



# **Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act (CCCC Studies in Writing & Rhetoric)**

*Rebecca S. Nowacek*

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The question of how students transfer knowledge is an important one, as it addresses the larger issue of the educational experience. In *Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act*, Rebecca S. Nowacek explores, through a series of case studies, the issue of transfer by asking what in an educational setting engages students to become “agents of integration”— individuals actively working to perceive, as well as to convey effectively to others, the connections they make.

While many studies of transfer are longitudinal, with data collected over several years, Nowacek’s is synchronous, a rich cross-section of the writing and classroom discussions produced by a team-taught learning community—three professors and eighteen students enrolled in a one-semester general education interdisciplinary humanities seminar that consisted of three linked courses in history, literature, and religious studies. With extensive field notes, carefully selected student and teacher self-reports in the form of interviews and focus groups, and thorough examinations of recorded classroom discussions, student papers with professor comments, and student notebooks, Nowacek presents a nuanced and engaging analysis that outlines how transfer is not simply a cognitive act but a rhetorical one that involves both seeing connections and presenting them to the instructors who are institutionally positioned to recognize and value them.

Considering the challenges facing instructors teaching for transfer and the transfer of writing-related knowledge, Nowacek develops and outlines a new theoretical framework and methodological model of transfer and illustrates the practical implications through case studies and other classroom examples. She proposes transfer is best understood as an act of recontextualization, and she builds on this premise throughout the book by drawing from previous work in cognitive psychology, activity theory, and rhetorical genre theory, as well as her own analyses of student work.

This focused examination complements existing longitudinal studies and will help readers better understand not only the opportunities and challenges confronting students as they work to become agents of integration but also the challenges facing instructors as they seek to support that student work.

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