

Series Editor's Introduction

In November 2004, Joseph M. Williams was referred to me by Nick Carbone, the New Media editor at Bedford/St. Martins and a long-time supporter of the WAC Clearinghouse. Dr. Williams had been looking for a home for a monograph he'd written about problems. "I wrote a rather lengthy piece on problem posing and matters of teaching it," he told me, noting that he had incorporated elements of his thinking about the issue into books he had written with Greg Colomb and that the entire piece had been referenced by scholars including Gerald Graff. "If there is a server somewhere where it could be downloaded, I'd be happy to send it along."

Dr. Williams' monograph was clearly a good fit for the Clearinghouse and, since late 2004, *Problems into PROBLEMS* has been available as a featured resource in our Teaching Exchange. Yet it offers far more – both in length and its depth of its treatment – than most of the resources offered in the Exchange. For a number of years, I pondered what to do with *Problems into PROBLEMS* and finally came upon the idea of building a new book series, Practice and Pedagogy, to serve as a home for the monograph and for similarly useful work, such as Richard E. Young's *Taxonomy of "Small Genres" for Writing Across the Curriculum*.

Dr. Williams' thoughtful analysis offers much to both writers and teachers of writing. He situates his monograph by referring not only to existing work on problem solving in rhetoric and composition, but on our treatment of problems in our writing and teaching:

... [I]f the literature on solving such problems is thick, our understanding of how we articulate the substantive problem that occasions our efforts to solve them is quite thin. By "substantive problem" I do not mean the local and ongoing struggle toward the discovery and articulation of meaning, but the significant question whose answer justifies the effort, the problem in the world or mind whose solution repays our time spent

writing and our readers' spent reading. We criticize the writing of our students and colleagues on many grounds, but none is more common – or devastating – than the observation that they have failed not just to solve a problem, but even to pose one that we think “interesting.” And as teachers, we experience no failure more common than our inability to explain what we mean by “pose” or “interesting” or “problem” and what it is about a text that elicits such criticism.

I hope you will find this monograph as valuable and insightful as I have.

– Mike Palmquist, January 2011