

## [watch?v=aygmPf7LVqA](#)

Multimodal Composing Mobility and Writing Ideas, written by Kendra L. Andrews and illustrated by T. Mark Bentley.

The connection among multimodal composing and idea generation, or invention, are not new or unique to sketchnoting-- the practice of taking notes that incorporates both the visual and the textual, for a more holistic representation of ideas. For decades now, scholars and practitioners of multimodal composition have argued that engaging more and different semiotic modes and inventive process writing may lead to new ways of engaging experiences and developing knowledge about the world.

For example, in her graphic text *Syllabus, Notes From an Accidental Professor*, Lynda Barry invites readers to rethink the relationship among idea generation, semiotic resources, and individual's embodiment and movement through space, when she asks the seemingly simple question, how are our hands, images, and insight connected?

Barry claims that both writing and drawing lean on a certain kind of picturing, not the kind that's already finished in your head or just needs to be put to words or reproduced on paper. It's a kind of picturing that is formed by our own activity, one line suggesting the next.

In this way of thinking about idea generation, mobility and movement through the places of our everyday lives become central to what appears upon our horizons, what is pictured within our own experiences. As Joseph Harris reminds us when he writes about the New London Group's work with multiliteracies and a teaching subject, meaning and knowledge are not simply forged out of a writer's internal thought processes but through the encounters she has with artifacts while moving through the world.

Harris explains. The task of the writer is to forge new meanings out of existing materials. A writer works not only with the resources of her language but with the artifacts of her culture, print texts, web pages, photos, music, videos, graphic art, and the like. Rather than looking within the self for meaning, the writer looks outward to the culture around her, reworking and redesigning the text and materials that it has to offer her. In Harris's formulation, the writer's identity has shifted into a composer, and this composer must respond creatively and

Multimodally to her surroundings. The concept of a writer as designer is also explored by Kristen L. Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, and Sheryl Lee Ball in their student text, *Writer Designer, A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects*. Arola, et al., explain how writing and designing always work together, and it is imperative that the new writer recognizes this distinction.

Not only must students recognize that their identity is shifting but composition scholars must, too. In remixing composition, Jason Palermi admits that there was once a time when I knew what it meant to be a compositionist. A scholar and a teacher in the composition field was one who was well-versed in the theories of the discipline and was one who knew how to have students critically engage with words. However, with the proliferation of digital technologies both inside and outside the classroom, the entire notion of what it means to compose has transformed.

As Andrea Lundsford points out, we're writing once meant print text, black marks on white paper, left to right, and top to bottom. Today, writing is in full technicolor. It is non-linear and alive with sounds, voices, and images of all kinds.

Multimodal composing practices, such as sketchnoting, enable individuals to practice this kind of pictured encounters when they transform cultural artifacts into material text, as they capture lectures, places, and experiences on the page. The available semiotic resources for recording these picturings matter significantly to the possibilities of what becomes represented materially in a given textual artifact and how it can be taken up in the future.

Multimodal composing affords its creators a range of modes through which to capture and transform experiences as it actively relies upon multiple semiotic systems and modes of communication to relay a message, including the visual, the aural, the spatial, the linguistic, and the gestural modes.

Jason Palermi reminds us that writing always employs multiple modes and writing has never not been multimodal. Thinking about writing through explicitly multimodal lenses highlights the importance of design. By representing an idea using various and specifically selected modes, the creator has an opportunity of a range of combinations of resources for representing the picturings of her horizons.

These multilayered picturings echo Kathy Yancey's 2004 CCCC chair's address, when she calls for composition made not only in words. Yancey calls for a new key in composition, evoking the idea of a new space for writers and foreign mention through multimodal composition. If multimodality describes how we combine multiple different ways of communicating in everyday life, individuals who compose sketchnotes create multimodality as soon as their hand meets the page.

The concept of a writer takes on new meaning, where she's not only capturing her thinking with text but also employing modes that require a sense of composition and of design. Multimodal compositions, such as sketchnotes, becomes a performative act that is designed through encounters with materials accessed as one moves through the world.

This performative composing resonates well with scholarship that has directed attention to the ubiquitous, yet unfortunate conflation of multimodal and digital composition. Jody Shipka addresses this confusion in her work as she pushes the boundaries of text, media, and meaning, where knowledge, creativity, and identity is constructed through the action of composing rather than solely through its product.

We must remember that, yes, digital composition is multimodal but multimodal composition isn't necessarily digital. In her introduction of *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, Shipka evokes the words of Paul Pryor and explores the radical assemblage of semiotic modes and prior experience, places, and times in all textual representations.

Multimodality has always and everywhere been present as representations are propagated across multiple media and as any situated event is indexically fed by all modes present, whether they

are focalized or backgrounded. Through composition, different moments of history, different persons, different voices, different addresses, may become embedded in the composed utterance.

Shipka also points to Kathy Yancey's 2004 article, "Looking for Sources of Coherence in a Fragmented World," to note that, she reminds us that a composition is at once a thing with parts, with visual, verbal, or multimodal aspects. It's the expression of relationships and perhaps most importantly, it's the result of complex, ongoing processes that are shaped by and provide a shape for living.

A shape or a space for living brings us back to what sketchnotes can provide for their creators. Sketchnotes allow the creator to relive prior experience by evoking the facial expressions, the environment, the sounds, and the sensory feelings of particular experienced places in time to be relived again and again in such a way that he or she can easily, and perhaps more accurately, re-experience it again.

In a similar way that we can re-experience a childhood memory when we enter a space with certain smells, sounds, or sights, sketchnotes can recreate an experience through its multimodal representation. In this way, sketch notes can become an epistemic tool. It models thinking in a way that traditional print literacy cannot. Not only does the way that a sketchnoter capture her experience demonstrate her knowledge of the topic, but it also constructs her knowledge on what composition truly is. Composing in a sketchnote style embodies these embedded differences that may remain hidden if only text or writing were employed.