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FOCUS ON: disadvantage and advantage

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preamblings

We've crossed some boundaries in this issue, out of our normal territory of prose composed by English teachers on serious subjects, into poetry and frivolity by teachers and students. We'd like to continue printing works of the Imagination and Fancy by our colleagues and their students, wherever they can be interspersed.

The articles on teaching the "disadvantaged" and the talented are related, if only tangentially, to the FORUM reports. Most of the complaints about small schools add up to "disadvantagement," for which the proposed solution is commonly "consolidation." We've heard a lot about the disadvantages over the past few years, not much about the advantages. We'd like to print some comments on both sides.

We appeal to our readers for at least one alternative to satisfy all of our disquietude with the term "disadvantaged." For that matter, the students at the Twin City Institute for Talented Youth twitched with some embarrassment whenever they were publicly addressed under that complimentary rubric. Surely the profession of English teachers has here the motivation and the authority to create some new semantically and aesthetically satisfying terms. Are we waiting for TimeMag to lead us?

The McKnight Education Fund English Awards will be directed this year towards recognizing creative instruction by elementary school language arts teachers. The MCTE will participate in administering the Awards program; a more detailed announcement will be made shortly.

Next issue the Journal focus will be on teaching the Humanities. Well-organized as we would like to pretend we are, we would also like to represent ourselves as alert and receptive to any unanticipated articles on the subject that reach us by the beginning of March.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By JOHN ZILLIAX
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There are a number of terms used to describe the type of student I refer to in my title, and all of them seem misleading. "Underprivileged," "Disadvantaged," "Culturally Deprived," everything implies that these students have missed something that the person assigning the term has not. What he hasn't missed is the advantage and privilege of a white middle class culture. What the terms imply, therefore, is that people who don't have the advantages of a white middle class culture are accordingly deprived.

Of course there is much truth in this. There is no need to itemize the social, political, and economic advantages of belonging to the white middle class. Educationally, however, the assumption is dangerous. It leads one to suppose that if he takes a disadvantaged child out of his subcultural environment and gives him the full benefit of a middle class education, then everything will be better for the child.

This positive supposition underlies most of the summer programs for the disadvantaged that I know about, and it was the original cornerstone of the program in which I served as English Chairman at Carleton College last summer. This program is called Project ABC (A Better Chance). The same supposition was the genesis of a program that I shall be serving as Director at Milton Academy this coming summer. This is called the Educational Enrichment Program, and I shall discuss it later. I shall start with the ABC program because in it the change of environment is dramatically clear, and because it was here that I became aware of problems facing programs like this.

Project ABC is a near-perfect expression of the American Dream. Backed by private funds and supported by the best private boarding schools in the country, it is the aim of the project to discover talented disadvantaged children (ISTSP: Independent Schools Talent Search Program) and to place them in member private schools for a two to four year stay until graduation. The ABC summer programs (Carleton, Dartmouth, and Williams last year) are designed as a bridge between

the world of the student's home and the boarding school. Thus a lucky ghetto child is literally flown from Harlem or Bogalusa or Watts to Carleton and thence after seven weeks to one of the most privileged schools in America, Milton, or Mount Hermon or Concord Academy.

Such an Algeresque leap is made by a select few. To qualify, a student had to come from a poor family (generally $4000 annual family income or less) and a substandard educational environment, and he had to be of unusual academic and personal promise, as indicated by tests and recommendations. Last year, of every eighteen completed applications for admission there was only room enough for one student. The 13-17 year old boys and girls who came to Carleton were mostly Negroes, the rest being American Indian except for three whites and a Chinese boy. Since most of the students came from segregated ghettos and reservations, their jump to the white upper middle class private schools would be that much greater because of the other sort of segregation awaiting them.

It is so great in fact that many an ABC student's most immediate need on arriving at a boarding school is to seek security by conforming in every possible way. Professor Arthur Gropen, the ABC Director at Carleton last summer, referred to this as the student's urge to become a "white middle class Negro." On the surface, this is what the program is geared to produce, and paradoxical as it may be, it offers a lot of hope to Negro children and their parents who often urge them to enroll so that they can "get out" of their present trap.

Educationally, too, it offers a lot of hope. The boarding schools offering scholarships to ABC students adhere to the highest standards with student-teacher ratios that no public school can at present match. This allows ABC students to stretch themselves to the limit of their abilities, perhaps for the first time, and also to do it in surroundings where such behavior is normal. Finally, a successful boarding school career all but guarantees admission to a satisfactory college. All this is a gain.

Where the educational danger lies is in the potential loss. In a boarding school the educational standards are emphatically white upper middle class. In forcing himself to meet these new requirements, a Negro or an Indian can quickly lose his own values, his own identity, his own sense of understanding. In

place of this may come the worship of success, the mask that he doesn't even know is a mask, the canned knowledge.

It is easy enough to see how this might happen in English. A student is thrown into a survey of English Literature in which he learns that the way to get by is to learn what the footnotes say and to pay attention to the teacher. Since his writing is not grammatical, the student is drilled on correctness, which he learns at the expense of any feeling whatever. At the same time, the student's speech is altered, since the teacher has discovered that a persistent Southern Negro dialect leads the student to misspell many of the word endings that he slurs. In vocabulary drill, the student memorizes a number of words to beef up his unsophisticated language and to pad his college board score. I doubt if I have to go on with what is not an exaggerated analogy to demonstrate the potential destruction of what the "disadvantaged" student already has in favor of the polished mask of the successful scholar.

What this "disadvantaged" person has as an English student is very closely related to what he has as a person: candor, spontaneity, and a wealth of experience. In my classes last summer I found ABC students to be generally less defensive than other students I have taught in public and private schools. They were more inclined to say what they felt than what they thought I wanted to hear (although there was still a lot of the latter). They were more easily excited and yet more mature socially, perhaps because they had less that they felt it necessary to hide (they had all come from the same kind of background and they were all "new" at the same time). Their maturity gave them a great deal of personal honesty. Their cultural background (mainly Negro and Indian) gave them a marked dignity. These many qualities gave their writing character. What their words lacked in finesse, they gained in vitality.

It was our great concern to hold onto the vitality while recognizing the fact that there was a need for polish if these boys and girls were to have a worthwhile experience in boarding school. The balance is urgent, for not only do these students have a lot to gain from boarding school life if they don't lose their own lives in the bargain, but also if they keep alive as they were they will contribute immeasurably to the rather ingrown middle class oriented community that they enter. Most students in these communities have been saturated by values that they may never have had an opportunity to question any more than most people

question what they mean when they say "culturally deprived." In fact, there is a deprivation from being enveloped in one's own culture without getting any perspective on it. Boys and girls from programs like Carleton's ABC offer this kind of opportunity to schools.

Fortunately we had a chance to plan an English program that might begin to deal with the conflict I have described. Thanks to Professor Gropen and many past ABC programs, we had a base of understanding when I met with the English teachers to discuss the summer program. What we came up with seemed a step toward meeting the particular problems of Project ABC.

II

It semmed appropriate to focus our English program on writing for two reasons: first, it would enable these students to express themselves in their own way; second, it would prepare them for the frequent writing that they would have to do in boarding school and that most of them had not done in their previous schools. The writing program that best seemed to fill our needs was our own modification of a much longer sequence designed by James Moffett of Harvard. I shall describe this in detail below. Given this emphasis on writing, we develped a reading program that would complement the writing both technically and thematically. For example, when writing about a personal memory, a student might read "Molly Morgan" by John Steinbeck, a story about a girl haunted by her memory of her father; the student might also be reminded of the fisherman's memories in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea. The readings also complemented the students' thoughts about themselves, and this helped their writing, too. Certainly we aimed to develop the students' reading ability as such, but our first concern was to support writing.

The Writing Program

We founded our writing program on several principles:

1. The program should be inductive, beginning with students' inner experience and working outward relating experience to literature.

2. Structure should be increasingly emphasized.

3. Student errors will be marked selectively (we avoided the overuse of red ink) and corrected individually (no grammar or composition books were used). We always said something good about every composition.

4. Students will write every day, and all writing will be returned in one day. Frequent conferences will be held. No grades will be given.

5. All students will be sectioned together regardless of their grade in school or their estimated ability (We broke this rule by putting the very oldest sudents together, and by putting five students with severe mechanical difficulties into special section.)

With these principles in mind, we centered the progression of our program on a sequence of twelve assignments covering a seven week period. Each assignment was taken in several steps which included rough drafts and outlines on the later assignments. The sequence begins with completely unstructured inner-directed observations written in whatever order occurs to the student. Gradually, we worked on developing a sense of the need for structure by encouraging the writers to control the reactions of other students to their work. To do this, we spent more time on the earlier, unstructured assignments than we did on the later ones in which we finally gave the students an organizational pattern to follow. We gave them a pattern because we thought that they ought to be sure of themselves to the extent of being able to see what we gave them as a tool, not as an answer to all their writing problems. As we emphasized structure more and more, we also emphasized writing about literature. Then the last two assignments returned them to what they were doing much earlier, ending with an autobiography. Thus, in theory at least, we made their ability to write about themselves the culmination of the summer. The teachers agreed that this often turned out to be the case.

Our sequence follows. (The titles of the assignments are in most cases the names James Moffett used. Our major variation from his program was to change his original sequence while skipping a number of his assignments.)

1. Sensory Monologue: Three or four assignments. Students were told to go somewhere and write down anything that came into their heads for fifteen minutes. We didn't care if they wrote in sentences or in any recognizable form. By discussing the results inductively, we tried to encourage the students to see the value of sensory language which seemed to find its way into the observations they liked best. Finally they rewrote one of several observations to hand in, touching up details

whenever they felt like it.

2. Memory Monologue: Three or four assignments. Again the student is set free to write down all the memories that come into his head. In class he is encouraged to select several memories to expand into detailed accounts. The best expansion is again rewritten. We tried to point out the relationship between sensual experience and what they remembered best.

3. Dramatic Monologue: Two or three assignments. Here the student is asked to imagine that he is someone else talking to himself or to a silent listener. This takes the student outside of his own experience. The rewrite of this assignment stressed the circumstances under which the monologue is spoken. This is a step toward structure. These papers were read in class.

4. Dialogue: Two assignments. This developed from number three. Students could continue with their monologue speaker, adding another. There was added stress on order, since students now wanted to control the response of the class.

5. Short Play or Dramatic Scene: Two assignments. I first asked my students to describe in writing the scene that was going to occur. In this way they had to work out their structure ahead of time, as in an outline.

6. Interview or On-the-spot Observation: Two assignments. We used the real thing as a logical follow-up to imagined conversation. The students all went out a. gathered fresh experiences, with people whenever possible. After taking notes on the spot, students recreated their impressions in the form they thought best. (This assignment was most successful.)

7. Narrative Illustrating a Generality: Two assignments. In many cases, students saw that good interviews were tied together by a single attitude on the part of the writer or by a point that the writer was trying to make. We encouraged them to do this intentionally. They were to control their story or report in such a way as to get across an attitude by example not by direct statement. (This assignment failed, largely because we didn't give it enough background.)

8. Several Incidents United by a Theme: Two assignments; five paragraph pattern. Here we began to mix reading and writing directly. I urged my students to select a theme from Lord of the Flies, showing how three incidents from the book related to the theme.

These incidents would be like the examples used in assignment number seven. The five paragraph theme model required the students to have an introduction, three paragraphs of one incident each, and a conclusion. The introduction and conclusion had to refer to all three incidents. After the students made outlines, we discussed the problem of a logical order for the incidents.

9. Generalization Supported by Illustrations: Two assignments; five paragraph pattern. Again students wrote about literature. They were encouraged to take three themes such as they wrote about in number eight and to form them into a generalization about Lord of the Flies.

10. Generalizations United into a Theory: Two assignments; five paragraph theme. This expanded number nine. I encouraged students to write about three separate readings, taking a generalization from each. Here we emphasized logical order and clear transitions.

11. Socratic Dialogu : Two assignments. Students were to write a dialogu that made a point and followed a logical direction. In this way we hoped to review while keeping our focus on order. (Unfortunately, time limitations forced most teachers to skip this assignment.)

12. Autobiography: Two assignments. Here the students were set free to follow their own order and subject choice. We encouraged them to look at their early writings about themselves for material. We wanted them to regain some of their early spontaneity in this.

Except for the section of five special students who spent the whole seven weeks writing descriptive paragraphs in standard patterns and working on basic mechanical problems, everyone followed the sequence of assignments as I have outlined it. There were other writing exercises describing pictures from the collection of photographs, The Family of Man, and all students wrote two writing sample type exercises which were group corrected for the benefit of the teachers. Finally, a number of the students wrote short poems in and out of class.

The Reading Program

The reading program was built around a core of short novels. We chose novels with which the students could identify; this helped their self undersatnding and helped their writing as a result. We also chose novels that would force the student to confront more than the story. We wanted them to become more aware of the allegorical areas in literature just as we wanted them to become

more conscious of structure in writing. All of the readings dealt with individuals who were set off from the society in which they lived, and we felt that this was an appropriate theme for students who were about t find themselves in the same situation. The core readings were:

1. The Light in the Forest, Conrad Richter. We chose this because it might absorb Indian students in particular, and also because the basic question "Who a I, an Indian or a white man?" seemed appropriate to everyone.

2. The Pearl, John Steinbeck. Students identified with this too, but we particularly liked it because of the allegorical level and stylistic sophistication.

3. The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway. This novel has the same qualities as The Pearl. By now students began to recognize the theme of an isolated individual and his values.

4. Lord of the Flies, William Golding. Although this is a much more "arty" book, students easily handled the many allegorical levels, and they also recognized the almost computer perfect structure of the nov

5. The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner, Ala Sillitoe. This novella brought the students back to a more literal level, one which might rather closely par allel their own situation in a boarding school. This reading summed up the "individual" theme.

Around this core were numerous readings chosen by the individual teachers: short stories were used to parallel writing assignments; poems helped to bring ou the essence of a reading or writing as well as to deve op a feeling for the richness of language; finally, mos of us read a Shakespearean play, either Othello or Romeo and Juliet, in order to make the most of the lan guage while trying to get the students really excited about the kind of work they would certainly encounter in private schools.

The Study Skills Program

We decided to set the area of study skills off fro the writing program because we felt that to include ba ic skills in a writing course would dampen the freshne and enthusiasm of what the students were doing. There- fore we held study skills sessions at a different time and place, and we arranged to have Carleton students supervise the work. Thanks to their help, the program

was far more exciting than it could have been otherwise.

Each ABC student was required to keep a notebook for vocabulary and spelling. In it he kept a record of all words he misspelled. His Carleton supervisor did the follow-up on only these words. Each student was also responsible for finding one new vocabulary word each day. The word could be slang or technical, anything they could demonstrate they had a use for. The Carleton supervisor worked with the student in getting him interested in a personal vocabulary.

In additon to the notebooks, we set up weekly exercises, each one aiming at a specific skill. Our major concern was relevance. Hence we had them do a library worksheet on John Brown because we could find enough that would relate to a play they were about to see, Harper's Ferry, as well as to the Negro past. In dictionary work we were less successful. We had the students write precis exercises using articles about the Newark riots. We also did work on note-taking.

Thus the study skills program avoided the standard textbook approach as well as the classroom. It seems clear that the more a program like this appeals to the students' own interests, the more successful it will be.

III

Clearly, the whole English program as I have described it suffers from being a compromise between a free, purely inductive approach that takes the students entirely on their own terms, and a controlled, deductive infusion of learning. Given the ABC function as a bridge between the worlds of the ghetto and the private boarding school, I still think that our approach was sound. We ran the risk, however, of covering too much too lightly. Perhaps this is the hazard of any whirlwind summer program; surely the transfer from formless personal feelings to structured objective critiques in writing could be better handled over a whole year, or two years. The readings were better paced, but they also formed a compromise curriculum. The Indian world of the eighteenth century in The Light in the Forest, the Mexican world of The Pearl, the English reformatory of The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner, all of these are once removed from the exact experience of the ghetto, the world of Claude Brown's Manchild in the Promised Land. At times in Study Skills we met this world directly, but we still found ourselves trapped when we did a project on the dictionary. And why did we do anything with the dictionary at all? Because it is part of our accepted middle class educational structure which is the core of the participating schools.

Of course it is also relevant that most of these students have been part of that structure all along in their public schools which follow most of the same practices and accept the same success oriented goals. In fact, most of the ABC students have been "winners" in their local junior high schools. In a sense, therefore, our program was designed to encourage them to reconsider themselves from the vantage point of a fresh start. This is perhaps the greatest opportunity of all for an ABC student: he gets a chance to see himself apart from the world for a moment, and it is up to ABC and other educational institutions not to pressure him into hiding again behind another set of superimposed values.

IV

What would happen if the program teaching disadvantaged students were not in the very special situation of a Project ABC? An example of this is the Educational Enrichment Program at Milton Academy. Here, junior high school boys and girls a year or two younger than the average ABC student are bussed out from Boston every weekday for a six week summer session. The students are selected because they are under-achievers. It is the chief purpose of the program to help the student change his attitude toward himself and toward his education.

To do this, the English curriculum, like ABC's, centers on writing. The writing program is more purely inductive, however. There is no imposed structure whatever. All of the writing projects are descriptive in nature, and the approach to the description is left up to the student. In order to create the desire to write, students are taken on many trips to places of intense activity or emotional impact: the Boston markets, criminal court, a ruined fort far out in Boston harbor. The result is writing that brings out the students' feelings in a very sincere way. The papers are not marked in any way; students are helped to improve on their own terms rather than on the teacher's. Devices other than the written word are also used by students: polaroid photographs picture emotions; movies made by students expand this in a more complex way; music expresses an understanding beyond vocabulary.

With this kind of freedom for self expression, the students do gain a much greater sense of who they are. Back in their public schools the following winter, their grades don't shoot up, but their attitude often does. To keep this going, Milton

runs a Saturday morning program throughout the winter, and students are invited back for a second summer. Thus Milton's EEP is a continuing influence rather than a lightning encounter like Project ABC.

In each case, though, the problem of a bridge between two worlds is the same, for the Boston Public Schools are just as far from the heart of the so-called disadvantaged students as are the boarding schools with whom ABC works as are, perhaps, the students themselves who are finally at the mercy of these schools.

So it is the chief concern of programs for the disadvantaged to try to help these boys and girls out of their dilemma. This can be done in English by encouraging the student to express what is true within himself without assuming that what is true for the advantaged student ought to be true for the disadvantaged student. Along with this major concern, it is necessary for these programs to help schools to understand what these students have to offer. It does not seem to be an overstatement to suggest that an ABC student helps a private school that he enters a lot more than it helps him--that is, if the student is not submerged. If he isn't, there is a good chance that he will help other "advantaged" students, and some of their English teachers, to emerge.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CONTACT IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO THE NEGRO POOR

By NANCY S. REINHARDT

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No carefully chosen words, no antiseptic euphemism on the pages of an educator's textbook or a sociologist's journal, can understand and heal the bitter heart of the Negro poor. The poorest in this country are desperately poor, and they are more often than not from the black race. For the Negro does not even have the barest currency of an Anglo-Saxon white skin -- not even of a skin which can pass for white, especially if it also can be worn as a proud symbol of close ties with a "charming" foreign culture or can be clearly identified with the color of a rich past (the past, for example, of the American Indian, the Italian, or the Puerto Rican). But with his black skin and kinky hair the American Negro must wear the symbol of his bitter past, the slavery that cut him cruelly from his land and family. (Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, New York: Random House, Inc., 1964. See especially Chapter IV.) And, as if this mark of slavery were not enough, he also must live in a culture which for thousands of years has identified in its literature the color of his skin with the color of evil. The Negro poor, then, and their children are the truly "disadvantaged" of this country; and the problems of learning how to teach these "disadvantaged" -- and somehow of giving them back or allowing them to take back something of what has been taken away from them -- probably present the greatest challenge any group of educators, regardless of color, has ever had to face.

The euphemism "disadvantaged" is very difficult to avoid using and is probably less insidious than "culturally deprived"; nevertheless, it still sounds a little too nice, like one more attempt to veil and hence to escape from the most unpleasant realities of the problem -- the problem which demands effective action here and now and not more of the studies, articles and ineffective experimental programs that simply salt and pepper the land. The November 20, 1967, issue of Newsweek underlined the urgency of the Negro problem by developing among other things a specific education program not only for the next decades but for today, and by referring to its program for action as "The Negro in America: What Must Be Done" (emphasis

added). Similarly, with his uncompromising title to his story of his teaching experiences in several Roxbury ghetto schools, Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools (Houghton-Mifflin, 1967), Jonathan Kozol goes right to the urgent heart of the problem of educating the poor Negro. He cuts through the veils of white society's euphemisms and evasions by frankly exposing the most unpleasant realities of a rigid, self-righteous New England school system that imposes its middle class values; its limited standards of "good" speech, literature and art; and its subtly or blatantly prejudiced teachers on the Negro children in its demesne. The title of Kozol's book might sound melodramatic at first, but an unbiased reading between the covers will show how painfully honest the title really is -- how much more honest than those titles which typically garnish the many articles and full length books on "the problems of teaching the disadvantaged child."

No human being can effectively relate with another from a condescending distance wearing the self-righteous garments that protect his prejudgments and assumptions from the living challenge of the other person's perspective. Similarly, no teacher can effectively teach from this distance which destroys the possibility of creating mutual respect, a very important ingredient in good teaching. But above all, no teacher who is working with poverty children, in particular children from Negro ghettos, can begin to understand the full "heart and mind" of the living challenge before him without first examinging his own assumptions, values, and motives -- the comfortable "normal" shell in which he lives. If any youth needs the personal friendship and encouragement of a teacher, it certainly is the student who is confused about his own racial image and who comes from the poorest home situations. This student to begin with has too many of his own barriers to surmount without having others cluttering his way. Much has been written about these barriers. (See The Disadvantaged Learner: Knowing, Understanding, Educating, ed. Staten W. Webster, San Francisco; Chandler Publishing Co., 1966.) I need only mention a few of them. The ghetto student often comes to school exhausted from a sleepless night and a sparse breakfast; he is shivering with too few clothes in the drafts of an inadequately heated slum school; he does not have the confidence and the verbal tools to speak up in class except with perhaps the voice of his vivid but "hidden language" (the phrase John M. Brewer used in his article "'Hidden Language': Ghetto Children Know What They're Talking About," New York Times

Magazine, December 25, 1966, p. 32.) of the ghettos. When he tries to write he runs his sentences together or writes in fragments, makes endless grammatical and mechanical mistakes; he reads one or more years below grade level and finds it increasingly difficult to keep pace; he hates himself and the world for his failures, or he is confused and defeated by them and cannot understand why.

But the disadvantaged student's learning problems do not simply begin when he first comes to school. As Charles E. Silberman says, this student's school problems "begin in the cradle." (Op. cit., p. 277.) The more "advantaged" child, however, because of his varied, organized and mobile environment, acquires from infancy onward the learning skills necessary for developing the ability to work with abstract concepts. The typical teacher expects, and was trained to expect, all his entering students to have these skills so that they can learn reading and writing with ease. But while the middle class child is happily playing with blocks, the child from the slums is probably learning other things to help him survive in his hostile environment. He learns how to "turn off" the harsh, confusing sounds of his environment; he learns how not to plan ahead for futile hopes and meaningless abstract ideas, but to be content rather with the few immediate and tangible things available; he learns the rhythm and subtlety of many of the essential facts of human nature -- of love and hate, of greed, cruelty, and prejudice. This kind of an education may be an advantage in the ghetto, but it is of no avail in learning how to survive in a white-structured school system.

As long as there is this great disparity between the environment of the white middle class teacher and the poverty child, there will be barriers to mutual understanding and respect, and hence to effective teaching. The focus for change must first be on the teacher. He is the one who is more free to recognize and tear down his own barriers. He has to be the one to come to (not down to) the student, to learn something of the student's language, to accept the value of the student's own experiences and attitudes. In many experimental programs for teaching these students there is too much emphasis on the negative aspects of their lives -- their "disadvantages." In the 1967 Carleton College Project ABC, however, the entire staff met for a week of intensive orientation in order to insure effective organization of every possible detail of the program, but more importantly to set the tone for the summer, to establish a warmly creative and

personal atmosphere, and to emphasize the positive values of these students. (This was one of three 1967 A Better Chance programs. The organization behind these programs, originally called the Independent Schools Talent Search Program, was formed in 1963 and was designed to discover, select and place with scholarship in the ABC member schools as many "disadvantaged students" as it can afford.) It was important, then, for the teachers in Carleton ABC to reorient their thoughts, assumptions, and perhaps even their teaching methods. In part, anyway, I think this intensive period of orientation and self-searching is a good reason for the success of the Carleton program.

In such a program as ABC, organization to the last detail is vital because these students generally come from very disorganized and often broken homes, and because they crave, respect, and work more effectively within the security of a tightly structured curriculum. Nevertheless, because many of these students are also emotionally starved (unwanted children in desperately large families, on the too lengthy lists of overworked welfare agencies, or in the strange homes of only partially committed foster parents), they need more than organization; they must have the flexibility of an educational program that allows them "to sit at the other end of the log" with the teacher and indeed even to become friends with him. The prevalent puritanical assumption in most white schools that teachers and students cannot be friends and that a necessary distance must be kept is, I think, a fallacy. (See Jonathan Kozol's description of this attitude, op. cit., p. 111.) If there is mutual understanding no artificial barriers are necessary; the "proper distance" will be established naturally from genuine respect.

In order to establish the creative teaching atmosphere in which mutual respect and even friendship can thrive, it is necessary for the teacher to accept the positive aspects of this "disadvantaged" student's background and to teach him by building from the verbal tools and experiences he has already acquired. Take for example the ungrammatical speech and writing of the Negro poor, a language commonly referred to as inferior or substandard English. Even here there are positive elements. Just because Negro dialect does not fit the patterns of standard English, it does not mean that it is without structure and vivid content. Nor does it mean that by giving the student a big dose of traditional grammar -- textbooks to study and rules to learn -- his problems will be solved. The opposite in fact seems to be the case. A recent study by Marvin D. Loflin (published in the December 1967

English Journal, vol. 56, no. 9, pp. 1312-1314) indicates that "efforts to construct a grammar for Nonstandard Negro English suggest that the similarities between it and Standard English are superficial. There is every reason, at this stage of research, to believe that a fuller description of Nonstandard Negro English will show a grammatical system which must be treated as a foreign language." If Loflin is right then English teachers who want to help students who have this "nonstandard structure" in their speech must resist the temptation to classify these students simply as speakers of inferior English which needs quite a bit of touching up in contrast with the merely awkward (even "charming) English of students who speak a foreign tongue. (Charlotte K. Brooks rigidly classifies the disadvantaged as "culturally different" and "culturally deprived" where those who speak a foreign language have a different culture while those who speak an English dialect have a culture which is deprived. The Disadvantaged Learner, p. 515.) Research has shown that it is far more effective to teach standard English to the speaker of a nonstandard dialect as if he were learning a foreign language. (Ellen Newman, "An Experiment in Oral Language," 1965, The Disadvantaged Learner, pp. 510-514.) Certainly the psychological advantages of such an approach are reason enough for adopting modern foreign language drill techniques. The last thing an unconfident Negro student needs is to be told that on top of everything else his language is all wrong. There is no obvious reason why the Negro cannot learn standard English as a second language without giving up his "native tongue." Just as the Puerto Rican can continue to speak in Spanish with his friends and family regardless of how much English he learns, the Negro too should be able to keep any of the old language ties he wants without fearing that he is speaking "incorrectly."

In developing his English, then, both oral and written, and in improving his reading skills, the "disadvantaged" student must begin with and build from (not discard) his own verbal tools, experiences and concerns, and his own cultural foundation. As John M. Brewer explains, the teacher of standard English has to stimulate a natural interest in his students to overcome their "verbal deficit" and to "stockpile new standard words and phrases," (Op. cit., p. 35. Marvin D. Loflin agrees that the teacher must help "a nonstandard speaker extend his repertoire of rules to include standard structures." (Op. cit., p. 1313.) The emphasis in both cases is on expanding not tearing down. Similarly, in encouraging students to read with enjoyment, the teachers who have been most

successful are those who go to the student and find for him reading material that "hits him where he lives." (See Charles G. Spiegler, "Give Him a Book That Hits Him Where He Lives," 1964, The Disadvantaged Learner, pp. 524-532.) Jonathan Kozol shows very vividly how a student's natural curiosity and motivation is destroyed when the teacher does not give him reading material which can be related to his own way of life. Many teachers who as children learned from blatantly prejudiced or patronizing textbooks (see Chapter Seven in Kozol, op. cit., pp. 61-72) still teach their Negro students within the mental framework of these same textbooks.

With the high school Negro student whose reading and writing skills are underdeveloped there is not only the danger of boring him by giving him reading or writing assignments which are irrelevant but also the danger of insulting him with material which in subject matter is immature and condescending. The Negro student is particularly sensitive to any condescending attempts by whites to "help" him. Imagine how insulting it must be, for example, to have to read some silly story about the Bobbsey Twins when one is a Negro teenager who has learned at nine how one has babies and at eleven how not to have them. The discrepancy between the understanding, the perceptivity, and sophistication of such a student and his own reading level presents a problem in selecting relevant reading material. But the problem is not insurmountable. It is far better to err on the side of giving the student interesting but too difficult material than to risk turning him off completely from books in order to insure he can handle all the words.

While it is a mistake to give too simple reading material to these students when the most important point is to stimulate them with plenty of reading and writing practice from material that is directly related to the tangibles of their own lives, it probably also is a mistake to spend too much time discussing fiction and poetry in terms of general themes, symbols, literary structure, and other relatively abstract concepts. Discussing the problems the characters have to face and encouraging the students to relate these concerns to their own lives usually produce the most fruitful results. It is not surprising, then, that Jonathan Kozol found that his students learned more about the kind of powerful emotional effect good poetry can have on the reader by having them read Langston Hughes' "Ballad of the Landlord" than by forcefeeding them the "proper" antiseptic poetry of a standard public school curriculum or by teaching

them the technical terms of the sonnet form.

The importance of relevance and of direct personal contact between teacher and student cannot, I think, be overemphasized. The "disadvantaged" student is encouraged to expand his reading skills by seeing the relevance of good books to his life, by beginning with his own experiences and adding to them the world of books. By the same principle he can also learn to write more effectively about his feelings and ideas. The writing program of the 1967 Carleton College Project ABC was based mainly on this principle as developed in James A. Moffett's sequence of writing assignments -- the principle of expanding rather than "correcting" the skills already acquired. Whenever possible, these assignments were supplemented with or paralleled by assignments based on the literature studied. Moffett is at present a Research Associate in English at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, but many of his ideas are probably the result of his teaching experiences. Although the students he taught were generally "advantaged," the fact that his teaching theories work not only for his students but also for "disadvantaged" students (who have no patience with ornamental irrelevancies and who, in a sense, then, can serve as a fundamental testing ground for any educational principles) probably indicates that he has his finger on an important concept in teaching composition. This concept will probably be developed thoroughly in his book Teaching the Universe of Discourse shortly to be published by Houghton-Mifflin, but his general ideas are cogently presented in his article "Learning to Write by Writing." (The English Leaflet, Vol. LXVI, No. 4, The New England Association of Teachers of English, 1967.) His idea basically is that you begin with what you've got -- that you show by inductive methods the relevance of principles of effective writing to the student's daily life which is essentially one of communicating and sharing. This kind of an approach is appealing to the "disadvantaged" student because he is allowed to write for his first assignment whatever comes into his head without worrying about grammar, punctuation or spelling and without wondering what will please the teacher. He can find encouragement in just getting the words down on paper regardless of how they come out. Then with the help of the other students and the guidance of the teacher he can be shown how in order to share without confusion his spontaneous ideas with other people he needs a comma here, a more precise word choice there, and a clearer logical link in between. The student immediately gains confidence in his ability to write. He sees that writing really is relevant to

his own life and that on the basis of his natural intelligence and powers of reasoning he can order and clarify his personal feelings without having to follow some esoteric rules of composition.

One of the most exciting moments of my teaching at Carleton was at the end of the summer when I read an essay by a boy who had been behind most of the other students, who worked painfully slowly, whose writing had always been riddled with mistakes and who in an ordinary teaching framework probably would have been considered careless and even thoughtless. We watched the boy studying, though, and knew that despite the superficial appearance of his work and his attitude he cared very deeply and tried very hard. But one day, after finishing the Moffett sequence and while studying William Golding's Lord of the Flies, I gave them the statement that "today's civilized man is really a savage" and asked them to write an essay based on it. The quotation fired their enthusiasm -- especially that of this one boy. For what was really the first time he let himself go and drew on his own personal experiences with "savage" people, filled his writing with vivid detail and actually gave his essay such a tight, logical structure that I could refer to it in class as a model essay. Of course, he was elated but confessed that he had not really planned his essay -- that it "just came out that way." He had introduced all his ideas in the opening paragraph, developed each idea in logical order and in parallel form, even used rather sophisticated transitions, and concluded with a new slant that not only tied the essay together but led the reader forward by suggesting a fresh perspective for regarding the quotation. This essay provides a vivid illustration of the truth to the theory that good writing can be drawn out from the student: that there is an inherent logic to his feelings and experiences which he can share with others if he really wants to regardless of his verbal deficiencies; that writing is not some obscure art mastered by the lucky few who are able to catch on to the elusive rules; but that it is something everyone with normal intelligence can do if he just sits down and writes about the feelings that are really important to him and is then shown inductively how he can take what he has on paper and make these words mean something to other people. When the student really sees the teacher's task is not to torment him but to help him add meaning to his life, he respects more fully those involved in education and perhaps even feels a desire to know and learn from them as full human beings outside the one dimensional role of classroom teacher. In a small, closely knit and harmonious community such as that of the Carleton

ABC program, the opportunities were endless for this direct personal contact, for the direct encounter essential to genuine teaching. Probably the real teaching took place late at night when a student discovered with a little help the beauty of a new poem, or at dinner time when he joined in with the adults discussing the recent race riots, or at the theater where with his teachers he shared the powerful experience of a live dramatic performance.

Mrs. Reinhardt, a teacher at the Carleton ABC program in 1967, teaches English at Northfield School, East Northfield, Massachusetts.

HAIKU

By CONRAD DIERKMANN, O.S.B.
Saint John's University

English professors
Concatenate platitudes
Interminably.

* * *

The wash-line Long-Johns - -
A dour, sober professor's - -
Do brisk Watusis.

ENGLISH FOR THE TALENTED: A PROLOGUE

By JOHN C. MAXWELL
Director of the Twin City Institute for Talented Youth

For the most part, America's social, culturally, and economically disadvantaged live in cities. While Minneapolis and St. Paul have nowhere near the percentage of disadvantaged pupils that New York, Detroit, and Chicago have, the impact of the press and the lately fashionable tendency to talk and worry about the disadvantaged in the Twin Cities have given the impression that nearly everybody in the cities and the city's schools is disadvantaged. Such is by no means the case.

Cities, by definition, are studies in contrast. While the suburbs may have taken on the appearance of "middle-class" America, the cities have remained the vigorous meeting ground of diversity and complexity. In the cities, for each disadvantaged, there is at least one advantaged person.

With this knowledge and a conviction that talented students in the cities must be served, the Minneapolis and St. Paul schools set out to organize and run a Twin City Institute for Talented Youth in the summer of 1967. Backed by the energies and fund-raising capacities of civic leaders from the two communities, the Institute opened its doors to 329 able youngsters from nearly sixty private, parochial, and public schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The students had chosen one from among seventeen courses, and their enrollment in a single course constituted a commitment of their time and interest. No grades were given, no credit transmitted to the home school. Focus during the six week session was on learning for its own sake. And the students reveled in it.

Each course was designed by a carefully chosen master teacher along lines which he believed significant for youth and for the teaching of his discipline. Only one course - Russian - was conventional, and the teaching in that was extra-ordinary.

"English" was the major discipline of the Institute. This development reflected both the dispositions of the director, the interest patterns of the students, and

the proclivities of the instructors.

The most "English-like" course of the curriculum was the composition course, taught by Dr. Harriet Sheridan of Carleton College. The similarity with conventional English ended about with the name. Applying generous infusions from studies in rhetoric and other infusions from recent studies from syntactic and descriptive grammars, Dr. Sheridan gave creative slants to composition teaching based on her work in preceding summers with English institutes for teachers at Carleton.

Fred Lundquist of Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis verged toward the "humanities" in a course which he titled "Literature of Protest." Mr. Lundquist, a John Hay Fellow and veteran teacher, saw a particular aptness for city youth in considering the current waves of protest, concerned with Viet Nam and racial issues, in the perspective of past ages of protest ranging from the muckrakers of the twentieth century to the religious protest of Martin Luther and even back to the Greeks. In all these emphases, literature was the core of study, and along with study of ideas was concern with literary structure.

One of the themes of protest - alienation - was central to the study of "Literature and Man's Search for Community," a course taught by Bart McDonough of Minneapolis Marshall. Mr. McDonough's class of 9th, 10th and 11th graders, sped through a variety of literatures from Aeschylus to Albee examining both the ideas of the works and the modes of the literature examined. For many of the students in Mr. McDonough's class and in Mr. Lundquist's class, the literature was demanding and often unsettling, since the literature often attacked systems of value and belief held by the students. The flexibility of the Institute's structure permitted ready adaptation of materials and courses of action; and the two instructors were able to bring more affirmative literature into play to offset the "dark" literature of their original choice.

"Man and His Gods" was one of the themes of a team-taught humanities course offered by two teachers from the Edina schools, John Dahl and Richard Scanlon, now staff members in the departments of history and classics at the University of Illinois. The particular mark of the humanities course was the wide and frequent use of feature-length films. The classes, in addition to reading many and major works of literature, studied the import and style of such films as "The Bicycle Thief," "The Seventh Seal," the film opera "Boris Gudonov" and

"The War Game." The second theme of the humanities course "Man as Hero" involved the Eroica Symphony, the operetta "Girl of the Golden West," and such literature as "The Fire Next Time," "MacBird," "Lord of the Flies," and "Babbitt."

While the humanities courses lie midway between English and social studies, they and some of the social studies courses of the Institute have strong elements of literature and other elements of the English curriculum. In the course in Political Philosophy, taught by Gerald Line of St. Paul's Murray High School, such works as "Selections from Thomas Jefferson," "Essential Works of Marxism," and "Walden and Civil Disobedience" were read, and closely reasoned essays were required on political and philosophical themes.

Charles Caruson of Hopkins High School taught a course titled Urban Sociology in which communication (or its lack) was a central motif. Student interviews and critical engagement with protagonists in the issues of urban living called into play many of the principles of rhetoric and argumentation which Mr. Caruson employs in his usual work as a teacher of speech and English at Hopkins.

Gary Parker of Minneapolis' North High School offered an unusual course called "Active Dramatics." While not a course in the literature of drama, Mr. Parker's course involved students in penetrating analyses and formulation of the mechanisms which vivify dramatic performance. While hardly a "method" acting course, "Active Dramatics" required such a degree of concentration, creativity, and projection that the observer might be excused for thinking about Stanislavski.

Because it was thought of as a curriculum laboratory, the "institute" had an apt name. More than a summer school, which might focus exclusively on the needs and experiences of the students, the Twin City Institute sought to evolve new courses and modes of instruction. Its output was not to be measured in terms of student response (though that was important) but in what the experience yielded for other teachers in other schools.

With the exception of Mr. Parker's course, all the Institute courses are described in detail in a mimeographed booklet called "Gleanings from a Summer Institute" available from the Institute office.

(Schools or colleges may order a copy from: Director, Twin City Institute for Talented Youth, 2698 University Avenue, St. Paul, Minn., 55114; price: $1.00)

An article of this scope can only hint at the richness, creativity, and variety of materials and techniques that the instructors poured into their courses. Because of the openness of definitions, one cannot say with accuracy which courses were "English" and which were something else. The things which English generally seeks were widely sought in the Institute, because those who taught saw the significance of language and literature and often composition to the kinds of things which talented students need. English was the core, if not the course, of the 1967 Institute.

John Maxwell is now, as Director of the TCITY, a member of the staff of the Upper Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

THE TALENTED RECEPTION

By DANIEL KRUEGER
North High School

It is the reception, primarily. Otherwise teaching the talented does not differ in very many respects from teaching the average high school student. At least this was my observation last summer at the Twin Cities Institute for Talented Youth in which I assisted Bart McDonough of Minneapolis Marshall High School in a course entitled "Literature: Man's Search for Community." For the first time in my teaching career I was faced with a class of students who elected to take an English course for no credit; indeed they were willing to commute many miles to get that English course. They had to be a different breed of students from those I was used to.

In some respects our students were like any well-behaved class which, through an accident of scheduling, might be belched out of a computer to a fortunate teacher. They were pleasant, mannerly, and regular in their attendance. We were even surprised to find that the range in abilities was as great as it is in many high school classes, certainly as great as in enriched classes. They even had the same old familiar notion that in the end the teacher had the final "appropriate" answer to all the major questions. This, they found, was not the case, for the questions were never "who did what to whom?" But these students came to the class eager, not just willing, but eager to learn.

Probably the greatest pleasure in teaching them came from skipping over the frothy questions of plot and sequence, often even the questions of style and setting. Instead we plunged into the deeper question of why. It was here that these students excelled. It was here that the reception to our teaching made the difference. We never needed to quiz them on whether they had read the material. Generally we simply had to pose a lead question. The instructor became what every teacher hopes to be in a class discussion a moderator.

Since our course attempted to investigate man's search for community, we were faced with the initial question of man's existence: why does man inhabit the earth? Many of our students could answer this

question easily enough through their religious faith. Many others were unwilling to accept any mystical explanation for their existence but chose to believe that there is no purpose in it at all; therefore man must create his own purpose. Both of these lines of reasoning led to the next question: What must man do with his existence? This, then, was the essence of our course, for this was man's search for community.

Since our course was primarily concerned with literature and not philosophy, we attempted to discover what some writers, both ancient and modern, had to say about this search. The most obvious starting point seemed to be Sophocles. We presented a minimum of introduction to the Greek theater and went right on to a discussion of Oedipus' guilt. We traced the tragic hero's futile attempt to outsmart the Fates and the blindness of his stumbling into their hands. The students were especially interested in the idea that Jocasta in her boast that she had outwitted the gods was advocating chaos and the ultimate meaninglessness of life. It was then possible to discuss whether man has an obligation to uphold order in the world and whether he can be happy if he chooses not to.

It soon became evident to the class that we, the instructors, were not going to provide the answers. At first we were reluctant to state our own opinions for fear of squelching discussion. Instead we tried to challenge them to evaluate their own reasoning. We especially wanted them to see their own inconsistencies where they occurred. If their ideas stemmed from personal bias, we wanted them at least to be aware of that fact. We were interested in getting them to think carefully and explore all avenues of reason.

As soon as they realized that they did not have to attempt to read our thoughts in order to guess what we wanted them to say, they began saying the things that occurred to them. They were then willing to attack works which they knew that we instructors enjoyed. They could give us concrete reasons not based on personal bias.

This was the greatest breakthrough in the course, for we were then in the enviable position of being accepted as peers, but respected as teachers. From then on we could provide our own observations and interpretations confident that the discussion would continue to flow.

Apparently ours was not the only course to experience this phenomenon, for at one of our staff

meetings another instructor said, "My students couldn't care less what my interpretation is. They might be mildly interested, but that's all." He made this remark with the same kind of pride that we felt in our class. It no longer mattered what we thought of a given piece of literature because our students were using their own tools to discover for themselves what the author was saying and how well he was saying it.

As we continued in our reading, which was quite extensive (including three novels, four book-length essays, and thirteen plays), we drew comparisons and contrasts among the various authors. It was especially interesting to hear some of the students state that they found more realism in Oedipus Rex than in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. This, of course, prompted a discussion of the meaning of realism or the various meanings of the word. One girl insisted that realism is unimportant, but what is important is what the reader takes away from the work.

Many of the responses made by our students were the same as those that might be made by any group of students in an English class, but they were made voluntarily, without the usual maneuvering on the part of the teacher. And they were made with conviction without agonizing, tooth-extracting hints. Furthermore, no one needed to say anything. We resolved early in the course not to call on anyone who did not volunteer. For a while we thought that this might prove a mistake. Some of our students were letting the others carry on all the discussion. Then we tried a plan of separating the "talkers" from the "non-talkers." As we had hoped, we found that the "non-talkers" responded very well when taken away from those who they admitted overawed them in the larger group. This was primarily because two or three were far more articulate than the others. The rest, and especially the younger ones such as the ninth graders, had to search harder for the appropriate words. These students benefited, nevertheless, from exposure to peers who were often as articulate as their instructors.

As the weeks of the institute wore on, we found that we were in danger of losing some of our students' enthusiasm simply because of the great bulk of assigned reading. Therefore we discarded three or four books that we had intended to assign in addition to those already mentioned. Instead we showed several films, both feature length and shorter. Happily, we discovered that these served not only as a pause in the work but as a launch for further discussion.

Students especially responded to Ingmar Bergman's Seventh Seal and the British documentary The War Game.

The most interesting observation that came from a student after the showing of The War Game came as a result of a question in the film. The question was: Should we retaliate if we are attacked with nuclear weapons? One girl felt that we should not. "At least half the world," she said, "would be left. Even if it's not our half, it's people. What would we prove by destroying the other half?" Many in the class agreed with her rather mature response.

This response occurred on the last day of the institute, and it made both Mr. McDonough and me feel rather satisfied that the class had been a success, for it showed that our students were leaving our institute with some concern for humanity and its direction. Nearly every discussion that had occurred had gotten round to the idea that basically what humanity needs is concern for one another, or "The Art of Loving" as Erick Fromm presents it.

Our class was conceived with the intention of treating high school students as adults and expecting adult responses in return. Their responsiveness was just what we had hoped it would be. They proved equal to the task. It was their reception to our teaching that marked them as talented youth.

List of Readings:

Aeschylus:	The Agamemnon The Libation Bearers The Eumenides
Albee, Edward:	The American Dream The Zoo Story
Buber, Martin:	Good and Evil
Camus, Albert:	The Myth of Sisyphus
Chekhov, Anton:	The Three Sisters
Conrad, Joseph:	Heart of Darkness
Fromm, Erick:	The Art of Loving
Hoffer, Erick:	The True Believer
Miller, Arthur:	The Crucible Death of a Salesman

O'Connor, Edwin:	The Edge of Sadness
Shakespeare, William:	King Lear
Sophocles:	Oedipus the King Oedipus at Colonus Antigone
Waugh, Evelyn:	The Loved One
Weiss, Peter:	Marat Sade

Dan Kreuger, English teacher at North High School, Minneapolis, was an assistant teacher in the Twin Cities Institute for Talented Youth in the summer of 1967.

"THE SNOW SWEEPS BY"

By CECIL JONS
Cloquet High School

the snow sweeps past
to coat the earth
a casket white of
shell and down

rain, rain, rolls by
on March's arm
to sate the thirst
of shell-like buds

the clutch of winter
slips, yet grasps
stays life with old
and rotten breath

life's golden ally
circles round
laughs light at
our perplexity

then reaching down
one sparkling day
melts winter's stagnant
crust away

THE HEARTH

By SARA SEDGWICK
Student at the Twin City Institute for Talented Youth, Summer 1967, now a junior at Minnehaha Academy.

Cross-legged by the fireplace he sat
reading, his hair damp from his bath.
She spoke to him from across the room,
dark hair and yellow flannel.
He did not even look up.

A flush edged out over his cheeks from
the close, heated flames. She lifted
the wheaten hair off his pale forehead,
kissed him. Her slender neck pulsed the
scent of obscure memories.
He turned the page.

Touching the brass knob of the fireplace screen,
she watched the blue and orange slide along the logs.
Stepping off the rug, she bent nearer. The cold
stone tiles of the hearth shocked her bare feet.
She began to weep.
He did not even notice.

Slowly she walked upstairs, staring at the shadows
that lingered in the corners. Aching jaw,
tears spilling slowly, silently. In the darkness
she crept into bed. He laid his book on the mahogany
table,
and when he came she was already asleep.
He turned on the electric blanket.

LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION: DOES THE SUBJECT MATTER?

By GERHARD T. ALEXIS
Gustavus Adolphus College

"Call me Ishmael," familiar enough as the beginning of a great novel, might introduce as well almost any teacher of freshman English, for in the continuing confusion his hand is likely to be against every man, and every man's hand is against him. If he contends that the course should deal mainly with writing he will encounter someone else who denies that the art of composition can be taught, or hear from still another that his students come adequately prepared for writing which has become a subordinate, if still respectable, part of a course which focuses upon literature, say, or Great Ideas, or Burning Social Issues. Nor is that teacher any hidden persuader who claims that the proper study is language itself, and that solid work in linguistics will lead us all out of the wilderness. Still others, weary of uncertainty, suggest in the words of a once popular song, "Let's call the whole thing off."

Most of us, however, are probably convinced of the importance of what we are doing in freshman English, even when we change our pattern from year to year. Perhaps whatever is, is right, but this assertion finds little favor in our time. My contention at the moment is that the same vigorous arguments which reveal our disagreement about course content indicate our continuing interest and commitment. I think it is fair to say that here at Gustavus, where the ten of us in English have adjoining offices and share responsibility for the freshman work, conversation in offices, hallways, and around the coffee urn is more likely to turn to the promise and perplexities of "Language and Composition" than to anything else we teach singly or in common. As Professor Prausnitz wrote in Minnesota English (April, 1966, p. 17), "The freshman course is the single most important course taught in the department." Perhaps an expanded conversation in print can serve to inform one another of our various attempts, successful or not. On that assumption, at any rate, I should like to say something of what we are trying to do here and mention several assignments intended to fit our program. That program, as will be obvious, is neither wholly original nor of interest only to the English teacher at the college level.

A catalog description, despite being commonly a combination of hope and self-induced delusion, may supply useful clues. Ours says in part of our "Language and Composition" course for freshmen, "Designed to develop competence and sophistication in written expression, through the study of rhetorical principles and ...through readings on the nature of language, including the structure of English and problems in usage." What emerges from both the title and the partial description is a dual commitment to the practice of writing and the study of language. They are not to be disjunctive but in some workable sense complementary. (The rule of thumb within the department is that we give each concern equal time in our class discussions and that at least half of the theme assignments relate specifically to language.) The challenge to each of us is to find ever more effective ways to combine, not separate, what might seem relatively disparate objectives.

Let me then present several of my attempts, for which I make no grandiose claims. Suppose the rhetoric text (and therefore the class, no doubt!) has had a chapter or section on definition: one might appropriately ask the students to define some term, and our particular text has suggestions ranging from tragedy to the Absurd. Very possibly a discussion of classification follows, and here, for topics, the world is all before us. There could be, then, two writing assignments on as many methods of exposition, but the two would not necessarily have any mutual relationship, nor would either have to involve the history of a word, or its connotations, or its meanings in differing contexts. Could we define and/or classify in ways that would require closer attention to the subject matter of language itself?

In the attempt to do this and to get the students to think, investigate, and discover more on their own, I tried using a single key word for several related assignments. During one week students were to think through what the term Puritan meant to them--no other person, no book, was to be consulted--and then set it all down in writing. What resulted was a sort of outpouring of definition by extension which, while not completely without merit, tended to slight any venture toward logical definition and with fine careless rapture identified connotative meanings with the denotative. This led us to the desk dictionary to discover what more specific or objective range of meaning there might be.

Next I sent them out as wolves in the midst of sheep to engage fellow students in contrived conversations

calculated to elicit others' candid definitions of Puritan and its related forms. Amateurish as the whole endeavor was, it was nevertheless a speech situation which led to direct involvement--and sometimes ingenuity and skill--on the part of each freshman who tried to get ten unsuspecting Gustavians to define Puritan without their knowing it. Of course what happened eventually was that not all approaches were equally indirect, and students who had been hunted down once or twice became gun-shy. Members of the class still managed to amass a good deal of material, all bearing on definition and all in need of some sort of classification. The basis was up to each writer. Should the responses be cast into simple dichotomies, favorable--unfavorable, historical--current? Should there be adjacent pigeon-holes labeled according to the focus, such as religious, political, social, moral? Classification, it seemed, involved analysis.

Students had written the first compositon more or less dutifully, but the second awakened most to realize what a surprising and exciting range of meanings may be attached to a word, and there was a certain personal satisfaction in the staging of the interviews. (These took a good deal of time as well, complained a few.) The many possible bases of classification led to considerable class discussion. A next step, tracing our key word in the NED, struck most of them as humdrum, for at the outset the dictionary is likely to be regarded as a handy place to get an authoritative answer fast, and it takes a while before a series of massive volumes appears as one of the most absorbing means of discovering where we are by realizing where we have been. Nor did the class respond at first with much enthusiasm to the project announced as the basis for the term research paper: namely, the compilation over many weeks of a file card for every citation to Puritan encountered in the student's reading, assigned and leisure, scholarly quarterlies and Sunday supplements, from Homer to Hefner, so to speak. And yet, if they were not so many Squire Westerns, ready to turn from all other pursuits at the sound of the horn, they came to sense something of the lure of the hunt, and by the time they had gathered the material and arranged it, and had illustrated and documented their observations of possible meanings of Puritan, they had at least made a start toward an investigation of language where the results had not been specifically provided by some linguistic authority beforehand.

An alternate and less protracted exercise in our changing language was the assignment of a close examination of Ephesians 2 in six versions of the Bible:

the Douay, King James, RSV, Phillips, New English, and American Bible Society. This was basically an historical survey which compared the versions on stylistic and lexical bases. Library resources this time ranged from the NED to the New York Times on microfilm (for reviews of some recent versions). And more than one student discovered the Xerox copier as he set up his own system of parallel texts.

It goes without saying that such assignments about language are exercises in the art of writing in addition to being fact-finding expeditions. One must organize material, establish some central idea, define terms, and employ with some skill whichever methods of exposition are most appropriate. He must even, if I may borrow some phrasing, write in a selection of language really used by men while providing some coloring of imagination for the subject matter of language, an objective that some linguists seem to consider inappropriate.

Concern with language as subject matter for writing is not confined, of course, to historical approaches: far from it. What are the verbal appeals that go with the shiny new car in the advertisement? Thunderbird--"the car created for the few" and "loved by discerning Americans"! Toiletries "created," again, "for those immaculate men who will settle for nothing less than an air of effortless elegance"! I got some lively essays on these very claims. Or the opportunity for an exercise in semantics is almost forced upon one when some public-spirited message comes along, such as last October's full-page newspaper and magazine advertisement by the Tobacco Institute. This was a reprint of a front-page editorial in Barron's, with a text so slanted it was hard to take seriously. Before turning the students loose on a written analysis of bias words I selected one sentence for class discussion: "While Barron's tends to disapprove of bureaucracy and all its works, the foregoing passages, taken from a recent Federal Trade Commission Report to Congress, unmistakably smack of talent." We spent ten or fifteen minutes on that one sentence, as I recall. "Bureaucracy" did not take long; "smack of talent" was a bit less obvious; what took the time was that innocuous little trailer, "and all its works." After that we debated the extent to which a dimly perceived allusion could contribute to slanted writing.

An examination of place names is an aspect of language study which, like many others, sounds uninspired until the student gets to work. Our language reader included one essay which gave passing

attention to place names. As an outgrowth of class discussion, I asked each student to draw a circle around his home town, suggesting as a starter a twenty five mile radius. The distance is arbitrary, the only consideration being that of getting an adequate list of place names. Once again the would-be writer began with detail work, the listing of cities and towns within the circle, and perhaps lakes and bogs as well. Once again he confronts the problem of classification: is he to use Mencken's convenient listing in The American Language or set up one of his own? What are the sources of information? What reasoning, known or imagined, led to some of these names? Which might call for some colorful bits of narrative? What can be done to make of the whole essay something other than a reference list or postal guide? More than one young writer found emerging from behind the most pedestrian names the memory and myth of settler and Indian, promoter and politician, and a sense as well of the very shape of the land.

In my observation students respond readily to questions and curious illustrations in linguistic geography. How do we say, "I shall marry merry Mary"? For me there is no phonetic difference in the last three words, and the same was true in one class for all but a single student. She was from Vermont and thought our pronunciation ridiculous. Our interest in dialect study and in research methods for the linguistic atlases led me to attempt another essay assignment this past semester. The students were in no position to travel about the country to assemble data on lexical, phonetic, or morphological differences in dialect, nor did they have adequate training to do so. (Neither have I.) But might it be possible, as a sort of calculated risk, to use the raw material compiled by others for a different purpose in order to make some linguistic generalizations of our own?

I decided to try it over a period of several weeks. We put on open-shelf reserve a number of anthologies of local color fiction, for here was an attempt, at least, to reproduce the oddities in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar typical of some clearly specified section of our country. That there would be serious limitation was apparent from the start: much of the material was dated, the writer's knowledge of the speech of his characters had to be taken on trust, spelling pronunciation was inadequate as phonetic transcription, and the sampling that students could do would be hardly extensive enough for sound generalization. But with the common understanding that we were operating within such clearly recognized limitations, we went ahead.

The students generally enjoyed reading the stories as a change of pace. Most of them had no trouble compiling a respectable mass of citations, too, but some of the conclusions to which these led stopped hardly short of chaos. Should freshmen have known that dialogue in Hawthorne would be a poor index to the speech of New England? Perhaps they should have had a wider range of foreign languages; one wrote that "in California the influence was Spanish: 'canon' for 'canyon.'" Perhaps they should have been able to recognize eye-spellings, as in "I do believe, Hanner, you think 'riginal sin is nothin' but a bad stomick." Other curious statements showed that there was a need to cover the linguistic ground more thoroughly. "In a story set in Massachusetts," one student discovered, 'ketched' is used instead of 'caught,' showing an ignorance of past tense forms." (An ignorance of whose past tense forms?) Or, again, "The mid-westerners speak what could be considered plain English. There is no accent to speak of." (Plains English might almost have been more defensible, and as for that unintended play on words at the end...!)

A trained linguist might have been distressed by both methods and results, but I do not regard the assignment as a wretched failure. Two pages of dittoed statements like those just quoted gave us material for several days of valuable reappraisal. Students were more aware of dialect differences of various kinds, even to the point of detecting some in a largely homogeneous college population. Their insights had been derived, at least to some slight extent, from what they felt to be their own discoveries. One girl concluded, "People, no matter where or how they live, almost always think their way of talking is right; speech that doesn't match their own instantly becomes peculiar.... These same people fail to realize that a 'correct' dialect just doesn't exist; they continue to think their own is 'correct,' and anything else is inferior." The assessment may not have been original, but it was hers.

Now to make an end where I began. I do not contend that writing, which is hard work, suddenly becomes fun when its subject matter is language. It is hard work still. I do not contend that every student has stood up to cheer at the announcement of each new topic or that every essay cheered me. I do not contend that writing about language is the one way to handle freshman English. I do say that it is possible to develop greater competence and confidence in students who with

some sense of discovery write about that basic resource their language. This is one path, at least, in the wilderness.

Gerhard Alexis is Professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

(cf. Swift, "The Progress of Beauty"; Shakespeare, "Tired with all these, for restful death I cry")

By CONRAD DIEKMANN, O.S.B.
Saint John's University

Robert Herrick, "Upon Julia's Clothes" (1648)

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
The liquifaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave vibration, each way free,
O, how that glittering taketh me!

Variation # 1

Whenas in mini-skirt my Jule[1]
Prances and struts her way to school,
Octogenarians lose their cool.

But when one casts his eyes, and sees
The knocking of her knobby knees,
Lips puckered for wolf-whistles freeze.

Variation # 2

Whenas in shorts my Julia shows
Gross steatopygian adipose,
Then, then, plead I for ampler clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
Those massive haunches, rolling free,
O, what revulsion seizeth me!

FOOTNOTES: 1. Jule, for Julia: cf. Romeo and Juliet, I, III, 55-57: The nurse tells of her (deceased) husband's talking to Juliet: ". . .Wilt thou not, Jule? . . ."

Variation # 3

Whenas my Julia--much too skinny
To look her best in a bikini--
May draw an adolescent whinny,

I really think that many a man
Would be quite satisfied to scan
A somewhat lesser span of tan.

Variation # 4

Whenas my waitress, Julia, shows,
In Hebe[2] Proffering Nectar pose
An utter abscence of upper clothes,

I wonder whether I'm awake
And ask if there is some mistake.[3]
I came here simply for a steak.

Variation # 5

Whenas my Julia, in the nude,
Proudly proclaims herself no prude
But with the newer norms imbued;

Then, then, I think her mind's untracked.
No matter that she's nicely stacked,
I think she should be gunny-sacked!

Variation # 6

Whenas my Julia, bowing to
Clio's[4] stern cyclic law, anew
Shrouds herself totally, neck to shoe,

Then will men's curiosity
Again be strongly roused, and she
The ever elusive woman be.

FOOTNOTES: 2. Hebe: bar-maid (topless) to gods on Mount Olympus (serves ambrosia and nectar) 3. This line is stolen from Robert Frost's "Waiting by Woods . . ." 4. Clio, the muse of history. Or, substitute for the Clio's stern (no pun intended): Spenglerian.

Review of Books

JOHN DIXON'S GROWTH THROUGH ENGLISH

Reviewed by ANGELA DROMETER
John F. Kennedy Senior High School, Bloomington

Growth through English (published by the National Association for the Teaching of English, Great Britain; NCTE; and MLA, 1967) by John Dixon of Bretton Hall College of Education, Wakefield, is a report based upon the Dartmouth Seminar held in late August and early September of 1966. At that time a group of fifty people from England, Canada, and the United States met to discuss common problems in the teaching of English. (All participants were in some way involved with the teaching of English.)

The report, which is relatively easy, palatable reading, contains chapters of review, survey, description, suggestion, theory, and practice. Specific observations are both heart-warming and heart-rending: a little boy wrote a diary about catching a "femail newt"; a little girl observed about a rose that "the petals feel so soft/ Like velvet hearts dancing round each other"; a teen-ager stated, "I am afraid not only of losing my physical youth but any childishness I still have."

Two chapters are particularly interesting for the classroom teacher: Chapter 1, a survey chapter, entitled "A Method of Definition," and Chapter 3, a chapter of practice, entitled "An Analysis of Activities in Class." It should be pointed out that the latter is not practical in the sense of giving specific lesson plans but in the sense of offering workable generalizations for the classroom teacher.

According to Chapter 1, a survey of the historical traditions in the teaching of English reveals three views of the subject--English as a skill, as cultural heritage, and as a method of personal growth. The skills approach was fitted to an era when initial literacy was the primary concern. The heritage model stressed culture as a given to be transmitted, via lecture, to the younger generation. The current, or personal growth model, stresses exploration of experience (literature) and sharing of experience (language).

In dealing with language, the participants of the Seminar set up a distinction between speech and talk, a distinction that is maintained throughout the report. (Speech is formal; talk is informal. Talk is more important.) There is also the feeling that speech, as a school subject, should not be separated from the English classroom; "when talk is so central to English, there are obvious dangers in introducing a specialist course in speech." This brings up the old battle on the secondary level about whether the English department should be "just an English department" or a language arts department, a battle which has been resolved, in this area at least, by inter-departmental cooperation between speech and English teachers.

The concern for the importance of talk leads into the chapter concerning classroom activities. These activities are divided into two camps: (1) talk and drama and (2) writing and reading. "What unifies such varied classroom activities," said the author, "is the theme or aspect of human experience on which work centers." The prime spot given to drama reinforces a feeling that my colleagues and I have had that "for some reason, drama works--even with the slow learner."

The report works upon the premise that what begins as drama moves on subsequently to reading and writing, that this occurs between the ages of twelve and eighteen, and that these stages develop:

> ...improvising talk appropriate to vast ranges of situation and role; listening and responding in the fullest sense, while taking a role; discussing the approach to a theme, its possibilities, and finally the insights gained; writing scripts for one's own group; reading, learning and probing the meaning of a text--through private study, talk and enacting.

Such an approach would seem to satisfy the various cries for creativity, group work, close scrutiny of the text, in-depth evaluation, and independent study. A quarrel might be raised about the timing of "writing scripts for one's own group." Perhaps it should be the last stage of development.

The report also contains some basic assumptions, some epigrams if you will, for English teachers: (1) "...the most fundamental aim of language is to promote interaction between people." (2) "When life is felt as immediate and particular, our work in this role is

closest to the artist; as it moves toward generality it moves closer to the thinker. Perhaps English holds the middle ground." (3) The author also reaffirms a vague fear that many an English teacher has felt when thinking about inter-departmental cooperation. "Whatever the subject in the curriculum, the places where such knowledge can affect language in operation need to be more fully understood than they are at present." In all of this, the report consistently refers to the position of the teacher as one of trust, a sometimes frightening position to fill.

Besides these two chapters on the background of methods in teaching English and on classroom activities the report concerns curriculum continuity, teacher preparation, and implications for the future. There are matters for agreement and disagreement, things to be praised and things to be blamed. One rather strong indictment for us as English teachers is this: "there is a widespread and self-defeating refusal on both sides of the Atlantic to see that literature cannot be 'taught' by a direct approach, and that the teacher who weighs in with talk or lecture is more likely to kill a personal response than to support and develop it." (I recall the early years when I tried to "teach" every minute of the hour and tried to fill in all the silent spots, forgetting, as the report pointed out, that we all have known the occasion when the best comment was silence--not dead silence, but the shared silence of reflection and quiet brooding over what has moved us deeply. Another drama image comes to mind--the few seconds of highly complimentary silence before the audience breaks into applause.)

The single greatest complaint expressed by a reader looking for specific answers is that Growth through English did not list enough titles or places where specific classroom helps can be found. It is the same plea we make to co-ordinators, department heads, colleagues, book publishers, and teachers from other schools: where do we find appropriate material for the slow learner, the terminal student, the culturally deprived, and the inadequately prepared? Nevertheless, Growth through English is a book worth reading in snatches sometime during this new year.

Miss Drometer is department head, and English and Speech teacher, at John F. Kennedy Senior High School, Bloomington.

FORUM

In a recent newspaper account of a comment by Fulton B. Klinkerfues, president of the MEA, about the Domian report's conclusion that seventy-five per cent of the school districts have too few pupils to support the programs they need, he is said to have said: Curricula are "so meager that the small high school is failing to carry out the function of early secondary education -- that of exploration." We print the following two articles as encouraging commentaries on what cooperation between administrators and teachers can accomplish in overcoming the disadvantages that James Conant in his earlier report to the nation had already described, and that we in our state's Domian report are currently deploring. If there are those amongst Minnesota's small high school English teachers who would like to speak further about the advantages of small size, we invite their commentaries.

CURRICULUM PLANNING IN THE SMALL SCHOOL:
A REPORT OF THE PROCEDURES AT CAMBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

By MELVIN W. NORSTED and BARBARA RAMSELL

I.

Mr. Melvin W. Norsted,
Superintendent, Cambridge
High School District 911.

Approximately six years ago, I was invited to Lincoln, Nebraska, to speak at a conference of school administrators regarding various subject matter fields. My particular talk at this convention was in the field of social studies. However, I happened to find time to visit some of the other discussion groups. One that greatly impressed me was the presentation of the English people of what was commonly known then as the Lincoln Plan. I saw some of this plan put into action in the actual classroom and was greatly impressed with its possibilities. Upon returning to my school at Cambridge, Minnesota, I called in Mrs. Ramsell, who is head of our English department. I discussed with her the possibility of calling the staff together in order to initiate a continuing curriculum study in the field of English. It was then that Mrs. Ramsell received her help from the University of Minnesota

Project English study, and, two summers later, from the NDEA Institute.

Our first problem in administering such curriculum study was to find the time and the money for the English staff to accomplish the work. A summer workshop type of program didn't seem to fit our system, both from the money standpoint and the fact that my staff was not inclined to remain on for summer work. As administrator of the school, I decided to free these teachers one hour a week and bring in some outside lay people, all of whom were qualified teachers, to take their classes during this hour. The Board of Education felt very kindly toward the project and agreed to go along with what I had recommended. The thing that impressed me most as an administrator was the enthusiasm of the lay people whom we brought in. They seemed to feel that they were definitely contributing something to the field of education.

At the end of the school year, Mrs. Ramsell, as chairman of the department, presented to the Board of Education as a whole, the work they had accomplished in their year of curriculum study in the field of English. This was very well received by the Board. As a matter of fact, the Board then proceeded to provide for a curriculum study in the field of history patterned after the English curriculum study. In successive years we have done a curriculum study, on somewhat the same basis, in the fields of science and mathematics. I might add that the Board was so impressed with the work of the English department's curriculum study that they agreed to pay the English department staff for a week's extra work which they did after the end of the school year. The following year the school board agreed to pay for the English department staff to work on Saturday mornings on their curriculum study, so it became a continuing thing.

I sincerely feel that any curriculum study in the high school has to have united support from all the agencies mentioned. I think this went a long way in making this study possible. We have now been engaged in this English curriculum study and other curriculum studies for a period of five years, and I am sure that none of the curriculum studies in the various fields has cost the district in this five year period more than one thousand dollars per year. I feel that this is a very small amount if we are going to keep up with the current trends and techniques that are being developed in the various academic fields. As a result of the curriculum study in the field of English, we have developed a handbook for all our English teachers which states the aims and objectives and outlines the program for their particular course of study. We have done this

in an effort to produce a program of vigor, interest, practicality and challenge.

In addition to this, the Board of Education has seen fit to give extra pay to all of the various department heads, so that there is some remuneration for their efforts in the way of curriculum leadership. I might also say that our English teachers this year are teaching only four hours a day. So we are giving them more time to do individual work and more time to spend with students. Interest in the new English curriculum was also responsible for at least two new teachers' decision to join our faculty this year.

II.

Mrs. Barbara Ramsell,
Chairman, English Departmen
Cambridge High School

This report of our four year English curriculum program is certainly not advanced as a model program. If any of the ideas which have worked for us can be useful to other small schools we will be pleased. But, since the basic tenet of planning such a program is that each school must adapt it to fit its pecular needs, we urge caution in assuming that situations and experiences will be similar.

Probably our English curriculum study in Cambridge would never have gotten underway had it not been for the nagging of both men and ideas. One of the "nagging" men was our former high school principal, the late Mr. R.B. Ernst. He regularly greeted me in the halls of C.H.S. with the question: "When are you going to do something about the English department?" The other man was Mr. Duane Scribner, then of the staff of Moorhead State College, who blasted my comfortable alibis with information he gave at an MCTE meeting at the University of Minnesota. It was there that I heard about the NCTE check list for the evaluation of the language arts program appearing in the April, 1962, issue of the English Journal. It was there, also, that Mr. Scribner asked his fateful question: "If you haven't started a curriculum study, when are you going to?" Shortly after that, I heard about Project English at the University of Minnesota, and through participating in it as well as the NDEA Institute held at the University two summers later, I finally felt partially equipped to initiate an English curriculum study for grades 7-12 at Cambridge High School. That was four years ago.

Looking back, I think the most important aspect of our four year experience was maintaining the feasibility of the project. First of all, I, as a department chairman, needed to believe it could be done. Moreover, I had to believe it was needed severely enough to be worth all the grief which Mr. Scribner forecast as part of such a program. Secondly, the members of the English department, as well as the school board and administration would have to share these beliefs. All of us agreed that the products of our English language teaching left something to be desired. But what could we do about it? Where would we start? How would we provide for differing opinions in the department? Since none of us felt expert in this field, how would we know that our efforts would prove worthwhile?

The assumptions built into the NCTE check list for evaluation of English programs gave us a set of criteria of excellence for which we have been increasingly grateful. It provided an excellent inductive device for total staff discovery of glaring deficiencies in the program. These weaknesses were evident at all levels, not just a few. The need for personal defensive arguments and the ill will engendered by such arguments were precluded. The project of upgrading the entire program became and continues to be a joint venture.

Once we had convinced ourselves we might, by following the check list step by step, improve our program, two other problems threatened the project's feasibility: time and money. We knew it was useless to ask for the kind of summer workshop program already successful in so many urban and suburban schools. Even if our board could have agreed to finance such a program, we could not interest enough of the staff in staying in Cambridge during the summer to work on such a project. And what about money? At the time, we had a department head who was neither paid for nor given extra time. The thing wasn't feasible. We might as well give up.

During one of the buzz sessions at the University of Minnesota Project English meetings, somebody had given a suggestion. Why not hire lay help on a substitute basis to relieve departmental teachers for curriculum work? We submitted the plan to the school board. A list of qualified lay people was compiled for us by our local branch of the AAUW. Lay people were contacted and were enthusiastic about the idea. The Cambridge English department, grades 7-12, plus a representative of the elementary school were released every other Friday for one hour to work on curriculum. We were in business. True, the pay situation was not ideal. The lay helpers were paid, but the teachers were not. In

spite of this fact, most of the staff not only made great efforts to help in the initial stages of curriculum appraisal and revision, but also worked three times as long in preparation for the released hour as the hour itself. One cannot expect such initial dedication to maintain itself, however. The next year, since our plan had worked so well, the board decided to use it for a curriculum study in another department. It was also decided that we would continue our study after school. Needless to say, the study ground to a screeching halt.

This time, when we approached the school board, at least we had the results of the year's work to show, and the vision of a possible, but unaccomplished program to present. The board agreed to provide, for the first time in the history of Cambridge, a week's paid curriculum study at the end of the school year. This forty hour session was highly productive, and this time the teachers themselves were paid for their work. The fourth year of the study we were unable to assemble the staff during even one week of the summer; therefore we substituted regular Saturday morning sessions for which the teachers were again paid. Our school board at present recognizes that curriculum revision and improvement is a continuing process and a responsibility of the school itself. We now feel that the problems of time and money for such a program will never be insurmountable as long as the board, the administration, and the staff can work out their problems cooperatively.

What procedure did we follow in revising curriculum? Here again, we used the trial and error method. We reasoned that we had very little time in which to work, that the sooner we could get something down on paper, the sooner we could change, correct, improve. We realized that the initial discussions of philosophy can become delayed in semantic polemic. Since the assumption of "correct" answers to the NCTE checklist of questions comprised a philosophy in itself, we decided to adopt it temporarily, plan our program around it, try it, and then decide to accept or reject it. We then decided we could only attempt one aspect of the check list at a time. Since our teachers had been teaching in almost complete isolation, one of the crying needs was to discover what <u>was</u> being taught. We arbitrarily started with literature. We obtained a large roll of newsprint and enumerated selections taught, grades 7-12, left to right. When we attached this chart to two walls of the small room in which we met, we were amazed at the glaringly apparent overlap. We were, for example, teaching the same poem at four

different levels! Currently, a permanent feature of our written curriculum study is an "overlap" page on which are listed problem selections and placement recommendations arrived at by the entire staff. This page is revised annually.

From this initial analysis of our teaching of literature have come, for us, far reaching changes. We now have planned studies in the field of mythology, grades 7-12; we are making efforts to use multi-level materials aimed at student independent reading skill development; we are systematically determining the reading level of the selections which we teach; we are making an effort to match the child's reading ability with the selections taught; we are making greater use of paperback books and mass media coordination. Professional materials to aid the slow reader are now used sequentially. A film library in the humanities was purchased in cooperation with three other schools in the area. Recently, we revised our program for greater coordination with social studies, into an American emphasis in tenth grade and world emphasis in eleventh. In 1968 we hope to provide from four to seven possible areas of elective courses for our twelfth graders. From the initial selection-oriented literature program, we have moved to the more flexible student oriented thematic unit program. These units emphasize the behavior aspect of language study. We are indebted for many of our ideas to the University of Minnesota High School and Project English. We are also indebted to the Language Arts Consultant of the State Department of Education, Mr. Gerald Kincaid, and to our superintendent, Mr. Melvin Norsted, for their aid and guidance. Although we have gained many ideas from other curriculum studies which we have been able to buy, from discussions at professional meetings, from summer school sessions and from professional articles, most of our ideas have come from the staff members themselves who, each year, discuss, evaluate, suggest, revise and implement new developments. These revisions are gathered together during the summer by the department head and are printed in the new booklet.

We have many problems. We need a better program to take care of the needs of the slow reader. We need a consistent vocabulary program which produces results. We need a better program to help the poor speller. In spite of the fact that we are trying to teach a language oriented curriculum, language studies are often bypassed by teachers who seem afraid to try new materials. A new series of Saturday morning in-service training sessions is now being planned to help new teachers with unfamiliar materials. They, in turn, should be better

able to evaluate these materials at the end of the ye
We now have recommendations concerning both compositi
and spelling given us by former staff members. It
would seem, however, that these recommendations are
either too impractical or too obscure, since they have
been used very little. The problem of presenting
material succinctly enough to be used by bewildered,
busy first year teachers is a paramount problem for
the small school with its rapid turnover of personnel.

Our gains are encouraging, however. We now have a
seventy-five page booklet which seems to be used by
our teachers. Academic department chairmen are now
paid for their time and given extra time in which to
work on department business. Community leaders have
participated in our program and are enthusiastic about
it. Our teachers seem to be more involved in the
total English program and seem to be more inspired by
their work. We are better able to provide for indi-
vidual differences among our students. Our materials
are more interesting and varied. We are offering a
more comprehensive progam. We are duplicating effort
less often.

We hope that future tests will prove that our Eng-
lish students are improving in proficiency, understand-
ing, and appreciation of man's use of his own language.

This report was given at the MCTE convention in Rochester in May, 1967.

A WORD TO THE WISE YOUNG POET

By JOHN HASSLER
Bemidji State College

Rhyme and reason
Are out of season.