

# The Practical Aspects and Relevance of the Texts of ‘Patterns for College Writing’ in Nepalese Context

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## Abstract

*‘Patterns for College Writing’ (Twelfth Edition) is a prescribed textbook under Tribhuvan University compulsory English for four years program of B.A./B.A.S.W. and B.B.S. level first year students. The textbook is also studied by millions of students at colleges and universities across the United States. The problem is that being composed by US writers, published by US publications and written in the US context, many Nepali students are thinking this book is irrelevant and impractical to Nepalese society. A question can be raised why this book is prescribed for Nepali students. This paper aims to address these problems and satisfy the students by discovering the practical aspects of the texts included in the textbook. Therefore, this brief academic study analyzes how the textbook ‘Patterns for College Writing’ can address various issues of Nepali public lives, which are: a) Socio-cultural issue b) Historical issue c) Health related issue d) Gender and racial issue. This paper aims to highlight the fact that the contents of this textbook, which are mostly written in American context and contain various essays on American issues, are relevant and useful in Nepalese context as well.*

**Keywords:** *Practical Aspects, Relevance, Patterns for College Writing, Nepalese Context*

## Introduction

The practical aspects of something involve real situations and events, rather than just ideas and theories. Practical aspect means something useful in practice which is also related to the construction of one’s personal life. It is also connected to the society, environment, health, education, politics and everyday life of people. It is based on practice rather than bookish stuff.

Tribhuvan University has launched a four-year bachelor’s course in B.A. from the academic year 2076/077 under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The students will be evaluated on the basis of written examinations of 70 marks, while 30

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marks will be for internal assessment, including mini project, classroom presentation and teamwork for each subject, but the written examination full marks is 100 for the B.B.S. students because internal assessment part is not included in BBS syllabus as in BA. ‘Patterns for College Writing’ (Twelfth Edition) is composed and compiled by Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. They seem to have worked hard with a big team to make this project successful. The brief information of the texts of ‘Patterns for College Writing’ (Twelfth Edition) is tabled below:

SN	Essay	Essayist
1	Only Daughter	Sandra Cisneros
2	My Mother Never Worked	Bonnie Smith-Yackel
3	Thirty-Eight Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police	Martin Gansberg
4	Rice	Jhumpa Lahiri
5	Ground Zero	Suzanne Berne
6	The Hidden Life of Garbage	Heather Rogers
7	The Case against air Conditioning	Stan Cox
8	The "Black table" Is Still There	Lawrence Otis Graham
9	Why Vampires Never Die	Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan
10	Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts	Bruce Catton
11	Two ways to Belong in America.	Bharati Mukherjee
12	Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior	Amy Chua
13	I Want a Wife	Judy Brady
14	Fame-iness	Meghan Daum
15	The Wife-Beater	Gayle Rosenwald Smith
16	No Pay? Many Interns Say, "No Problem"	Jennifer Halperin
17	The Meat Market	Alex Tabarrok
18	Let Them Drink Water	Daniel Engber

The varieties of essays included here deal with different issues of American societies. Although it may have a lot of relevant issues in the context of Nepal, this paper only explores the following practical aspects of basic issues:

- a) Socio-cultural issue
- b) Historical issue
- c) Health related issue
- d) Gender and racial issue

## Socio-cultural Issue

Social problems, art, cultural, religious, economic and family related matters are included in Socio-cultural issues. The textbook presents narrative essays in the beginning that include the ironic essay composed by Bonnie Smith-Yackel 'My Mother Never Worked' which recounts the unending chain task of Martha Smith, a discarded homemaker who was found disqualified to entitle death benefit because she 'never worked'. This essay reflects the lives and status of average Nepali women who spend their whole lives working hard free of benefit indoor and outdoor hiding their identities:

Every morning and every evening she milked cows, fed pigs and calves, cared for chickens, picked eggs, cooked meals, washed dishes, scrubbed floors, and tended and loved her children (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2012, p. 116).

Next narrative essay 'Thirty-Eight Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police' reports the pathetic events took place on March 14, 1964 as contemporary American culture was undergoing a complex transition. Many innocent people in Nepal also face sudden deadly attacks by assailants because the eye-witnesses nearby close their mouths and doors of their homes. Many Nepalese do not want to take the trouble of calling the police because they think it can lead them to further legal difficulties. This essay encourages the audience to help the people who are in such difficulties, at least by calling the police. The descriptive essay 'Rice' describes a common grain that has strong nutritious and cultural values in Nepalese lives. Rice is important grain in *annaprasans*, marriages, festivals, deaths and so on. Planting and harvesting rice is not only culturally but also musically connected to Nepalese societies too. Jennifer Halperin shows the reality of internship by addressing millions of students in her argumentative essay 'No Pay? Many Interns Say, "No Problem."' Internship programs are sometimes – more often than not – associated with an improvement in post-program employment prospects as broadly understood. The socio-cultural environment is important for multinational companies. There are various socio-cultural factors that significantly affect the economic activity as well as the performance of multinational companies. As many American institutions, many Nepalese institutions also support and oppose the paid internship process of the fresher because this matter is closely linked to the overspreading unemployment problem of our society.

The essay 'Two ways to Belong in America' is a comparison-and-contrast essay written by Bharati Mukherjee. This essay shows the life of two Indian sisters who migrate to the US for higher studies and later settle there, marrying a person of their choice. The essayist Bharati Mukherjee shows the differences between her and her sister Mira in the introductory paragraph in the following ways:

I am an American citizen and she is not. I am moved that thousands of long-term residents are finally taking the oath of citizenship. She is not. (p. 227)

The differentiation continues in paragraph 11 where she writes:

In one family, from two sisters alike as peas in a pod, there could not be a wider divergence of immigrant experience. America spoke to me-I married it- I embraced the demotion from expatriate aristocrat to immigrant nobody, surrendering those thousands of years of “pure culture,” the saris, the delightfully accented English. She returned them all. Which of us is the freak? (p. 229)

In the next essay ‘Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior’, the essayist Amy Chua contrasts Chinese parenting with American and argues that the Chinese are the most successful doing this. She has discovered three major differences between the Chinese and Western parental mind-sets and described them in different paragraphs:

- 1) Western parents are extremely anxious about their children’s self-esteem. (Paragraph 12)
- 2) Chinese parents believe that their kids owe them everything. (Paragraph 16)
- 3) Chinese parents believe that they know what is best for their children and therefore override all of their children’s own desires and preferences. (Paragraph 18)

Through a harsh parenting method with continuous punishment and unmatched motivation, Chinese children prove to be one of the more successful races of children. The Chinese believe that they know what is best for their children. It teaches the audience Chinese child-rearing practices and American methods that can be useful for them to apply in their families for a child training as Nepali parents. We can welcome all suitable practices of other countries and ignore the impractical ones.

### **Historical Issue**

As the history course approaches the present era, such inquiries assume special relevance, confronting students with issues that resonate in today’s headlines and invite their participation in lively debates, simulations, and socratic seminars—settings in which they can confront alternative policy recommendations, judge their ethical implications, challenge one another’s assessments, and acquire further skills in the public presentation and defense of positions. Particularly challenging are the many social issues throughout United States history on which multiple interests and different values have come to bear. Issues of civil rights or equal education opportunity, of the right to choice vs. the right to life, and of criminal justice have all brought such conflicts to the fore. When these conflicts have not been resolved within the social and political institutions of the nation, they have regularly found their way into the judicial system, often going to the Supreme Court for resolution. The essays entitled ‘Ground

Zero’ and ‘Grand and Lee: A Study of Contrasts’ are set under this category. ‘Ground Zero’, composed by Suzanne Berne, describes the outcome of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that destroyed the twin towers of New York’s World Trade Centre and severely damaged the Pentagon. Visiting the post-attack spot, she writes:

At least, nothing is what it first looked like, the space that is now ground zero. But once your eyes adjust to what you are looking at, “nothing” becomes something much more potent, which is absence. (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2012, p. 152)

It reminds us of the horrible historical accidents of Nepal such as the *Kotparva* (C.E.1846), ever since the Rana rule was established and the Royal Massacre (C.E.2001) in which the family of king Birendra was destroyed. T.R. Vaidya writes on *Kotparva* in his essay ‘The Kot Massacre: A Critical Assessment’ in the following way:

The *Kot* Massacre was the historic epoch-making turning point in the history of Nepal and an outcome of the fear, frustration, feuds and intrigues, jealousy, personal interests and clashes among the *Bhardars* and the royalty. (Vaidya, 2000, p. 18)

In another essay ‘Grand and Lee: A Study of Contrasts, composed by Bruce Catton, considers Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee in terms of both their differences and their important similarities. These generals have come to symbolize the two nations that fought the Civil War. Each was a product of his region and his rearing. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, two very strong and very different generals, met on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox Court House in Virginia to bring to a close the Civil War. By this time, America had become a country that was starting over with the simple core belief in equal rights for everyone. This essay takes us back and shows the Nepalese Civil War (C. E.1995-2006) and the *Janandolan* (C.E. 2006) due to which the rebel party Maoists ended their armed conflict and joined the peace process and Nepal entered into a new era. The civil war devastated many families, soaked the eyes of many parents, wiped out the vermilion of many wives, made the education of many students incomplete and pierced the chests of many youth. Wherever death is bitter, whether it is in the United States or in Nepal, whether an American dies or a Nepali dies, there is only one ‘person’ who dies and there is a heart inside her/him. However, after the attainment of peace, many weeping souls, in their boundless imagination of the golden future, expressed their heartfelt laughter and red-faced grandeur for the good of the country. Finally, as Grant and Lee, Prachanda and G.P. Koirala signed on November 21, 2006 for the Comprehensive Peace Accord. The above mentioned two essays are the two historical pillars of this textbook.

### **Health related issue**

This textbook also includes health related essays like ‘The Hidden Life of Garbage’, ‘The Case against Air Conditioning’, ‘The Meat Market’ and ‘Let Them Drink Water’.

The first, written by Heather Rogers, describes the reality of waste management by telling the process of waste collection to sanitary landfill. In the beginning, it reminds us the truck that appears in front of our houses to collect the garbage:

In the dark chill of early morning, heavy steel garbage trucks chug and creep along neighborhood collection routes. A worker empties the contents of each household's waste bin into the truck's rear compaction unit. (Kirszner & Mandell, 2012, p. 158)

We, Nepalese, who are living in the major towns of Nepal, have smelt and played with the unwanted rubbish daily and are familiar with the struggle, difficulties and the politics of waste management.

Showing the environmental, health and economic problems created by the A.C. and imagining the A.C.-free America, Stan Cox writes in 'The Case against Air Conditioning':

... the three-day, 100-plus-degree, record-shattering heat wave prompted Washingtonians to crack up their favorite humidity-reducing, electricity-bill-busting, fluorocarbon-filled appliance: the air conditioner. (p. 183)

The air conditioner has become a part of the everyday life of many Nepalese. After reading this article, the Nepalese audience will really think seriously before buying or using the A.C. Not only about garbage and the air conditioner, there is another essay written by Alex Tabarrok entitled 'The Meat Market' which argues for difficulties in organ donation and shortages of donor organs. He has raised a serious question in this essay:

Organs can be taken from deceased donors only after they have been declared dead, but where is the line between life and death? (p. 303)

Donating organ to the needed patient is a challenging task in our country Nepal too and many have been running their illegal black business by selling the organs of people. If a legal process is formed, the victims will get relief. Organ transplantation in Nepal is regulated by the Human Body Organ Transplantation (Regulation and Prohibition) Act 1998 and the Kidney Transplantation (Regulation and Prohibition) Rules 2002. People with chronic kidney ailments either need dialysis for the rest of their lives or a kidney transplant. However, the 1998 Act only allows for "close relatives" to donate kidneys to patients, provided they are medically fit. A close relative is defined as son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, uncle, nephew, niece, grandfather, grandmother or legally adopted family members. Doctors estimate that there are 3,000 cases of renal failure annually in the country as 1,000 cases of liver failure follows along with three million diabetics in Nepal.

The next essay 'Let Them Drink Water', written by Daniel Engber, deals with foods and beverages that we are consuming every day. Many Nepali children eat varieties of junk

foods without knowing their side effects including being overweight and obesity. Many children know it, but they still use fast foods because they are hyperpalatable. Their parents encourage their toddlers to buy such products in the name of civilization. Engber, aware of all, recommends drinking water instead of Coke, soda and other sweetened beverages and home-made foods instead of sugar and/or salt mixed oily junk foods. Dr. Aruna Uprety, public health specialist, writes in The Kathmandu Post:

We have many other kinds of food that are ignored by society and policymakers but are healthy with a lot of micronutrients. ... Amaranth (*latte*) can also be used as a vegetable or mixed with wheat or rice flour. It contains iron, magnesium, and high quantity of protein, which most vegetables do not contain. Hundred grams of amaranth contains 9.41 grams of protein and 68.9 grams of carbohydrates as well as 2.15 grams of fiber, which makes it an ideal food. But very few people use it because of a lack of information.\_(Uprety, 2015)

Such informative articles are bound to increase students' consciousness when they enter university education. Students who arrive on campus on an empty stomach in the morning are compelled to eat what they find in the canteen or nearby shops. It is beneficial for both the teacher and the learner to have such awareness in the classroom.

### **Gender and racial issue**

Both gender and racial parts are enveloped in the same category. There are three articles related to this issue- 'Only Daughter', 'Black Table Is Still There' and 'I Want a Wife'. Another definition essay 'The Wife Beater' also touches gender discrimination and domestic violence, but it is also about modern days fashion sense. In her narrative essay 'Only Daughter', Sandra Cisneros describes the difficulties of growing up as the only daughter in a Mexican-American family of six sons. This is a true story that tells how she finally won the heart of her father as a daughter. Similarly, in Nepalese context, many female children are facing similar problems and struggling to get the equal love as their male siblings have got from their parents. Wives are treated as a slave or servant in many societies along with the societies of Nepal. Showing this bitter reality, essayist Judy Brady in her essay 'I want a Wife' writes:

I want a wife who will work and send me to school. ...I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments...I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2012, p. 255)

She continues it in paragraph 4 too:

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep my house clean. (p. 256)



She further adds about her needs and states again with the following satire:

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties.  
(p. 256)

Many wives are the victim of marital rape. Judy Brady also writes stating the fact that a wife should be ready in any situation to fulfill the sexual desire of her husband:

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. (p. 256)

In this way, by emphasizing the phrase 'I want a wife' she has presented a series of reasons why and how women are suppressed in societies. In Nepal, the violence against women is rampant. Several research projects in Nepal have indicated that 66 per cent of women have endured verbal abuse, 33 per cent emotional abuse, while 77 per cent of the perpetrators were family members (UNICEF, 2001). Violence against women is happening day by day but the government and the other civil society members are doing their best but still there is plenty of room to work and control the forms of violence against women. The violence against women in politics is also rampant but we are unaware or the cases have not come out in the realm of violence against women due to its ignorance. And, even the political leaders are unaware whether the violence happening in political parties to women leaders is duly the violence against women in politics.

The cause and effect essay 'Black Table Is Still There', written by Lawrence Otis Graham describes with many rhetorical questions the effects of being a member of Black or White community. Since the 1950s, the United States government has strongly supported integration in public schools. Ironically, as the essayist observes, when students are given the choice, self-segregation seems to be the norm. Nepalese communities don't have as much color discrimination as it is in America, but caste based discrimination is practiced here. Many so-called lower caste people are the victims of hatred and are insulted by so-called higher caste people in many Nepalese societies, especially in rural remote areas. Some people self-segregate themselves thinking themselves marginalized. Sharing his own experiences, the essayist has encouraged and promoted integration programs through his essay and urged the Nepalese societies not to support segregation according to race, religion, gender, or some other principle.

## **Conclusion**

Though the essayists of the textbook 'Patterns for College Writing' are non-Nepalese citizens, the essays written by them are highly related, practical in nature and relevant



in the context of Nepal. Different geographies have different variants of problems and issues. Although the nature of the problem and the issue is different, the root cause is the same. As global citizens of the 21st century, we need to consider today's problems as a global problem and issue. The textbook 'Patterns for College Writing' shows the problems of other countries (mainly America) in front of us and invigorates us to study how our problems are related to them, what are their practical uses and what is the relevance of such problems in Nepal. The rest of the essays belong to science and technology, art and entertainment and so on and they too, are always relevant because this is the era of them.

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