

A Short History of Writing
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Ancient Greek Writing Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

The history of writing instruction in ancient Greece is a record of the discoveries of the powers of literacy and how those powers could be taught systematically. At first glance, the study of writing instruction does not appear to seem complex. If we consider literacy to be nothing more than learning the skill of how to read and write, then writing instruction would be nothing more than learning the rudiments of a technique that would serve as an aid to memorizing speech. Before writing, Greece was exclusively an oral culture. Thoughts and sentiments were preserved by long-term memory and transmitting those thoughts from mentor to apprentice. While being facile in long-term memory was valuable in Greek culture, it was hardly

a widespread trait. Skill in memorizing massive amounts of language for preservation and transmission became viewed as a specialized craft that required years of training. That is, controlling Greek "literature" was the job of the expert and not a broad-based public skill. The ties between writing, reading, and speech were particularly strong in ancient Greece. In fact, there is very good reason to believe that most ancient Greeks never learned to read silently. From this perspective, writing instruction would be a tremendous skill if it were nothing more than simply a recording device. It is also important to note that the alphabet made this recording device very easy to learn and to use. Mastery in writing and reading allowed not only a broad dissemination of literature but also a skill that could be acquired by children. Writing provided the conditions under which not just an expert but a community, such as Athens, could become literate. In short, writing had demonstrable benefits over techniques to stimulate long-term memory, the procedure used by early Greeks to capture the fleeting, momentary utterances of oral discourse.

There is little doubt that writing instruction aids oral discourse by "freezing" speech so that it is stable. Yet, stabilizing oral discourse through writing offers many more benefits than merely holding the language still and in place. Ancient Greeks realized that extraordinary abilities in memory were the gift of a few, and that skill was subject to the fragility of personal recall. As this chapter shows, however, ancient Greeks realized that writing offered benefits that extended far beyond the value of recording oral discourse for preservation. Writing also facilitated the production and quality of discourse. By its very nature, the act of writing required authors to slow down their thinking much more than was necessary in oral discourse. Moreover, once written, that discourse was readily available for pondering, recall, and self-reflection. From this perspective, writing was thought to help stimulate abstract thought, creativity, and long-term problem-solving. Although these concepts sound contemporary, and even progressive, they were features of writing that ancient Greeks recognized and, accordingly, assimilated into their writing instruction. The history of writing instruction in ancient Greece is much more than mastery of lock-step prescriptive methods; it is the evolution of a mentality that came to understand that writing was itself a heuristic for both preserving and creating new modes of thought and expression.

Ancient Greeks also recognized that writing had another, social dimension. One of the most important features in the development of writing instruction in ancient Greece was that it evolved into a public activity. That is, by comparison with other contemporary cultures, more members of Greek societies, such as Athens, participated in reading and writing. 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. Not the least of these advantages was that writing served as a recording device and as an activity that facilitated widespread complex thinking. That is, a community of writers and readers could benefit from the interaction of comment and response, much like a collection of individuals could benefit from the interchange inherent in the oral dynamics of discussion. One of the earliest and most important features to understand about writing instruction in ancient Greece is that it became a public activity. Writing instruction was done in Greek not just to train the scribe but to enrich education by facilitating higher-level modes of thought and expression than had been available through oral discourse alone. Yet, awareness of the cognitive benefits of writing was not immediately recognized and was the subject of considerable debate among thinkers such as Plato. To understand the evolution of writing instruction in Greece, the issues inherent in determining the place of writing instruction in Greek education, and its eventual impact on higher education, some modern presumptions about writing and its relationship to thinking must first be reassessed.

In one respect, writing is a technology and, in ancient Greece, the alphabet was the essence of that technology. By modification and adaptation of earlier Semitic scripts, ancient Greeks were able to construct a writing system that evolved to only twenty-four 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 reconstruct the vocal patterns of everyday speech. The alphabet was ingenious in its simplicity and monumental in its impact. Earlier writing systems were, by comparison, slow, cumbersome, complex, and imprecise. The alphabet, however, could be easily learned, written, and readily remembered, even by children. The Greek alphabet facilitated public writing instruction and became a feature of widespread education. In his volume, *A Study of Writing*, I. J. Gelb asserts that the Greek development of the alphabet was "the last important step in the history of writing."¹ For those of us who wish to better understand the history of writing instruction in ancient Greece, the opposite view would seem to be true. That is, the devising of the alphabet signaled the beginning of writing instruction in ancient Greece. The simple, yet ingenious, manufacturing of letters that captured each discrete sound into a group of twenty-four symbols would appear to be the first—not the last—of achievements. If we take Gelb's remark to mean that the structure of writing was so ingeniously simplified that any child could learn to write and, therefore, any advancement would only be limited to adding or modifying letters, then we would agree with Gelb's view. Writing instruction in ancient Greece, however, was much

¹I. J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1974) 184.

more than imparting directions about the arrangement of individual letters of the alphabet. It soon became apparent to Hellenic practitioners, educators, and politicians that the alphabet was the medium for unleashing 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 refining patterns of thinking.

CAUTIONS AND CONDITIONS

Reconstructing the history of writing instruction in ancient Greece is difficult because, from a retrospective view, modern writers' perspectives and capacities toward writing are assumed to be similar to those of Hellenic writers and, correspondingly, it is assumed that instruction would be based on such shared traits. Starting with the presumption that writing and its instruction are synonymous with current practices presupposes many unwarranted inferences. For example, writing is such a powerful intellectual force that it is used as a marker for the educational and intellectual achievements of societies. By modern standards, writing is both a skill and a sign of higher education. We go so far as to judge not only individuals but also entire societies by labeling them as "literate" or "non-literate." Societies that demonstrate any evidence of literacy, widespread or otherwise, are lauded for their sophistication and erudition. Such present-day stereotyping and generalizations distort our understanding of the development of writing instruction and its evolution toward importance in ancient Greek culture. Generalizations about writing and its instruction are based on the belief that *literacy* is univocal in meaning. Correspondingly, we associate literacy with the privileged; that is, if any members of a society were literate, it would be the rich, the powerful, and the intellectual luminaries. We tend to think that those who have learned how to read and write possess some kind of cultural superiority or, what may be even more inaccurate, that these individuals are representatives of their cultures. One of the most fundamental current assumptions about writing instruction centers on the association of literacy with intellectual capability. Writing today is viewed as a heuristic, a conceptual tool, for problem-solving and as a mark of creative artistry. By current standards, those who are eloquent are judged so through literacy. The command of language, by the standards of present society, is evaluated by control over written language.

As we learn more about the history of writing instruction, especially with respect to ancient Greece, we realize that many of our current assumptions, such as those just outlined, are inaccurate. This chapter shows

that *literacy* has a range of meanings, that facility in writing was not always the possession of the intellectual elite, and that writing underwent a transformation from a pragmatic labor-craft to an intellectual heuristic or skill for rational analysis and expression that eventually found its place in the higher education of Hellenistic Greece. By the standards of archaic Athens, writing was initially learned for functional purposes. The standards for eloquence were not written but oral expression. The impact of literacy was, in part, a change from the view of writing as a mundane recording device to the standard for artistic prose expression. The transformation of writing during this period was both caused by and reflected in the writing instruction of Athenian society. The best way to view the nature and evolution of writing instruction, from a labor skill to its intellectual flowering with the school of Isocrates, is to understand the forces in operation that brought about this change.

As mentioned earlier, another condition concerning writing instruction in ancient Greece needs to be underscored: its emergence from an oral society. Many groups of people, entire civilizations in fact, have come and gone without any known writing system. Walter J. Ong has argued that thousands of languages are known to have existed—doubtless many more have faded from memory—but only a few more than one hundred writing systems are known to have existed. Yet, the impact of those writing systems has been astounding in their facilitation of virtually every dimension of those literate societies: law, education, politics, and the ways histories are recorded. The relationships between these disciplines and orality and literacy were also important in the development of writing instruction in ancient Greece.

Writing instruction is a dynamic research topic, in part because its place and importance are only now beginning to be understood. This dynamism is particularly apparent in understanding the place of women in ancient Greek writing instruction. It must be stated at the outset that the role of women in the history of rhetoric in general, and Greek writing instruction in particular, is under-researched and woefully incomplete. There is, however, current scholarship that provides evidence indicating that women were far more involved in Greece's literate revolution than previously suspected. Recent scholarship by Andrea Lunsford, Susan C. Jarratt, C. Jan Swearingen, and Cheryl Glenn has made an important contribution toward understanding the place of women in Greek rhetoric (e.g., *Reclaiming Rhetorica* and *Rhetoric Retold*). There is evidence pointing toward the possibility of women participating in schools of rhetoric in Athens, teaching rhetoric, and even establishing their own educational centers. The constraint inherent in such research, however, is that the sources and social status in Athens, and many other Greek city-states, were so heavily oriented toward male control that the quest for primary evidence remains

the foremost concern before a full and detailed accounting can be made. Such scholars as those mentioned above, however, have demonstrated that the activity and place of women in writing instruction were far greater than suspected. Further, epigraphical evidence reveals the possibility that education for women in Athens may not be representative of all of Greece. All this is to say that the role of women in writing instruction in ancient Greece is a current and very exciting topic of inquiry.

The impact of writing instruction reveals much more than the nature of writing within a culture: it tells us about the culture itself. Few societies better illustrate the impact of literacy than ancient Athens. Given these preliminary cautions, what then should be said about Gelb's assertion about the alphabet as the last great achievement of writing? Gelb's assertion should be viewed as accurate and, at the same time, incomplete. It is true that the alphabet was a monumental achievement, but it is also true that this achievement set into motion a series of events that led to systematized writing instruction which, in turn, led to the emergence, perhaps for the first time, of a literate community: Athens.

THE HOMERIC TRADITION OF ORAL EDUCATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

Ancient Greeks relied on oral discourse to express thoughts and sentiments; their culture was oral, including their educational practices. If three adjectives were used to characterize what is known 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. Although 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. In most other settings, however, the responsibility of 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, engaging in athletic contests oriented toward military and agonistic skills, and acquiring (to some degree) proficiency in music.

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 was introduced, the family-bound education was cemented through orality. Home-based, family-centered education was strongly associated with kinship. Eventually, education was de-centered away from the family and home in two respects. First, centers, such as the gymnasium, evolved 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.² Second, instruction from the home was extended, and correspondingly diminished, by foreign educators (*metics*), who were attracted to Athens. In fact, many of the most famous Sophists were non-Athenian but saw in Athens a site that offered both the freedom and reward for their pedagogical skills. The novelty and diversity of these educators attracted students to their schools and away from family teachers and what amounted to home schooling.

Understandably, the mode of expression that dominated these earlier forms of education was oral. Orality is apparent even in the transmission of what is known today 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, lauding virtue and condemning vice. Homeric bards, or *oidoi*, 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 foundation for what ancient Greeks termed *paideia* or the virtue of intellectual excellence. Over the centuries, this Homeric heritage, which served as the basis for education, was challenged, and writing was a central issue 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 *paideia* 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 an instrument; that is, writing became a means for attaining intellectual excellence. 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 of the oral tradition of education.

²D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (London: Cambridge UP, 1983) 3.

The history of writing instruction in ancient Greece is a history of this transition from oral-only to oral-and-literate educational practices. Writing instruction was closely tied with, to the point of being inextricably bound to, orality. This relationship was fostered, in part, because of the bond that existed among reading, writing, and orality. Today, the language arts are treated in terms of either orality or literacy. In the most literal sense, writing instruction in ancient Greece was oral and literate, one and the same. Ancient Greeks, with rare exceptions, never learned to read and write silently. 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. Writing instruction in ancient Greece, then, was more closely tied with the oral/aural than it is today. To discuss writing instruction is implicitly to discuss reading instruction. Whereas the association between writing and reading is viewed as a natural connection today, the emphasis and expertise between writers and readers in ancient Greece diverged as writing was introduced and as writing/reading instruction evolved. Some groups, 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.

THE (R)EVOLUTION OF WRITING INSTRUCTION DURING THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

The impact of writing instruction was so dramatic that some scholars have characterized it as a "literate revolution." The introduction of writing and its instruction is considered, by some scholars, a startling and immediate "event," something akin to a society being invaded and taken over by an alien force. A more accurate representation, however, is that writing instruction was an evolution and that the impact of literacy, which flowered in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC, began centuries earlier. To understand the nature and impact of this literate revolution, we must first understand the "(r)evolution" of writing instruction.

As with some other groups, early (pre-alphabetic) Greeks both developed and borrowed symbols to transcribe and therefore "freeze" ideas. These symbols were both descriptive and representational in that the earliest Greek scripts (written well before the alphabet was invented) captured meaning through pictures (presentational symbols) and phonetic symbols to represent sounds. Influenced by contact with other groups of people, particularly the seafaring Phoenicians, early Greeks evolved their pre-alphabetic writing systems into syllabaries, pronunciation systems based on sound clusters. For example, a syllabic writing system would have three



FIG. 1.1. Abortive abecedarium (courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies: Agora Excavations).

signs approximating the vocalization for each cluster of sounds in the word *in-struc-tion*. The two most famous of these early Greek writing systems emerged during the Bronze Age and are known as Linear A and Linear B. At this early level, however, any sort of writing instruction was idiosyncratic and learned because of the pragmatic utility of the symbols, principally for commercial and economic reasons. These forms of writing were used for counting, recording, and remembering. These early, crude systems were not writing systems as we think of them today. They were not used to record long prose narratives or to help in the explication of complex modes of reasoning; rather, they were shorthand methods for recording that served as aids-to-memory (e.g., in recording jars of oil or number of oxen).

Although these early Greek writing systems had pragmatic functions, they were nonetheless difficult to learn, making instruction all the more selective. Early Greek syllabaries normally comprised scores of characters, requiring no small degree of commitment to learn. There is, moreover, no direct evidence of how this earliest Greek writing instruction was actually taught. The prevailing belief, however, is that writing instruction paralleled the normal patterns of early Greek instruction, particularly the habits for acquiring oral compositional techniques. Most likely, these complex systems were taught by mentor to apprentice and sustained by individuals who saw the benefits of recording economic data and possessions and had the resources to utilize it. These early Greek writing systems, the forerunners to the alphabet, helped to stabilize a system of expression that would be refined into the alphabetic script.



FIG. 1.2. Bone styli used for writing (courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies: Agora Excavations).

As mentioned earlier, what Gelb means by the last great invention—the development of the alphabet—is the finalization of a system that could be learned simply and used widely. The alphabet could be learned by children without great difficulty and, as ancient Greeks discovered, was useful in ways that extended far beyond counting and chronicling. The elegant simplicity of the alphabet made instruction much easier as well. That is, the “expert” did not need to know the scores of characters that are required by Greece’s earlier syllabaries but a comparatively few number of characters with distinct phonetic equivalents. This explains why earlier, pre-alphabetic writing instruction was a craft-tool used for the employment of economic concerns and not artistic production or educational development. The possibilities of the alphabet, however, were enormous, extending the benefits across society and making the system of writing so simple that it could be learned only a few years after birth.

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 scribe necessary for mastering the intricacies of Egyptian hieroglyphics, diminished 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 dissemination. In this respect, Gelb’s last phase of writing—the emergence of the alphabet—is the solidification of a system that would begin an evolution toward public literacy. The progress of that evolution is the progress and refinement of writing instruction. It is for these reasons that, while earlier Greek writing systems existed, the attention to the development of writing instruction started—not ended as Gelb implies—with the emergence of the alphabet in Greece around 800 BC. The technological ease of the alphabet meant that writing skill could be acquired publicly. The potential of the Greek alphabet meant that not only was communal literacy possible but also that writing instruction could be systematized.

EARLY WRITING AND SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION: ARTISTS AND ARTISANS

The evolution of literacy in ancient Greece took several hundred years. As already indicated, the emergence of alphabetic writing is known for certain around 800 BC 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 BC, Greece was in a transitional phase known as *preliteracy*. Alphabetic writing had some use and its familiarity was spreading (doubtless due to its utility in trade and commerce) but was not widely employed. In brief, writing was known throughout Greece, but there is little evidence that most people knew how to read and write to the extent that widespread, public literacy could be claimed. In this respect, writing instruction 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 BC), this early manifestation of writing instruction as a craft appeared in two dominant groups: the Homeric rhapsodes and the artisans of the Archaic period.

The Homeric rhapsodes were bards 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 *oidoi*, the earliest balladeers that appear within the works of Homer (e.g., *Odyssey*, IX). As the singers of Homeric tales, rhapsodes took pride in being the linguistic guardians for 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.

Homeric rhapsodes began a system of writing instruction which was designed to preserve the words and the oral quality of the Homeric tongue. In an effort to record, and thereby preserve Homer, as well as capture the correct orthography of the Homeric tongue, many rhapsodes began to use writing as an aid-to-memory and soon saw writing instruction as a part of their craft. Rhapsodes transmitted their thesaurus of Homeric literature from mentor to apprentice, and it is doubtless that through this process, writing was taught. Such a form of writing instruction, however, is far from public. Rhapsodic composition was more akin to the specialized craft skill mentioned earlier, a 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, thus stabilizing and establishing the inscribed text. Unlike the function of earlier, pre-alphabetic syllabaries, however, rhapsodes used this craft literacy in a way that would become a part of their art. 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 semidivine (oral) literature. Hellenic rhapsodes were among the first 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.

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. 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, however, this form of writing becomes much more stylized and even a part of the art itself. In one example, an urn portrays a Homeric rhapsode and words from Homer are "spoken" from the figure's mouth. 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. 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 build-

ing 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 *thetes* artisan—writing was learned as a 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 directed toward larger audiences. There should be little question about the connection between these early forms of writing instruction and the spread of literacy. Yet, generalizations about instruction should be made with caution. Although the presence of writing is a sign of

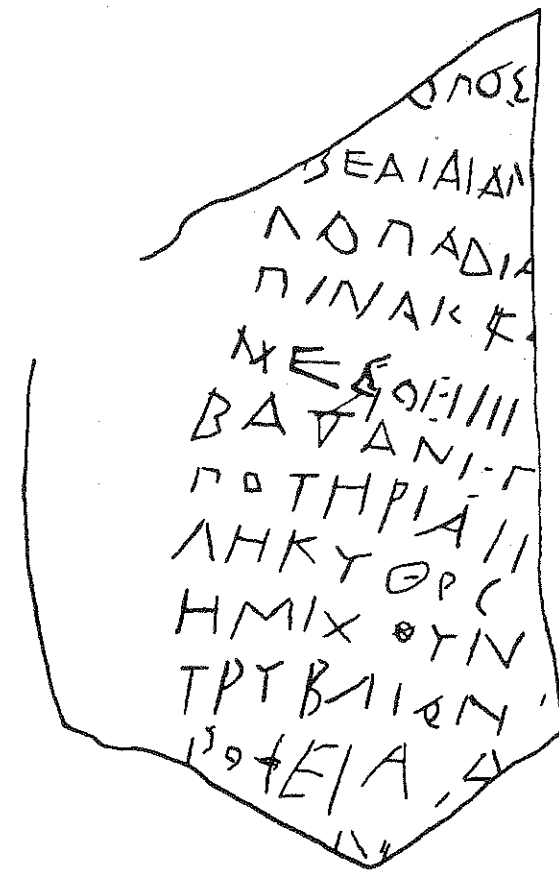


FIG. 1.3. A fourth-century BC shopping list (courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies: Agora Excavations).

some sort of instruction, it is not a basis for inferring that that instruction was widespread or systematic, nor can we infer widespread literacy from evidence of writing at various sites throughout archaic Greece. These two forms of specialized literacy, however, should evoke questions about the increasing spread of literacy, for while these two forms of writing comprise the bulk of the available 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 exists from "non-expert" writers during the Archaic period is little more than childlike scratch marks. 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" had 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 period into the Classical period of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, 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, indeed, 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 evidence to support the belief that reading knowledge was fairly widespread during the Classical period.

The Classical period, however, ushered in significant changes in writing and, accordingly, altered its instruction dramatically. While it is accurate to state that writing-in-order-to-read was still (by degree) the orientation of the upper classes, that emphasis was shifting during the Classical period. During the Archaic period, writing was done to stabilize texts for their permanence. Hence the works of Homer, the chronicling of histori-

cal events, and the finalization of laws dominated the more formal craft-skills of artisan writers. The Classical period continued to utilize artisan writers, but newer, more specialized writing tasks developed and with them more specialized writers. The distinguishing feature of this emerging form of writing instruction is that it was done in the service of orality. The *progymnasmata* provided elementary drills and exercises. 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 this chapter discusses how this close association between oral and written composition was extended into the more sophisticated and advanced educational exercises which Greeks called *melete* and Romans called *declamatio*.

Athens offers the most explicit example of writing in the 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 also helpful in recording the oral deliberations necessary in the operations of the *polis*; it was used to record events that had 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* (or water-clock) and, correspondingly, so were those who had to transcribe their speeches.

The new conditions of writing in the service of orality modified the nature of writing instruction, at least writing instruction 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 shorthand symbols.³ Unfortunately, there is no extant evidence of Xenophon's work or any direct examples of systematic tachygraphy until the early Christian centuries.⁴ Even these artifacts, unfortunately, come from Egypt, not Athens. If the account of Diogenes Laertius is accurate, however, it constitutes 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 craft while, at the same time, demonstrating its use by a member of the upper classes of Athenian society.

³Diogenes Laertius, *Xenophon* 2.48.

⁴Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 489.

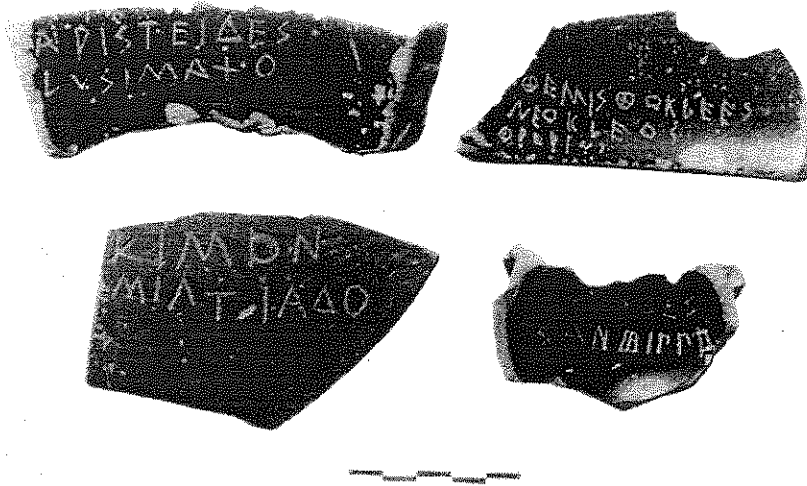


FIG. 1.4. Ostraka used in fifth-century BC voting (courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies: Agora Excavations).

There is, however, other, more abundant evidence of writing developing 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, 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. The concept of *logography* existed during the Archaic period as a specialized skill to record accounts of important events. In this respect, early chroniclers and even Herodotus, the father of historians, would be considered logographers. Here too, however, this form of specialized writing altered 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 individuals composed 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 before courts. Evidence shows 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, including Lysias and Isocrates, came from the upper classes but, due to their own 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 part of an intellectual process. Eric A. Havelock’s research has revealed 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.

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 “composing for the gods.” Most scholarly attention to writing instruction has been oriented toward the more civic functions typical of Athenian rhetoric, that is, the writing used in the orally based activities of the *Ekklesia*, or public assembly, and the courts. The current view of writing instruction for epideictic discourse (i.e., rhetoric that is often ceremonial and occasional) has been limited and narrow, with the exception of Donovan J. Ochs’s recently published *Consolatory Rhetoric* (1993). If, however, the notion of epideictic rhetoric is extended to other ceremonial functions, the pervasive influence of writing in the service of orality can be illuminated.

The best and most substantial examples of writing instruction being assimilated into the arts of expression are in the literary festivals actively attended by Athenians. The Olympic Games are, of course, 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, many other smaller games were held annually. In sum, literary and oratorical contests for Athenian citizens were widely available and, based on epigraphical evidence, regularly attended by Athenians both as spectators and participants.⁵

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 evidence from games held at the Amphiareion at Oropos, a site approximately thirty miles from Athens, show

⁵Richard Leo Enos, *Roman Rhetoric: Revolution and the Greek Influence* (Prospect Heights: Waveland, 1995) 87–96.

that Athenians regularly participated in these contests, which included such events as satire, comedy, rhapsodic odes, and tragedy. 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 processes 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 part of instruction in poetry and the fine arts would have increasingly incorporated writing into its training. Other types of physical 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. Writing instruction was becoming a part of the arts of expression.

WRITING INSTRUCTION IN ANCIENT ATHENS AFTER 450 BC AND THE *RATIO ISOCRATEA*

More and more, writing was becoming a part of daily life at all class levels. Recent archaeological evidence, excavated this century at Athens's Agora, demonstrates the pervasiveness of everyday writing throughout the Ar-

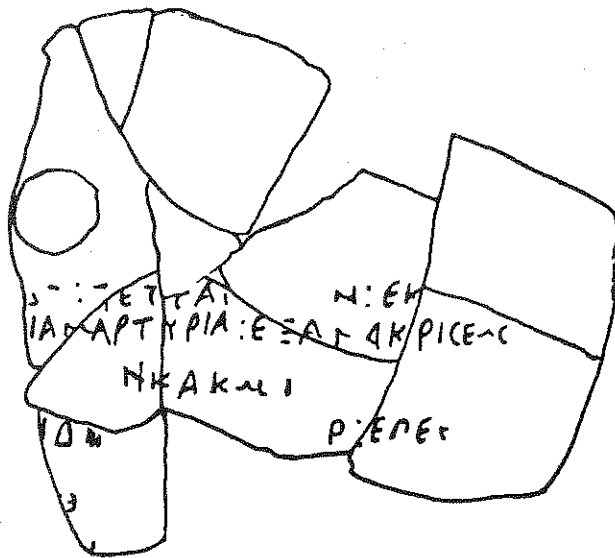


FIG. 1.5. Lid of a pot used to hold copies of written evidence, fourth century BC (courtesy of The American School of Classical Studies: Agora Excavations).

chaic and into the Classical period. Personal notes of affection appear on pottery. Such personal possessions as spear-butts are labeled for ownership. Shopping lists for parties have been scratched on pottery fragments. As mentioned above, several *abecedaria*, lists of the alphabet—writing for 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, was becoming more widely used by Athenian citizens.

The 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 also is in evidence throughout Greece. This evidence proves that writing was increasingly studied for its everyday use and that literacy was widespread. During the fifth century BC, 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.

The Classical period of Greece (the fifth and fourth centuries BC) is famous for the flowering of Athenian democracy, the emergence of intellectual luminaries, and the stabilization of higher education. Many historians of rhetoric believe that writing played a part in these achievements of the Classical period. As mentioned earlier, operations of government and the systematization of legal procedure, both of which remained predominantly oral, included writing as a way of recording and disseminating deliberative and forensic activities. Prominent thinkers and artists, moving away from a strictly oral tradition, included writing as a feature of work ranging from philosophy to history to theatrical composition. In short, by widespread practice, writing was manifested throughout Athenian society. For the purposes of this inquiry, it is important to see how this popularity relates to instruction.

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 grammarist (*grammatistes*) at the primary level. The older child (*pais*) was taught more advanced levels in reading and writing 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 Athens, this form of education was formalized in an Ephebic College. Finally, and normally after required military service, an adolescent male (*meirakion*) could elect to study rhetoric with a Sophist. It should be understood that this latter phase altered and upset the traditional form of education and faced resistance.

As mentioned earlier, 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."⁶ 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. That is, the mastery of technique became increasingly valued not only for its functional effect but also for its aesthetic merits. *Melete*, and later Roman *declamatio*, represented, for Russell, a shift of rhetoric "from discourse to literature."⁷

The changes in writing instruction that would be stabilized and fully integrated in Hellenistic and Roman education were not assimilated without resistance. Conservative citizens, those who wished to preserve the longstanding modes of education, saw writing instruction by Sophists as disrupting the strong family-oriented bonds of education associated with the *sumposium*. Others doubtless continued to see writing as a form of manual labor associated with the trades of the lower *thetes* class. If we understand these underlying tensions about writing and the uneasiness that some established families had over having their sons taught by non-Athenians, we can gain a much more sensitive understanding of Plato's objections to writing instruction and sophistic rhetoric in general, as well as Aristotle's cryptic but critical views of *technographers* in the opening passages of his *Rhetoric*.

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. The assimilation of writing into the highest forms of education can be credited, in large part, to the Sophists. Most Sophists were not Athenian citizens but *metics*, non-Athenian Greeks

⁶Russell 3.

⁷Russell 15.

who came to Athens to teach for a price. Some of these Sophists were famous orators and others were logographers. Many Sophists recognized the benefits of writing in higher levels of education and actively promoted the use of writing among their aristocratic Athenian students. As mentioned earlier, the *sumposium* methods of Athenian education were both oral and family centered. Sophists ruptured this traditional *paideia* both as foreigners and as non-family teachers of writing. Socrates's 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 a technical skill and should be seen as such.⁸

Plato's criticism of writing instruction as taught by the Sophists was echoed by his student Aristotle, who clearly believed that these technographers emphasized "supplements" 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 *techné* for creating rational proofs.⁹ An understanding of the emergence of writing instruction in higher education through the Sophists helps clarify Aristotle's views. At the time that Aristotle wrote his *Rhetoric*, writing was shifting in emphasis from an aid to oratory to an art unto itself. The revolution of literacy, however, was not so much that more and more people could read and write, although that appears to be the case, but rather that writing instruction could be a system for enhancing more complex patterns of thought and expression. It is important to recognize that in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle clearly sees writing as an important feature and treats it as a part of the process of thought and expression. In a rarely cited passage of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explicitly comments on how the exactness of writing composition (*akribestate*) aids in stylistic precision.¹⁰ Moreover, Aristotle later comments on how epideictic rhetoric is especially suited to writing, since it is intended to be read.¹¹ Aristotle's observation complements Russell's belief that *progymnasmata* and *melete* were forms of writing instruction that aided in the development of literature. It is also significant to note why Aristotle claims he wrote the *Rhetoric*. Aristotle asserts in the be-

⁸Plato, *Protagoras* 236 C,D.

⁹Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a-55.

¹⁰Aristotle 1413b.

¹¹Aristotle 1414a.

ginning of his *Rhetoric* that he wishes his work to be a corrective for the then current Sophistic practices. Given the views of Aristotle discussed above, it is clear that he believed that the Sophists did not fully realize the potential (*dynamis*) for writing as a heuristic for complex discourse. There is strong reason to believe, in addition and more specifically, that Aristotle was contesting the views of Isocrates, whose instruction he associated with the Sophists.

The advancement of writing instruction in ancient Greece came with Isocrates and his important school of rhetoric. Enormous changes took place in writing instruction from the Archaic into the Classical periods. Writing instruction moved from a labor skill to an intellectual process. This ultimate phase of its development, however, only became apparent with Isocrates and his school, which Friedrich Solmsen called the *Ratio Isocratea*.¹² Isocrates's views on writing are best understood by contrasting his mode of instruction with the practices of his contemporaries. During the Classical period, writing was used increasingly in higher education for the more aristocratic citizens. Sophists, in fact, saw writing as a feature of higher education, often incorporating writing instruction into the educational practices of their oldest and most distinguished students. By all accounts, however, Sophists did not fully recognize the heuristic potential of writing. Yet, where the Sophists valued the functional features of writing, Plato viewed writing and its instruction as a necessary evil at best, while Aristotle saw writing's potential as unrealized by the educators of his day. Plato had strong reservations about writing because it was a poor alternative to the dynamics of primary, direct oral interaction. Aristotle saw the Sophists (a group in which he unfairly included Isocrates) as embracing the technical features of transcription and recording. Aristotle clearly acknowledged advantages to writing and says so in his *Rhetoric*, but his recognition of writing as a dynamic heuristic process is nowhere as apparent as it is within the writings of Isocrates.

Isocrates's distinguished career as an educator is well chronicled by both his contemporaries and by current scholars. Yet, it is only recently that scholars have come to understand how important his view of writing instruction is in education and how it modified the concept of *paideia*. For Isocrates, writing instruction was an integral part of intellectual growth. Two of Isocrates's treatises are especially valuable in revealing his views on writing instruction. *Against the Sophists* was composed fairly early in his career. Isocrates wished to distance himself from the Sophists, to illustrate that his mode of instruction was based on his own version of philosophy. Attacking the pretentiousness of the Sophists, Isocrates sought to demon-

¹²Friedrich Solmsen, "The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric," *American Journal of Philology* 62 (1941): 190.

strate his genuine concern for the worth of the individual. At the same time, however, Isocrates also distanced himself from Plato. Isocrates's notions of *philosophy* and *truth* were not based on, or even derived from, Plato's belief that knowledge was predicated on universals nor the idea that the apparatus for securing such knowledge was through dialectic. Isocrates had his own philosophy and in *Against the Sophists*, he reveals how this knowledge is derived from a study of people and cultures, how social knowledge and normative values are a type of knowledge which, when applied, can help to promote justice and wise choices about human affairs, social conduct, and ethics. For scholars such as Werner Jaeger, Isocrates is the father of the humanities, principally because Isocrates's theory of knowledge and the grounding for action centers on, and is derived from, social and communal standards.

In many respects, the ideas that Isocrates presents in *Against the Sophists* are elaborated on in his later work, *Antidosis*. Written at the age of 82, and thus several decades after *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates's *Antidosis* is the statement of an educator whose reputation was secure. The *Antidosis* provides a much more detailed explanation of his views on education and the place of writing. For Isocrates, writing was a way of coming to understand. Yet, as he pointed out, his writings were not the writings of the sycophants of legal logographers but rather speeches composed with the intent of resolving social issues. His ideas about education were a synthesis of all that we associate with classical education: the conditioning of the body with the development of the mind; the orchestration of talent, practice and experience; the harmony that comes from self-knowledge and self-restraint. All of these ideas were, for Isocrates, "composed" through writing, for it was through writing, Isocrates believed, that wisdom and eloquence could be united in the pursuit of virtue (*arete*) and justice (*dike*). If we fail to be impressed by Isocrates's motives, we should be impressed by the seriousness of his beliefs. So complex was Isocrates's curriculum that, as pointed out in the *Antidosis*, some of his students studied three to four years. In short, writing was not, for Isocrates, a skill mastered as a technical craft nor something one learns only as a child. For Isocrates, writing was a central part of a process of social knowledge and language interaction that could only be mastered (when it is mastered) at the pinnacle of one's education and only with the most rigorous training of the best minds. A reading of these two treatises of Isocrates will not only make apparent why the *Ratio Isocratea* was a mainstay of classical education, but also why writing had emerged as one of its central features.

While Isocrates provides us with the particulars of his writing instruction in his *Antidosis*, we also can thank ancient authorities such as Plutarch, and modern scholars such as R. C. Jebb, H. I. Marrou, and R. Johnson, for synthesizing and expanding on Isocrates's comments. As already men-

tioned, Isocrates stressed relationships in his educational philosophy. He believed that mind and body should complement each other and that education was based on talent, practice, and experience.¹³ Marrou calls Isocrates's education the development of "mental culture."¹⁴ Isocrates believed in a broadly based education that included such subjects as history, political science, poetry, ethics, geography, literary studies, mathematics, and oral and written rhetoric. In fact, rhetoric was at the core of all of these subjects and composition was at the heart of his literary rhetoric. As Johnson points out, Isocrates's curriculum "is centered on rhetorical composition."¹⁵ Isocrates's writing instruction prepared students by developing writing as a source of civic power. As Jebb argues, writing was "recognized as a mode of influencing public opinion on the affairs of the day."¹⁶ In fact, if we were to condense Isocrates's educational philosophy, it would be that he considered writing instruction to be the art of expressing good judgments to others about civic matters.

Athens is well known for moving from an oral culture to an oral and literate culture. Some contemporary scholars, such as Havelock, consider this shift as nothing less than a "revolution." Isocrates's methods of writing instruction reveal his revolutionary mode of literary rhetoric. Although Isocrates taught many students over his own distinguished career, he instructed small numbers of students at a time, probably no more than eight. Study by imitation was important, but Isocrates also sharpened critical thinking by debate exercises, pitting students against one another in agnostic verbal warfare. There is also evidence that Isocrates encouraged his students to discuss and evaluate in groups, so that they would have comments coming not only from him but from peers as well. He taught excellence in writing through exercises that bonded oral with literary composition. Isocrates's students declaimed from written speeches and doubtless his own experiences as a logographer grounded his writing instruction.

In terms of writing instruction, Isocrates was the educator behind Athens's literate revolution, the educator who established the importance of writing in the classical curriculum. Of all the educators of the Classical period, Isocrates is credited as the first to realize the full potential for writing instruction, that is, as a method for facilitating thought and expression in higher education. Marrou has called Isocrates the first literate rhetorician. Isocrates, himself an excellent and prolific writer, encouraged writing

¹³Isocrates, *Antidosis* 187.

¹⁴H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982) 83.

¹⁵R. Johnson, "Isocrates' Method of Teaching," *American Journal of Philology* 80 (1959): 31.

¹⁶R. C. Jebb, *The Attic Orators from Antiphon to Isaeos*, vol. 2 (1875; New York: Russell, 1962) 47.

among his students, many of whom ranked among the most respected of Athenian citizens. In his writings, Isocrates makes it clear that education directed toward human concerns and immediate social issues is noble and a philosophical orientation in its own right, albeit a more pragmatic and directed one than that of Plato or Aristotle. If we judge educators by the merits of their students, we begin to see the merits of Isocrates's mode of instruction. His school produced not only leading politicians but also historians and educators. Isocrates established writing as endemic to the highest, most complex, and most serviceable of all levels of education. It is not too much to say, and significant to note, that no great thinker or statesman emerged in Athens after Isocrates who is not also known for his literate ability. Marrou has called Isocrates and Plato the two pillars upon which classical education was built. Although there are profound differences between Isocrates and Plato, especially in their views on writing instruction, there is no doubt that both were highly literate and that it is through their respective accomplishments in writing, and the writings of their students, that their importance and impact are measured.

CONCLUSION

How can we best understand how the "(r)evolution" of writing came about so quickly? How can we explain how thinkers such as Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle, who exhibited such control over writing that they became the standards of literacy for their culture, seemed to spring into existence so quickly? What we witness with such individuals as Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle is a phenomenon of rhetoric that is normally discussed only with reference to macroscopic views of cultures and societies: the phenomenon of *letteraturizzazione*. George Kennedy's treatment of *letteraturizzazione*—first introduced to readers of English in his 1980 edition of *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*—is as a concept that is meant to explain what happens when literacy is introduced into oral cultures. *Letteraturizzazione* is the process by which features of oral rhetoric are appropriated and applied to writing. The analogy would be akin to the principles of typing being transferred and applied to word processing on the computer. Early versions of personal computers borrowed heavily from the systems invented for manual typewriters. Over time, however, certain techniques that were helpful remained, whereas those techniques of typing that were not useful were removed or replaced with a more "user-friendly" approach. Personal computing evolved into its own system, but the residue of the principles of mechanical typing can still be found. Likewise, written rhetoric appropriated some of the techniques of oral rhetoric, discarded others, and created new heuristics that were

unique to writing. As with personal computing, written rhetoric still has the residue of some of its primary oral antecedents, such as a writer's "tone" and "voice."

This overview of writing instruction in ancient Greece reveals the evidence of the dynamic power of writing which, when realized, facilitates stunning intellectual advancements. What we see with individuals such as Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle is the phenomenon of *letteraturizzazione* manifested on a personal level. That is, all three of these individuals were so proficient with writing that they were able to apply that system to higher-level problems. Each manifested his power of advanced proficiency in writing in very different but dynamic ways. For Plato, writing was an aid to abstract concepts of ontology that refined his philosophy. For Isocrates, writing in terms of political issues and history helped to explain, account for, and interpret social activity and human conduct. For Aristotle, writing was an essential heuristic in his quest to provide taxonomical systems that enabled him to analyze and synthesize in order to organize phenomena for better understanding. Studying in the respective schools of these three thinkers meant not only studying their orientations but also studying how writing facilitated thought and expression in their respective domains of inquiry. The evolution of writing, much like a plane taxiing on a runway, builds speed until the moment that it is airborne. For these three thinkers, writing moved beyond a recording device to become an instrument that freed them and their students into the higher levels of abstract thought and expression.

The luxury of history is that we can retrospectively see that those educators who integrated writing instruction into the highest levels of education prospered. Isocrates, considered the first of the literate rhetoricians, established educational practices that became the cornerstone of Hellenistic education. In this respect, the school of Isocrates is a pivot between the culmination of classical education and the entry into the zenith of Greek education, the Hellenistic period. The evolutionary role of writing into and throughout the *paideia* of Greek education is the marker for such change. Perhaps Marrou's analogy of Plato and Isocrates as the classical pillars on which Hellenistic and Roman education was built should be modified, reconfiguring Marrou's imagery into a tripod, to include Aristotle's role in bringing writing instruction into the foundation of the classical curriculum.

The Key Role of Habit in Roman Writing Instruction

James J. Murphy

Key Concepts. *Habit (hexis) • Roman education as a system • Public schools • Concept of curriculum • Writing and oral language • Quintilian • Facility (facilitas) • Tutorial teaching • Isocrates's influence • Male-centered education • Five parts of Latin rhetoric • Cicero as model • Theory and practice • Triad of precept, imitation, practice • Inheritance from Greek pedagogy • Grammaticus • Rhetor • Grammar and rhetoric as precept • Seven steps of imitation • Form preceding free expression • Graded composition exercises (Progymnasmata) • Hermogenes and Aphthonius • Declamation • Sequencing • Modern criticisms of the system*

The remarkable thing about Roman education is that it took the comparatively loose ideas of Greek educators and molded them into a cohesive system, which instilled in its students a *Habit (hexis)* of effective expression. Moreover, the Romans embedded the system in a network of "public" schools (i.e., classrooms of numerous students, each under one teacher), which used a common curriculum throughout the Roman world.

Virtually every individual element found in the Roman educational system was inherited from the Greeks. What was not inherited, however, was the deftly designed correlation of these elements into a learning system that could be replicated worldwide as a tool of Roman public policy.