a higher-level study of writing in the service of orality made popular by Sophists. The concept of "logography" existed during the Archaic Period as a general skill to record narrative accounts of important events. In this respect, early chroniclers and even Herodotus—called the father of historians—would be considered "logographers."[21] Here too, however, this form of writing would alter during the Classical Period because it was applied to the immediate constraints of orality. During the Classical Period logography evolved to become a profession in which Sophists would compose speeches for others, normally during legal proceedings where each male citizen was compelled to speak for himself. Logographers wrote these speeches for a price and instructed clients in their "readings," that is, in the preparation for their oral performance in

19 Diogenes Laertius, *Xenophon* 2.48.

20 Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum* 489.

21 Enos, *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle* 75–92.

court. Our evidence is that the most successful of logographers, such as Lysias, and quite possibly Isocrates, were popular because they composed oral arguments well for others. At least some of these logographers, such as the two mentioned above, came from the upper classes but, due to financial misfortunes, had to use these writing skills to earn a living.

The success of logographers began to alter the perception of writing, which came to be viewed more and more as an intellectual process. Eric Havelock has done much research that reveals the importance of writing in the service of orality. One of Havelock's most important (but debated) claims is that such writing served to facilitate abstract thought. That is, writing speeches helped to stabilize oral arguments by shaping and molding words that would otherwise be thought of as "winged" if left to the fleeting notions of oral discourse and memory alone.[22] Sophists sought audience agreement—and consequently validity through their approval—on the merits of specific cases and probable reasoning, as opposed to appealing to universal, fixed principles. This *ad hoc* orientation developed into **casuistry** where likely, but contingent, arguments dominated on case-specific issues. The ability of the Sophists as logographers to write out and refine such probable arguments provided a powerful, effective heuristic for those listeners who sat in judgment.

There are other arenas that illustrate the impact of writing in the service of orality during the Classical Period of Athens. One such kind of writing might best be considered as "composing for the gods." Most of our attention to writing instruction has been oriented toward the more civic functions typical of Athenian rhetoric, that is, writing used in the orally based activities of the *Ekklesia*, or public assembly, and the courts. Our current view of writing instruction for epideictic discourse—rhetoric that is often ceremonial and occasional—has been limited and narrow, with the exception of Donovan J. Ochs' *Consolatory Rhetoric*.[23] If, however, we extend our notion of epideictic rhetoric to other ceremonial functions, we can begin to see better the pervasive influence of writing in the service of orality.

The best examples of writing instruction for the arts of expression are Hellenic literary festivals. The Olympic Games are the most famous of all Greek festivals. There were, however, other religiously rooted festivals, such as the Isthmian Games of Corinth and the games held at Delphi. These games included athletic contests, but often literary and oratorical contests as well. Although many of these major games were held every four years, other smaller games were held annually. All this is to say that

22 Stacia Dunn Neeley (Campbell), D. B. Magee and Richard Leo Enos, "The Very Rhetorical Mr. Havelock: A Re-View Essay." *Rhetoric Review* 17 (Fall 1998) 194–204.

23 Donovan J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

literary and oratorical contests were widely held and, based on epigraphical evidence, regularly attended by spectators and participants from several city-states.[24]

Contest winners from these literary games were recorded on marble and other durable material, often listing not only events but also the names and origins of victors. The games held at the Amphiareion at Oropos, a site approximately 30 miles from Athens, show that Athenians regularly participated in these contests, which included such events as satire, comedy, rhapsodic odes, and tragedy.[25] It is reasonable to infer that these Athenians, as well as contestants from throughout Greece, would have used writing to aid in the preparation and recording of their literary performances. This sort of composing, done to honor the gods at various religious festivals, reveals that the heuristics of writing were becoming a part of the creative process. Although these festivals never lost their oral emphasis, it is also reasonable to assume that instruction in poetry and other fine arts of expression would have increasingly incorporated writing into preparation. Other types of material evidence lend support to the claim that writing was becoming integrated into artistic expression and education in general. Vase paintings, for example, depict youths practicing their musical instruments, reciting aloud and learning their letters—all within the same scene (e.g., Douris's "school" cup, Staatliche Museen [2285], Berlin). Writing instruction was becoming a part of the arts of expression and increasingly recognized as an aspect of higher education as vividly revealed by the educator and stateman Isocrates. However, this evolution of writing instruction as an intellectual activity was not without controversy and resistance. Prominent thinkers such as Plato saw writing, particularly as taught by Isocrates, as a direct threat to the *paideia* of educational ideals and made his criticism of the dangers of such writing instruction explicit in his dialogues *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.

The Controversy over Writing Instruction in Ancient Athens after 450 BCE

One of the most important features in the development of writing instruction in ancient Greece was that it evolved into a public activity. Our most complete sources of this functional writing come from Athens, but it is clear, primarily through the efforts of such epigraphists as L. H. Jeffery, that such writing occurs throughout Greece.[26] This social dimension to writing had an enormous impact not only on shaping writing instruction, but also in sharing the advantages of literacy beyond the individual expert. That is, a community of writers and readers could benefit from the

24 Enos, *Roman Rhetoric* 152–163.

25 Enos, *Roman Rhetoric* 155–163.

26 L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

interaction of comment and response, much like a collection of individuals can benefit from the interchange inherent in the oral dynamics of discussion.

The transformation of writing from craft to art during this period is both caused by, and reflected in, the writing instruction of Athenian society. As will become apparent, our best way of seeing the evolution of writing instruction, from a labor-skill to its intellectual flowering with the school of Isocrates, is to understand the social and cultural forces in operation that brought about this pedagogical transformation. More and more, writing was becoming a part of daily life at all class levels. Recent archaeological evidence, excavated just last century at Athens' Agora, demonstrates the pervasiveness of everyday writing as we move through the Archaic and into the Classical Period.[27] Personal notes of affection appear on pottery. Such personal possessions as spear-butts are labeled for ownership and even shopping lists for parties have been scratched on pottery fragments. As mentioned above, several *abecedaria*, lists of the alphabet made for writing practice, have also been unearthed. The majority of this writing is not sophisticated and certainly does not match some of the elegant inscriptions of the artisans mentioned earlier. What it does demonstrate, however, is that writing, while still used for functional purposes, is much more widely used by Athenian citizens and becoming a part of their culture.[28] By the fifth century BCE wood tablets whitened with gypsum (*leukomata*) were posted on sites in the Agora such as the precinct of the Eponymous Heroes for making temporary public announcements and providing another source of evidence of civic literacy.[29]

The evidence mentioned above tells us that writing was studied increasingly for its everyday use and demonstrates a level of widespread literacy that we could only speculate on earlier. During the fifth century BCE, however, Athenian education underwent significant changes. As advanced levels of education assimilated writing, its importance shifted from a functional tool to a heuristic for advanced thought. The upper levels of Athenian society began to complement their ever-increasing emphasis on reading with writing to clarify and record advanced intellectual problems. By the Classical Period the traditional, Homeric form of education was being replaced. Music lost emphasis and writing gained increasing status. This influence of writing instruction, which flowered during the subsequent Hellenistic Period, grew into the *paideia* of Greek education, eventually reaching all levels. The small child (*paidion*) learned letters necessary for reading and writing from the grammatist

27 Richard Leo Enos, "Writing Without Paper: A Study of Functional Rhetoric in Ancient Athens." *On the Blunt Edge: Technology in Composition's History and Pedagogy*, ed. Shane Borrowman (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2012) 3–13.

28 Enos, "Writing Without Paper" *passim*.

29 B. F. Cook, *Greek Inscriptions* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1990) 6; Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 245.

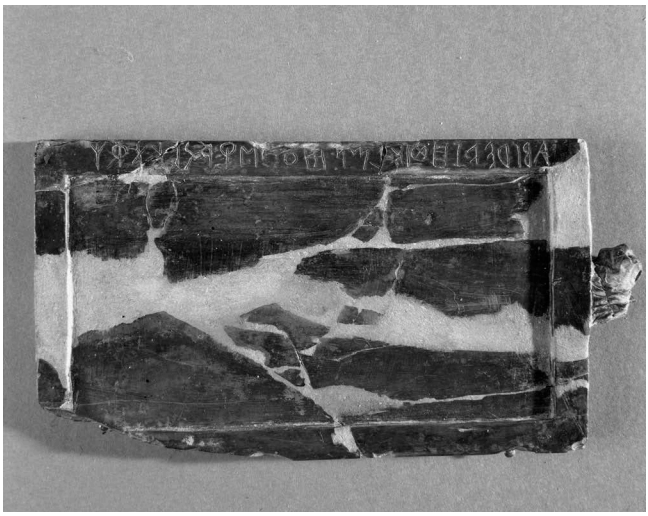

Figure 1.7 Etruscan writing tablet with Etruscan alphabet, *c.* 675–650 BCE.
Museo Archeologico Nationale, Florence, Italy. Permission of Art Resource, image reference, ART69188.

(*grammatistes*) at the primary level. We commonly associate the teaching of writing by using wooden tablets coated with wax as a method of Roman instruction, but wooden tablets also were used by Greeks, Egyptians, and even Etruscans (see Figure 1.7).[30] In Greece, these instructional wood tablets were called *déltos*, *pínax*, or *pyxíon* and were coated in wax (*kērós*, *málthē*, or *máltha*) and were in use as early as the fifth century BCE.[31] The writing on these wax-coated tablets was done with a *stilus* that was called in Greek *graphís*, *grapheîon* or *graphídion* and was kept in its own case or *graphiothékē* (see Figure 1.3).[32] It was not uncommon for the *stilus* to have a rounded end that was used to rub out work and smooth the wax for further exercises.[33]

To an older child (*pais*), more advanced levels in reading and writing were taught by the grammarian (*grammatikos*). This secondary emphasis, for children ranging from 7 to 14 years of age, covered the more sophisticated levels of exposition, interpretation, and criticism. The culmination of the grammarian's curriculum was instruction in *krisis*, or arguing for an evaluative judgment. From the ages of 15 to 20 males underwent military education as *epheboi*. In

30 David Diringer, *The Book Before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1982) 27–29.
31 Diringer, *The Book Before Printing* 27–29; Herodotus 7. 239.
32 Diringer, *The Book Before Printing* 553.
33 Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* 155.

Athens, this form of education was formalized in an Ephebic College. We even have a later (*c.* 200 CE) inscription list of foreigners who came to Athens to complete their ephebic education.[34] Finally, and normally after required military service, an adolescent male (*meirakion*) could elect to study rhetoric with a Sophist. As discussed earlier, there is archaeological evidence revealing that by the Hellenistic age writing instruction in other Greek cities such as Teos was co-educational and that advanced instruction in writing was taught to young women.[35]

Writing instruction in ancient Greece was constantly evolving. The traditional oral features of education were being complemented by writing instruction at all levels. Preliminary exercises in rhetoric, *progymnasmata*, were introduced that extended the earlier training of grammarians by integrating oral and written assignments that ranged from the analysis of fables to composing arguments for legal and popular debate. The advanced form of these exercises, *melete*, had a very important impact not only on writing instruction but also on the perception of rhetoric itself. Russell argues that instruction in this type of composition played "a large part in the development of literature."[36] Proficiency in complex declamatory exercises became a feature of higher education in the Greco-Roman world. Writing, brought into existence to aid in the pragmatic needs of functional speech, became in effect an art valued for its aesthetic merits. *Melete*, and later Roman *declamatio*, represents, for Russell, a shift of rhetoric "from discourse to literature."[37]

Manuals, or *technaī*, were present even before rhetoric emerged as a formal discipline of study. As has been discussed, the very earliest efforts at teaching discourse occurred when Greece was still an exclusively oral culture, and these methods were taught by verbally passing down techniques from mentor to apprentice, such as the earliest rhapsodes of Homeric literature. As writing emerged, these principles were recorded in an effort to replace orally based memory and it is out of this nascent period that manuals emerged. These handbooks became popular, and were done by some of the most prominent of rhetoricians. It is widely believed, for example, that Isocrates wrote a *technē*.[38] However, other than fragments, many of these earliest manuals are lost, but we do know from other surviving sources that these manuals offered systematic procedures for learning how to speak and write effectively. These manuals were doubtlessly popular and numerous prior to Aristotle, who sought to gather and collect

34 Cook, *Greek Inscriptions* 24–25.

35 Richard Leo Enos and Terry Shane Peterman, "Writing Instruction for the 'Young Ladies' of Teos: A Note on Women and Literacy in Antiquity." *Rhetoric Review* 33.1 (Winter 2014) 1–20.

36 Russell, *Greek Declamation* 3.

37 Russell, *Greek Declamation* 15.

38 Jeffrey Walker, *The Genuine Teachers of This Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2011) 86 *et passim*.

many of these *technaī* so that he could make a thorough study of rhetoric as a discipline. Aristotle's work, the *Synagoge technon*, is itself lost, but we know from ancient accounts that Aristotle had been able to gather together many of these early handbooks.[39] The only fully developed extant *technē* of ancient Greek rhetoric is the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, a work that was published during the time of Aristotle.[40] While many historians of our discipline view Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as the first, coherent "theory" of Greek rhetoric, it is widely believed that his work is based in part on his study and evaluation of these earlier handbooks. The use of manuals continued throughout ancient Greek writing instruction and on into Roman rhetoric. In fact, the earliest extant Roman manual (*ratio*), the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, is believed to be little more than principles of rhetoric that were borrowed from earlier Greek manuals and adapted to Latin. Other than the earliest, purely oral period, the history of rhetoric has always included the development and use of manuals as handbooks for the study and teaching of rhetoric.

The growing popularity of writing instruction that would be stabilized and fully integrated into Greek education was not assimilated without resistance. Plato expressed great concern about writing because he felt that it destroyed the dynamic and interactive exchange that took place in the (necessarily) oral deliberations of dialectic. Socrates' views against writing instruction are well expressed through the dialogues of his student Plato, particularly in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. Plato viewed writing as a constraint because it mediated the essential function of primary, direct, oral interaction between thinkers. Plato valued memory and believed that writing would limit and devalue the important role that memory has in internalizing knowledge. Plato further believed that writing instruction by Sophists was not an instrument for knowledge but rather only a pragmatic technical skill that should be seen as such and nothing more.[41]

Plato's criticism of writing instruction as taught by the Sophists was echoed by his student Aristotle, who clearly believed that these "speech-composers" (*oí technologoûsi*) emphasized peripherals and missed the heuristic potential for rhetoric. In the opening passages of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle criticizes "technographers" who taught and practiced only the surface techniques of their craft and did not understand rhetoric as an "art," that is, a *technē* for creating rational proofs.[42]

39 Keith V. Erickson, "The Lost Rhetorics of Aristotle," *Landmark Essays on Aristotelian Rhetoric*, eds. Richard Leo Enos and Lois Peters Agnew (Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998 [now New York, NY and London: Routledge]) 3–13.

40 For a reference to writing in the text see [Anaximenes], *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1445b.

41 Plato, *Protagoras* 236C, D.

42 Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a–155b.