

Review:

Sue Doe and Lisa Lanstraat (Eds.).
Generation Vet: Composition, Student-Veterans, and Post- 9/11 University

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Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat's edited collection of theory, practice, and personal stories from both teachers and veteran students provides insights into how the field of composition serves and networks with increasing numbers of the specialized veteran-student population. The most significant contribution this collection makes lies in its consistently networked connections between students and instructors in compelling examples that include prose, poetry, and personal narratives. The essays all point to both challenges and successes in composition classrooms that serve veteran communities and veteran-students. They also connect back to *Reflections'* generative mission of bringing teachers, students, and community partners to talk about public service-writing.

The editors present a comprehensive introduction that points readers to particular locations in the text for theory, pedagogy, and empirical studies. They organize the text into three parts: I- understanding veterans

as students; II- negotiating veterans' stories for public audiences; and III- creating veteran-friendly writing praxis. This organization furthers the connections between theory and real-world challenges that instructors and veteran-students face as they navigate academic and public writing spaces.

The introduction succeeds in providing a road map for the pieces in the collection, but, given the precise discourse of the topics covered, as well as the sometimes jargon-y language that inevitably comes with discussions of specific communities, I would have liked to have had more explanation and definitions of the alphabet soup of abbreviations peppered throughout many chapters. Otherwise, the collection is accessible to both first-time and seasoned instructors.

Erin Hadlock and Sue Doe's chapter, "Not Just Yes Sir, No Sir" offers readers a small case study of veteran-students at Colorado State University. The authors describe deeper understandings of the rhetorical abilities and limits of veteran-students and how such understandings are vital to composition instructors who want to engender agency and voice for this student population. The authors present excerpts of students' perceptions of how to use agency and rhetorical genre from military experiences to create a bridge to academic writing. Through surveys, interviews, and document analysis with eleven veteran-students, the authors offer pedagogical recommendations on how to overcome challenges in veteran-students' demonstrating agency. My primary critique of this chapter is that it demonstrates the need to better explain the terms with which first-time or non-military readers may not be familiar. Otherwise, it offers findings that will be of interest to readers seeking to understand veteran-students' agency and how to connect that agency to academic writing in public spaces.

Linda De La Ysla's "Faculty as First Responders" is a gripping personal account of her role in an incident that occurred at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), where a student-veteran wrote of his "addition to killing" stemming from his active duty experiences in Iraq. Although De La Ysla's narrative is compelling, it is nonetheless an emotionally difficult read. She weaves in her practice of Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone" theory

and briefly describes the narrative essay assignment that started the chain of events that led to her student being suspended from campus. The bulk of the essay, however, is a re-telling of the nationally covered events resulting from the student's disturbing essay. The story has a somewhat productive ending, though, as faculty and administration at CCBC created a college-funded support network for veteran-students, including psychological counseling and a "veterans success committee." This narrative is a must-read for instructors, as it presents the complexities of doing public writing and how students perceive it. De La Ysla's piece connects strongly with *Reflections'* scope in providing a thought-provoking example of how messy public writing can sometimes be. It also offers a solutions-based community connection that teachers and students alike can identify with. De La Ysla gives recommendations for creating community partnerships on campuses to address veteran-students specific needs. Her story also provides a strong link to the realities of negotiating public rhetorics with student-writers.

Section II is arguably the strongest and most inspirational set of essays in this collection. Authors discuss the materiality of writing and how veteran-students operate within its various formal and informal, physical and digital spaces. Eileen Schell and Ivy Kleinbart describe in a side-by-side narrative the genesis of the Syracuse Veterans' Writing Group and how they combined their civilian expertise of writing instructor (Eileen) with creative writer (Ivy) to create and co-lead a writing group that helped veteran-students share their personal and professional stories in a public space. Like other essays in this section, the authors draw on the success of Maxine Hong Kingston's community writing groups for motivation. They further use Kingston's idea of writing as a process to encourage veteran-students to write their stories as a means of making public their personal struggles of re-integration into civilian culture. Several personal narratives from group participants highlight this chapter, which adds richness to the community service themes in the essay.

In chapter 8, Ashly Bender explores how active-duty military writers use multimodal genres such as videos, blogs, and social media sites to connect with family, friends, and even global audiences. She describes "dub videos," which have become popular ways for active-military

writers to communicate across geographic and cultural boundaries. She then discusses practical ways that composition instructors can connect this type of public, cooperative communication with collaborative writing. Bender argues that these public multimodal compositions not only serve the purpose of linking with loved ones but also serve as sites for active-duty writers to divest issues of trauma that they experience on the battlefield. She concludes that the circulation of multimodal texts on social media, their connections to audiences and feedback, and their partiality for re-mixing genre opportunities, makes social media composing a viable entry point to open up spaces for multimodal writing in composition classrooms and for meeting veteran-students' expectations of what and how they will write in academic genres. Her conclusions are well-received, but what I found most interesting was how the above considerations could help integrate returning veteran-students into communities of their school peers outside of military service. This essay will be of specific interest to Reflections readers who want to integrate civic writing into their curricula.

In Section III of this collection, Ann Shivers-McNair provides a pilot study in basic writing. Her findings show interesting trends of specific interest for teachers who develop extended composition courses. She describes a pilot learning community for veteran-students at a mid-sized regional university in the Deep South with a strong ROTC, reserves, and veteran presence. For the study, she partnered with a former student and developed a cohort of veteran-students in an expanded composition course modeled after Arizona State's Stretch Program. The essay details recruitment strategies, acknowledged study limitations, participant demographics, and survey methodology. I especially appreciate how in-depth Shivers-McNair narrated her involvement with the Veterans Affairs (VA) office on her campus and how she worked with former veteran-students to assess the cohort's experiences. Her vivid reflections on the study, its future possibilities, and the attitudes of her colleagues make this piece a must-read for both part-time and full-time instructors seeking campus community involvement in research with student populations.

Bonnie Selting then offers an examination of service-learning strategies for veteran-students in chapter 11. She draws primarily on

empirical research studies conducted with veteran-writers to make a case for composition courses themed specifically on service-learning to meet the expectations of veteran-students. She connects service-learning with learner-centered teaching, which will be of special interest to *Reflections'* readers. She then uses research written in the field of adult-learning to connect the impetus for service-learning to returning military students. I appreciated the explicit connections Selting draws between service-learning and adult-learning. Her pedagogical conclusions and framed student examples clearly show how these two practices together impact the expectations of veteran-students.

Doe and Langstratt close out the collection with a reflective, compelling case study from Corinne Hinton that focuses on veteran-students' perceptions on composition courses and connections to their previous learning in military discursive spaces. Through interviews with twelve former marines, Hinton gleans their attitudes towards teaching and learning in composition courses across several four-year colleges in multiple regions of the U.S. The primary goal of Hinton's study was to expand understandings of the perceptions of these enlisted veteran-students towards their educational experiences and their own rhetorical behaviors as they navigated these academic spaces. She includes a nod that describes the intersections of WAC and writing center collaborations between peer tutors and veteran-students as part of her interview questions on writing process and experiences. Hinton's findings include reflections of participants regarding community, feedback, and limitations. Of particular interest is her finding that veteran-students actively solicit feedback from their peers, both veteran and civilian, which feeds into their embodiment of teamwork as vital to success in academics as well as on the battlefield. Participants unanimously echoed their Corps training in terms of teamwork, when they reported that their attitudes in class were those of responsibility for their fellow learners and their desires to help make them stronger in their writing. As the daughter of a marine reservist, I felt an intrinsic recognition for the authenticity of Hinton's study methodology and results. The study provides a valid snapshot of how veteran-students interpret classroom interactions and collaborative learning. Findings also illuminate possibilities for writing center practices, including how to make writing center tutoring appeal to veteran-students' prior learning. Her inclusive

narrative wraps up a collection that provides much-needed insights into how instructors approach pedagogies for the surging, specialized population of veteran-students.

Overall, the essays in *Generation Vet* provide *Reflections* readers with interesting and diverse accounts of how teachers and students do the work of public writing in different contexts. The collection offers theoretical arguments as well as practical “how-to” tips that are readable and do-able for seasoned as well as emerging teacher-scholars who are interested in public service-writing. This collection serves the diverse fields of public composition in the same vein as veteran-students serve our country.

Jeanne Law Bohannon is an Assistant Professor of English at Kennesaw State University. She believes in creating democratic learning spaces, where students become stakeholders in their own rhetorical growth through authentic engagement in class communities. Her research interests include evaluating digital literacies and critical engagement pedagogies; performing feminist rhetorical recoveries; and growing informed and empowered student scholars.