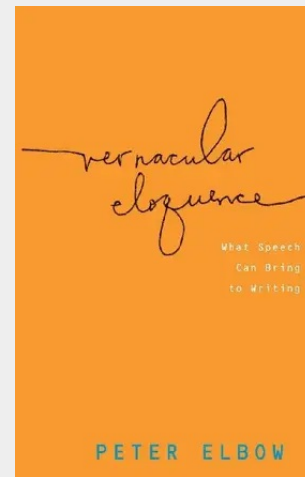


Vernacular Eloquence

Since the publication of his groundbreaking books *Writing Without Teachers* and *Writing with Power*, Peter Elbow has revolutionized the way we think about writing. As a theorist, teacher, and uncommonly engaging writer himself, he has long championed our innate ability to write effectively. Now, in *Vernacular Eloquence*, Elbow turns his attention to the role of the spoken word in writing. He begins by questioning the basic cultural assumption that speaking and writing are two very different, incompatible modes of expression, and that we should keep them separate. The book explores the many linguistic and rhetorical virtues of speech--spontaneity, naturalness of expression, fluidity of thought--to show that many of these virtues can usefully be brought to writing. Elbow suggests that we begin the writing process by "speaking" our words onto the page, letting the words and ideas flow without struggling to be "correct." Speaking can help us at the later stages of writing, too, as we read drafts aloud and then revise until the language feels right in the mouth and sounds right in the ear. The result is stronger, clearer, more natural writing that avoids the stilted, worried-over quality that so often alienates (and bores) the reader. Elbow connects these practices to a larger theoretical discussion of literacy in our culture, arguing that our rules for correct writing make it harder than necessary to write well. In particular, our culture's conception of proper writing devalues the human voice, the body, and the linguistic power of people without privilege. Written with Elbow's customary verve and insight, *Vernacular Eloquence* shows how to bring the pleasures we all enjoy in speaking to the all-too-often needlessly arduous task of writing.

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156,30 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780199782505

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-978250-5

Verlag: ACADEMIC

Erscheinungstermin: 02.04.2018

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2018

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 845 g

Seiten: 456

Format (B x H): 161 x 240 mm

