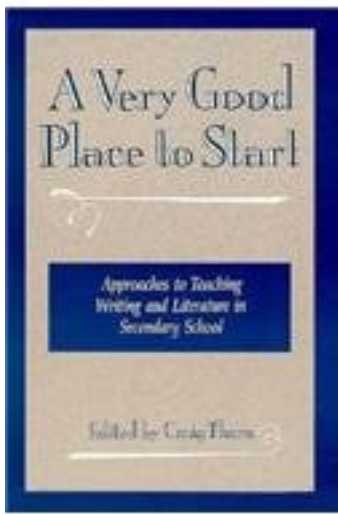


A Very Good Place to Start



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"A Very Good Place to Start," a collection of articles by members of the Phillips Andover English department, demonstrates how effective an English department can be if individual teachers are willing to take full responsibility for setting up their courses (often with considerable input from students) and are also committed to sharing what they're doing and how it's working. Instead of following a departmental curriculum, complete with sets of required texts, individual teachers are free to try new techniques and new materials geared to a particular class. The approach encourages a constant interchange of ideas and experiences among department members, to everyone's professional advantage. When the editor invited his colleagues to contribute to a collection of essays, he had no intention of trying to put together a book. He simply wanted to photocopy the essays and spread them around the department, hoping to encourage others to join in. During the course of the writing, the teachers found themselves learning all kinds of things from each other. Further, the act of writing helped some of them understand what they had been doing for years. The book is a

plus, but for the contributors the process of writing the essays, discussing them, finding striking parallels and differences among their basic attitudes about teaching and learning was reward enough. In many, respects, "A Very Good Place to Start" is an invitation to teachers in English departments to put together their own collection. The book is an excellent tool for a teachers' workshop, because the essays are open-ended, inviting variations on the techniques and as an end in itself. Rather, it's a means by which every department can set its own course.

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