

Dissection of “the nut and bolts of college writing”

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Dissection of " The nut and bolts of college writing" Submitted by Sudhir Pathak Student ID No- 1153630 Instructor — Brenda McDermott Date- 2012-09-07 At the request of the association of writing instructors, to write a book review on " The nuts and bolts of college writing", this review will be published in the association's Annual student edition of the journal of writing instruction. The aim of the book review is to evaluate its relevance to contemporary university students. It is important that instructor seeks students' opinion on the book because student use the textbooks recommended by instructors. The author Michael Harvey is an Associated professor of Business Management at Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland. This book review of " The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing" will highlight some of the main themes that are discussed in the book. The book was specifically written to highlight, inform and persuade college students about the fundamentals of English writing. In order to achieve that goal Michael Harvey divided his instructions into eight easy to read chapters. My review will focus on how well he used his writing skills and power of persuasion to instruct his readers on how to improve their writing. The introduction of the book clearly states Harvey's purpose, " This book can help you write better college essays"(Harvey, 2003). The first sentence orients the reader to what the whole book is going to discuss, in this case, improving ones writing skills. From then on the book goes into detail on how easy it is for college students to make wrong assumptions on what good writing is all about. Harvey's efforts has made it possible for a clever and calculated decision by first highlighting the misconceptions or mistakes that college students make when writing; he does not appear too critical but

rather informative. This makes his audience more receptive to his suggestions and instructions when he suggests that college writing should be simple, conscience and focused (Harvey, 2003). His approach becomes more powerful because he is giving his audience instructions which appear to be just suggestions on how to write. Another useful devise that he uses extremely well is identifying with his audience. In the second chapter he begins his first statement by saying " Most of us think our writing is cleaner than it really is" (Harvey, 2003). This approach serves two purposes, one it humanizes him, secondly, he identifies himself with the audience. Readers become more receptive to his message because when they read his work, they realize that he also had to go through a transformation and improve his own writing skills. Once he has made that connection he goes on and identifies mistakes that writers make when they write for an audience. This makes his readers conscious of their own writing flaws. Harvey also describes how to use simple words we use on daily life to improve writing. In any type of writing, university essays or non-academic, word play is important. He explains that as a writer our words are the only tools to convince the reader (Harvey, 2003). Every word, phrase, clause or sentence put right through the essay determines the quality and essence of the composition (Harvey, 2003). His analysis that when we choose words we must know what we are trying to communicate to our readers highlights to college students the importance of clarity in college writing. His insight emphasizes the real aspect of writing, and how to write according for an audience. Generally, most students repeat sentences or words during the writing process. Harvey explains that this does not lead to clarity for readers.

He advocates that writers choose certain words, verbs sentence structures and punctuation that are easy to understand. This is the section where he writes about the importance of grammar. In this section he begins to introduce a lot of examples to support his argument. I think this approach served his purpose well because his readers have concrete examples of what he is trying to communicate to them. For college students who have to write about a lot of diverse issues, this gives them concrete examples from plays, politics and business to look at. Harvey also describes the importance of punctuation in college writings. He asserts that his book will help university students writing, help them to understand the use of signs and diction (Harvey, 2003). He also suggests that his book will help university students in writing that will earn better grades. However, he cautions them that writing burdened with improper use of punctuation and writing error could often not earn a student a commendable grade (Harvey, 2003). Before taking WRIT 1000, I never ever think about these punctuations, I used to perform poorly on writing because my writing had many comma splices and run on sentences. Part five of the book deals with the composition of sentence structures. The topic is tactfully entitled gracefulness. In this section Harvey goes through a number of examples to illustrate how sentence structure impacts how readers enjoy and understand the correct meaning of each sentence. Some of his examples show how a slight change in the composition of a sentence can have a different meaning and reading altogether. I think this was one of the most insightful topics because often time's readers can sometimes misread and misunderstand the true purpose the writer intended to make because of how the sentence was structured.

Harvey did not describe plagiarism and I recommend adding this topic in the book to emphasize the importance of avoiding plagiarism in college writing. The exclusion of plagiarism makes this book incomplete for students because most students struggle with plagiarism. In WRIT 1000, I struggled with plagiarism on my summary assignment because I did not understand the concept before writing summary assignment. However, Harvey adds generic formats, APA style guide, quoting effectively as some of the ways to avoid plagiarism in last part of the book. This does not adequately address the issue of plagiarism. In addition, Harvey does not include a glossary and an index nor does he define keywords. Some students may need the explanation of terms immediately after reading the chapter. However, the inclusion of glossary and index will be of greater appeal to student who may not be able to go through all the pages in the book. Harvey's book, 'The Nut and Bolts of College Writing' aims to help university student understand the ways to write properly and earn them better grades. Harvey seem confident about his book because he stated in his introduction that the book "main aim is showing how clarity and painless can make better writers and clear thinker" (Harvey, 2003). He also recognized that there are negative consequences for his audiences if they write in the same way that he communicated to them in his book. I think this book was carefully written and the instructions within provide students with an opportunity to improve their writing skills. The chapters were divided and arranged in an easy to follow order that took the reader in a controlled and gradual cumulative process. It is my opinion that the book is suited for college students because it identifies some of the flaws and misconception that college student's fall

into when they write. References- 1. Harvey, M. (2003). The nut and bolts of college writing. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Word Count# 1179