Chapter 5
This Is the Remix: Remediating Pedagogy Practices

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ABSTRACT
Remix, as a pedagogical style and teaching method, reframes foundational elements of writing instruction and broadens the traditional practice of writing to include 21st century compositional methods and technological forms. Through Remix Writing, students and instructors learn to compose a networked system of writing that diffuses assumed hierarchies and promotes associative thinking across diverse ecologies of media. We are always already associative thinkers. We build connections to understand, compare, reject, and relate. The digital writing environment offers an assemblage of associations, available in an instant. By disassembling and then reassembling texts, writers can learn to analyze influences and situate works in a web of connections. Students not only write critically about objects of study, but also have the opportunity to produce original work in various styles and media. In mapping the remix process as well as the purpose of each composition, students are able to identify key elements of argument, style, and effective communication – taking ownership of their own writing.

INTRODUCTION
Remix is not a new idea. Art, music, and writing have a long history of “cut-up” techniques, remix, and sampling from William Burroughs and Marcel Duchamp to Led Zeppelin and Grandmaster Flash. Copying, recycling, adapting, and appropriating have all helped create art, culture, technology, and texts. In music, recording equipment and sound machines alter tempo, tone, instrumentation, intensity, and style to create something new – all while using common notes and chords. In writing, new media formats and technologies alter common composition methods for authoring texts and communicating ideas. As Mickey Hess (2006) notes, “Like academic writing, hip-hop sampling requires more than cutting and pasting existing material. Sampling, at its best, uses sources to create new meaning” (p. 281).

The free market economy of Internet information makes untold amounts of data available to users, not just as read-only texts, but data available for consumption, production, remix, and circulation. While
This Is the Remix

the term ‘remix’ may originate with musical composition and hip-hop sampling, the act and ideas of remix inhabit all forms of writing and design, from fashion appropriating emerging trends and language evolving signs and signifiers, to technology tweaks of code that blur the lines between remix, invention, and innovation. Even people can be considered genetic remixes of family traits and cultural experiences. Remix as a combinatorial generative device is encoded in evolutionary biology and culture, a code that has only grown in size and variation with the proliferation of digital media.

Remix already describes the writing process. Authors rewrite and revise all the time. Multimedia writing uses the skills of remix to both transform existing texts and also create new ones. The particular arrangement of notes, images, or words matters, but so does the rearrangement, adaptation, and remix of key ingredients or common ideas. As many writing classrooms move to incorporate emerging technology and modalities, remix offers a framework for composition that reworks pedagogical aims through everyday digital practices.

Writing Departments commonly ask students to demonstrate mastery in various styles, situations, or contexts without acknowledging the routine use of social media as a form of writing. Instead, word counts and page numbers often define “successful” writing and establish requirements for composition curricula. Educators want students to ‘write more,’ but many first-year writing classes pick and choose what counts as writing while lamenting the sorry state of literacy today. Students are writing, prolifically, but the writing process has evolved beyond traditional page-based formats. According to the 2014 Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement “[s]uccessful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to change in material conditions and composing technologies” (“WPA Outcomes,” 2014, p. 3). Students successfully participate in a vast web of composition across multimodal platforms: Twitter posts, Facebook status updates, Instagram photos, Youtube mashups, Vine videos, and messaging programs, which each engage rhetorical skills conventionally taught and typically valued in academia. Acknowledging social media in the classroom empowers students to take ownership of their writing, all forms of writing, and encourages learners to remix conventional perspectives on authorship, criticism, and what defines writing.

Using Remix Writing as a framework, this chapter confronts the traditional limits of page-based pedagogy by offering multimedia strategies to remix composition and supplement teaching. Working with a tautology of second-hand ideas alongside an overview of classroom assignments, I explain the benefits of remixing and remediating conventional rhetorical methods through web applications and alternative technologies such as Podbean, Instagram, and Twitter. Through Remix Writing, words, images, platforms, and technologies all become data available for update, shuffle, repurpose, and replay.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Writing as Remix

Remix centers on hybridity, a state of culture always already in play. Literacy and media scholars Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear (2008) define remix as “taking cultural artifacts and combining and manipulating them into new kinds of creative blends” (p. 22). Kirby Ferguson (2012), documentarian and author of the influential video series ‘Everything is a Remix,’ offers an even more simple equation:

Remix = Copy + Transform + Combine.