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Inspecting Shadows of Past Classroom Practices: A Search for Students' Voices

Our pedagogical histories lean on textbooks, institutional records, and the words of famous teachers. Students rarely appear in situ. Here, the voices of two very different Progressive Era students cast spotlights on the shadows of long-ago classroom practices—offering a liveliness that is difficult to recover, but worth seeking.

Roll Call

How do students in composition's origin stories answer that classroom summons? Too often they remain mute, as we know precious little of the story through their words. Indeed, the field's accounts of the origins of composition classes in American colleges focus on teachers, textbooks, and colleges as they weave narratives of upheaval and great change. Materially these accounts depend on textbooks, institutional materials, teachers' notes, and other archival materials as key to the recovery of those long-ago classes. Yet the learning spaces depicted rarely portray the presence of students in more than sketchy ways. This is understandable: students didn't publish; they rarely kept their written work; if they wrote about their educations, they did so at a time removed from the events; and aside from "school days" photos the technologies from that period deliver few indications of their activities. Yes, students were present in

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