minnesota english journal

FOCUS   OUR WORLD OF VIOLENCE

FORUM   approaches to composition:
new-born and renewed

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minnesota english journal

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PREAMBLINGS

We are accelerating to the end of our academic year, which has characteristically been a time of melancholy for us. It's not that we can't use the vacation, but that we think back over what we had hoped to do, and didn't. We don't dare to think about what we did do, and shouldn't. Better to look to the future, better even to make some hopeful predictions than to waste in regret.

One thing is clear: drastic changes in the structure of the curriculum and, as well, in the preparation of teachers lie ahead of us. By the first, we don't mean dropping good old books in favor of anything from today, though there certainly is a strong movement in that direction. We mean, instead, rearranging the traditional Unit of study system into more mobile blocks or mods or terms, preferably elective, open to all three years of the senior high school. Much more fun for the teacher, and much better sense for the student.

And we mean shaping our share of the curriculum so that it produces some observable effects. The time is now that we acknowledge that education is either a form of baby sitting that keeps the kids off the streets and out of the job market, or a force to direct the future voters of our troubled country towards rational judgments. Away from violence, but never away from dissent. Knowledgeable about orthodoxy, respectful where it deserves respect, critical where it deserves change. We'd like, for example, to see an elective course in the Bible taught in the high schools, as a part of the history and the literature of our culture. A group within the state, headed by Roland DeLapp of North High School, is working towards this end.

We'd like, also, to see an elective course in Composition, written and spoken, with a component on the subject of fallacies, focused on articulate dissent, convincing consent.

"Observable behavior," "performance criteria": these are the terms that have the greatest significance for our teaching future. Much as we may dislike anything that smacks of mechanization or oversimplification, we can still try to sharpen our objectives and our teaching techniques from lessons learned from the chief text of educational behavioral objectives: The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (I: Cognitive Domain; II: Affective Domain; edited by Benjamin Bloom; pub. by David McKay Co., Inc.).

Agreed that we must steer clear of jargon and ritualism, we ought nonetheless to test for whatever promises to help us in our field of English and whatever should be discarded. Better to do it for ourselves than to have others impose it on us. We are planning to include an article on the subject of behavioral objectives in a forthcoming issue of the Minnesota English Journal.

Talk: Write, talk back. We tried a modified form of Robert Zoellner's tape-recorder technique (See C E, January 1969, and M E J, vol. V, no. 2, et al.) with two Freshman composition classes this year, in so informal a way that the word "experimental," glamorous though it is, must be denied us. We asked each class to write on an assigned subject, after the usual preliminary exploratory discussion, in order to get an idea of the quality of each student's writing as it had developed out of traditional forms of instruction. Then we gave to all our students cassette tape recorders and a supply of tapes and asked them to talk their next themes, play back the tapes, and write out what they chose for the final version (before the usual revisions, that is). Then we collected the tapes from those students who were willing to let us have them (and not all were) and listened to them in conjunction with the written versions. What we observed: the talk rambled, stopped and started, picked up momentum, flagged, grew bawdy or angry. The written versions were more stilted, better organized. They sounded careful. Not surprising.

But this is not the whole story. We are not rejecting the method by any means. As the last step, we asked each student to write us a note about his reactions to the tape-recording technique. The reactions ranged from regret that it had not been available in the early formative years, to enthusiasm about its liberating effects, to indifference, to open hostility. Some welcomed the recorder as an aid to memory, to recalling tangents that could be redirected in the written form; some suspected it as an enticement to vain verbal posturings; some valued it as a disciplinary measure that forced them to think; some liked the chance to develop the skill of talking to some purpose; some thought that students should exchange tapes amongst themselves as stimuli to their own reflections before their ideas became locked into place. The chief objections were to the inhibiting effects of the machine, effects which would probably be reduced with continuing use, and to the time-wasting of expressed talk on the part of those who already felt themselves to be competent silent thinkers. A third, interesting objection to the "dimensional" limitations of the

machine came from students who liked to work rhythmically or visually with sentence structure and who needed a panoramic view rather than the linear chronological sequence of the recorder.

All in all, we think the advantages of "Talk: Write" outweigh the disadvantages. We'd like to see the technique used earlier in educational life and become optional later. Even though we're held accountable for two lost recorders.
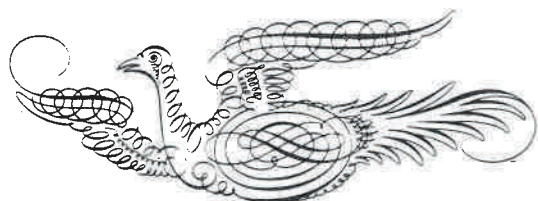
Summer Calendar:
"Reading in the 70's" Conference, June 22-26, at Saint Mary's College, Winona. Directed by Brother Leonard Courtney.
Workshop in Linguistic and Rhetorical Analysis of Literature, July 6-17, at Bemidji State College. Directed by Lorraine F. Cecil.
Second Annual Upper Midwest Writer's Conference, July 20-31, at Bemidji State College. Write to Bill Elliott or Ronald Lycette.

approaches to composition: new-born and renewed

Mr. Bacig's "A Humane Rational For Composition" and Mr. Larmouth's "Models in Remedial English: an Intermin Report" are planned as complementary articles. The writers have team-taught a course in remedial composition and have co-operated in writing the articles. Neither feels that the different approaches illustrated by the articles are sufficient in themselves. An effective composition program, like effective writing, will balance the demands of freedom and discipline. In addition, the writers feel that effective writing programs demand a care-ful analysis of the various tasks involved in the composing process. Such an analysis suggests that we may need to use radically different techniques to help students achieve freedom of expression and technical competence. The articles, then, are an attempt to suggest some strategies for helping students to write, speak and think imaginatively and skillfully.

A Humane Rationale for Composition

by TOM BACIG
University of Minnesota, Duluth

In my first year of teaching I told my class of high school seniors that while I would justify most of what I taught on "shaky" humanistic grounds, I could with equanimity claim that what I taught them about writing would be useful, would help them to achieve success in college, or would make them better equipped to survive in the business jungle. At this moment I can only attribute my arrogance at that moment to a view of the arena of discourse no wider than the Freshmen English course and the college paper, and a naive faith in the efficacy of teaching a paragraph rhetoric. That same naivete produced a three week writing unit, taught simultaneously to three sections of senior English, requiring students to write a paragraph a day and the teacher to read 75 paragraphs a day.

Suffice it to say that at the end of three weeks my office was full of paragraphs that students didn't want to write and that I didn't want to read. I don't mean to imply that the students didn't learn some things, or even that the only thing they learned was to dislike writing more than they already did. But whatever they learned had no more to do with them as human beings than most Freshmen English programs or college papers do.

If I were teaching that class now, I might begin by asking the students why anyone, students or teachers, ought to compose. How many essays will the typical student write after he leaves the schools? How many do teachers write? If the student becomes a politician, will he write his own speeches? Will he turn out handwritten drafts of letters to his constituents? If he's in business, will he write out his correspondence? As a matter of fact, some equally pertinent questions might be asked about his experiences in the schools. In how many of his classes does he write essay exams or term papers? How often is he called on to deliver prepared speeches in his classes? When he moves from the high school to the college, does the demand for "composed" speeches and essays increase or decrease? We might press additional questions here, but I think the point is already perhaps too well made. Perhaps I could then get my students, with just wrath, to turn to the larger community and proclaim that if "they" want us to learn composition "they" had better make certain that every teacher becomes a teacher of writing and speaking, and that business men and senators stop using secretaries, dictating machines and ghost writers; perhaps the students would settle for becoming competent secretaries and ghost writers to fulfill the increasing demand for such people in our society; or they might, as I hope they would, reject the utilitarian rationale for instruction in composition altogether.

Once they have rejected the utilitarian rationale, I'm not sure that my students might not go on to reject learning to write. But if I can assume that they might press the question a bit further, I believe they might discover a new rationale, a rationale of a higher order and broader scope. Without trying to detail sources or develop the argument completely, I think my students would discover that the real rationale for writing is in its humanizing potential, its capacity to help us order our universe or discover our "selves." Perhaps they might even point out the private contemplative experience that writing makes possible, noting that privacy is hard to come by in mid-century America, or that in writing they could for a change, revel in their differences, their idiosyncrasies, their individuality, thereby coming to new understandings of themselves and others. If my hypothetical (and wonderfully perceptive) students did reach such conclusions, they would not, I think,

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be far from agreeing with the statements made by the CEEB's Commission on English in Freedom and Discipline. The commission suggests that what one learns in learning to write is to "...care for the truth, care for the audience, care for one's own integrity." It is also I think what John Holt had in mind when, in introducing Herbert Kohl's Teaching the Unteachable, he said:

> ...What we have to recognize is that it is the effort to use words well, to say what he wants to say, to people whom he trusts, and wants to reach and move, that alone will teach a young person to use words better. No doubt, given this starting point, some technical advice and help may at times be useful; but we must begin from here or we will make no progress at all.

If we were operating from a humane rationale like the one my hypothetical and incredibly cooperative students discovered, Mr. Holt's statement could at least, serve as the starting point for a new approach to composing. Before taking up that new approach, I want to enter a few disclaimers. I want to avoid the too easy rejection of concern with "technical advice" that Mr. Holt mentions. One of the easiest errors to make in the pursuit of freedom is to ignore the demands of discipline. The task of helping students to express themselves must involve a concern with providing students with the conventional means that a linguistic community uses to communicate. While it is obviously foolishness to begin teaching children to compose by teaching them to spell, it is equally foolish to suppose that they can share experience fully using the written language, if they do not become minimally competent in spelling and in using a dictionary or word list. As a matter of fact, perhaps the problem here results principally from our blurring of some important distinctions between teaching our students how to deal with questions of substance and questions of form, a bugbear that is not new to us.

For the moment, reservations in hand, we might do better to consider briefly the amazing fluency of our students with the spoken language. In the light of our concern with expression we ought to note that, while our students are not necessarily brilliant at declamation or debate, they do in most informal situations succeed admirably in expressing themselves. They invent elaborate excuses for lateness or missing work, they hoodwink assistant principals and us, they speak of love, war and politics with one another, they coin new phrases and words, they swear and joke. When we note that, though to be sure they are more and less successful in these various uses of language, most of them, despite tremendous differences in IQ, reading ability, and Iowa Basic Skills scores, do manage to use the spoken language to express an incredible range of nuances and

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understandings, a question suggests itself. Why is their formal speaking and writing, their effort at composing so unsuccessful?

I don't think we need to look far for the answer. Let's contrast their experiences in learning to speak and write. The infant babbling in his highchair produces, accidentally, DA DA. Much to his surprise, suddenly he is the center of an almost incredible uproar. He is being patted, poked, kissed and fed. Since most of this is eminently enjoyable he soon establishes some connection between action and consequence. As he continues to make noises and receives encouragement, he begins to produce more complex utterances, imperfectly. How are these imperfect utterances treated? Imagine yourself in the living room of a friend whose small child has just entered the room and produced a stream of what appears to be complete gibberish. His mother responds, however, with complete understanding and gives him a cookie and a glass of milk. The experience is almost enough to make one doubt one's sanity. Gradually, of course, mothers and fathers, friends, relatives, and strangers force refinement of those early crude utterances, and one variety or another of English, French or Spanish arises. But the process begins in love and acceptance.

Contrast Johnny's first experiences with producing the written language. Pen in hand he is told to reproduce a meaning-less series of chicken scratches arranged in a particular order. In some cases he is praised when he finally manages to write "johnny" for the first time, but as often as not he's almost immediately informed that his work isn't neat enough or small enough, or that it's backwards. Far too frequently his experiences in sophisticating his skills in composing begin and end by being judged as totally inept; and in almost all cases no one ever reads and reacts to his writing as though it really mattered to Johnny or to anyone else. By the time he is in high school or in a Freshman English course his papers come back bloody rags, demonstrating his increasing weakness. We could talk just as easily about his experiences in preparing speeches, though "show and tell time" tends to qualify our picture a bit. In either case the effort to write or prepare speeches does not begin in love or understanding. It begins and ends in evaluation and judgment.

Of course all of this is an exaggeration and probably ought to be carefully hedged. But exaggerated as it is, it comes too close to the truth. When we must admit, as most of us do, that for most of our teaching lives we've never taught composition; we've simply graded papers and written critiques of speeches, the exaggeration doesn't miss the mark by much.

If this is the case, what do we need to do to change our practice, to make composition humane and humanizing? And, moreover, what can we do to provide our students with the skills

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they need to achieve higher levels of self expression? While no one can claim that any carefully tested, surefire methods to accomplish these goals are immediately available, it does seem clear that there are some basic principles that generate particular practices that ought to inform our teaching of composition. We ought, for example, to make the simplest kind of application of Bloom's taxonomy (Benjamin Bloom, et al., Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain; Handbook II: Affective Domain, New York: David McKay Co., 1956, 1964) to our discussion of composition. In a word, we need to recognize that there are effective or attitudinal dimensions to the teaching of composition. We ought to recognize that the task of making students want to write and speak or making them like writing and speaking is a task re-quiring strategies different from those necessary to build habits of punctuation and spelling. In this regard the most obvious need is to convince students that they can use the written language to share experience, to shape experience, to discover things about themselves, without fear of being graded or evaluated, without fear of teacher reprisals, or administra-tive outrage. This may involve learning to hear our students speak of the failings of our schools, our colleagues, and ourselves. We may even have to admit we are not all good writers, and ask our students to help us with our own writing. But if we can find honesty and integrity in our student's compo-sitions, if we can make our students want to write, even enjoy writing, the pain of facing our own weaknesses seems a small price to pay.

Another set of basic principles or processes that ought to inform our teaching of the "new" composition emerges from considering the "old" rhetoric. If, as many have suggested, the trivialization of the old humane rhetoric has consisted in part in dropping any real concern with the canon of invention, we might accept that one of the ways to broaden and humanize con-temporary rhetoric would be to reintroduce a concern for inven-tion. More precisely, what we need to reintroduce are the playful and creative dimensions of the composing process. For Aristotle, invention, the search for the available means of persuasion, followed dialectic, the search for truth. Using the terms in these senses, perhaps it would be more accurate to say we need to reintroduce a concern for dialectic or discovery. In other words, we need to go beyond asking our students to sort the conventional wisdom either by getting "sources" from the library or by employing updated versions of the classical canons of invention. The library research paper or Edward Corbett's Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York, 1965) are useful, but must be transcended. To accomplish our transcendence we will have to give up one debilitating canard. We will have to stop assuming that imagination is a gift of the gods or a genetically coded capacity. We will have to recognize that all of our students have creative potential

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and that we have not met our responsibility as teachers when, in starting the creative writing "unit", we say, "Be creative!"

Creative behavior can be and has been analyzed, and some exercises in creative thinking have even been suggested. William Gordon's Synectics, for example, while it is often mechanistic and simplistic, does suggest some techniques that might be used to encourage creative pre-writing. His discussion of the use of personal analogy is a case in point. Asking students to identify themselves with inanimate objects, thus giving the objects the capacity to respond to and sense the world around them, can produce interesting notes which in turn can be used to write descriptive poetry or prose. In the following example a student began by trying to describe a drinking fountain. While I can't avoid smiling at the choice of subject, I can't help but be taken by the resulting notes. Something in them makes even water fountain descriptions worth the effort. Perhaps "making the familiar strange" is its own reward.

> Sleek and silvery
> Every angle gleaming
> Upright, proud
> Austere and haughty
> Metallic taste, frigid
> Galvanic to the touch
> Warmed infrequently
> By pulsating fingers
> And suspended exhalation
> From the yawning
> Abyss of
> Copper,
> Caves
>
> Who would guess
> That through
> These steely coils
> Flows the
> Sustenance
> Of Life.
>
> —Glenda Holt

Clearly the object of such exercises is not to produce poems or prose. Instead the object is to encourage students to play with language and perception. Out of such play discovery or poetry may emerge, or if it doesn't, we might at least hope that a tolerance for the idiosyncratic and a sense of the freedom within the constraints of language and perception will.

Having thus made a start at "taking our students where they are," at becoming a real audience for whatever it is they have to say and at helping them sense and develop their creative potentials, we can take up the task of "providing technical advice," of developing skills. Here we may have much to learn from a careful study of the language acquisition process. We might also learn from the classical rhetoricians of the Roman schools and our colleagues who teach foreign languages. We might note, for example, the way in which parents accept rough approximations initially, and then gradually demand closer compliance with accepted usage, insisting finally on near perfect performance. We might also notice the unbelievable number of repetitions that parents and foreign language teachers encourage. We might ask ourselves why the classical rhetoricians had their students spend so much time memorizing and imitating the speeches and writings of the "masters." Mr. Larmouth's companion article develops these matters in some detail.

I want to produce some evidence that the game is worth the candle, but I find this hard. My own most recent work in teaching composition may be with students who are too far gone, too much products of what we've been doing in the name of utility. I will say, that I have had some experiences in my advanced composition course, a course designed for prospective teachers, that reinforce my present views. In that course we have had some success in getting students to want to write by avoiding grading their work. While I think the mechanics of the operations of the course are not important at this point, you might be interested in a piece of student writing that indicates one potential outcome of providing students with freedom and finding that they do wish to write.

A VERSION OF A FABLE
by
James Johnson

...the howling moon was lost falling in a wilderness changing under a pair of Jack Frost underwear as I lay by my sunshine companion asleep in the dark cave of love. A self-made grizzly bear growled awakening my absent senses.

"Out of the cave." It was purple at first.

"Out of the cave." Again but less purple.

He lit a cigar and filled two glasses with brandy. He gave me one glass.

"Skoal."

"But my companion?"

"That is another dimension of these lonely bloody woods.

Skoal and I shall tell..."

We skoaled and he began to tell a sleepy broken tale he too had once met--a girl with golden hair...

It was a worried silly once upon a time wisdom but the bear was entitled to a wondered share in the universal dream of all. He was once a black-eyed kid, so he said, driving a yellow cadillac and living luxury in a dingy papered shack. His mother was a scrub kneed wide bottomed working woman who scrubbed out the bowery places and came home to cook a perfect porridge. His father was a gambling bear. What summer brought fall would fill and winter eat. Spring was sometimes honey. Sometimes not. The porridge was hot one special spring day so the three drove over the bridge and bought in Superior a jug of wine made cheaper with dirtier tracks of another tread but drank well with the perfect porridge. Anyway, they returned in wishbone time, home to drink and dine. Pa's porridge was perfect Ma's porridge was perfect. The third was gone. The kid he growled once, he said, then he drank the wine. His sorrow tapered sad to bad. He slid upstairs and there--that was where he found the firl--the storybook girl the one with the golden hair, who awoke too soon and ran down the stairs away and away.

The kid left home to find the bear and a life his own. Sometimes he flew upside down laughing in the crosswinds, soaring among the barren branches, eating flesh and bone unpealed, and falling into the pond and stream running along the hill to the top of the mountain searching for something within the bees precious tree but only finding a yellow head bouncing in love in a one way canyon breathing breathless air and wanting not the honey but the golden hair. All summer he teased the young and small without reason and jealously watched the male and female enjoying most the female--the salmon, the berry, and the other selfless dying autumn myths. He found a cave in which to dream not deep as the pool in the stream and the mirror on the pond but instead hollow and long as the canyon of breathless air where the girl with the golden hair is a dreaming silence. Tomorrow the springtime sprung memories all over. Honey trees and berry vines and new salmon running times with sunshine lightening the endless canyon rising and setting within an elusive endless canyon that was cold and nowhere--the girl running thru with raving golden hair.

Dreams that rise in youth sometimes set younger yet when summer salmon swam with summer wine while bears with valid ids were drinking and the dreaming grizzly bears were sexing still for honey forgetting tomorrow only for a sorrow as an alley as ancient as the one way canyon. Otherwise make the wine in autumn then sleep all winter sometimes hanging empty sometimes hanging together with kisses in the morning or sometimes with a

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thankful bleeding heart that asks only for today what is. Salmon berry wine within a grizzly bear lives. While golden hair is a multiple of zeroes in the mist.

I looked up to a dream disappearing. I was alone. My companion with the superficial raying hair was gone from the cave of love. It was no longer dark. The moon had changed; its shape was fading, dying remembering only a summer heaven while in the east fermenting was golden hair to live but for today and to die tonite and to vanish quickly with one real drink with reality...

* * * * *

While I'm not sure I can paraphrase Jim Johnson or that I know precisely what he meant, I am hesitant to say that he ought to straighten out his syntax. He has gotten beyond me; he is better than I am; I enjoy his writing, question him about it and even suggest changes, but we both recognize the ironies in our respective roles. I hope that I can find this in more situations with more students.

I would like to close with a quotation. I've been discussing a new rationale for teaching composition and some implications of such a rationale for teaching practice. If anyone asks for a rationale beyond the rationale, a reason for humanizing composition, I think he might well find it in these words of D.K. Smith which appeared in the Octover, 1967, issue of Minnesota English:

> Our students are saying, or seem to me to be saying, that they want possession of an art of discovering more honest, more meaningful, more satisfying relationships with other human beings. They want to know how to escape from the masks of concealment, suspicion, and hostility which infect their engagements with elders and peers. They want to know how to discover what it is that lies between man and man, the truth which is not the possession of one or the other which does not exist at all prior to an actual engagement, which is created in the act of engagement, which is experienced rather than objectified, and which underlies all sense of community among men. They want, in short, not simply the skill of managing their speaking and writing in ways which will be reputable and traditionally efficient, but a skill in discovering the symbols that mark the gulf separating them from others, or in discovering the symbols that define the way in which men separated by such gulfs can still treat each other as human beings, and not as threatening objects.

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Models in Remedial English:
An Interim Report

by DONALD W. LARMOUTH
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The teacher of composition in high school and college English programs has several concerns, ranging from mechanics and spelling to problems in organization and content. Many programs now in use tend to emphasize one or two aspects of composition, rather than co-ordinating efforts at all levels of the composing process. This is most obviously true in beginning composition, where the teacher often feels forced to choose between a narrow, restricted starting-point and a scatter-shot approach which does nothing very well. There is, however, a productive approach which is generalized without loss of specificity. The materials and the basic design of this program emerged from our work in the remedial composition course offered by the Department of English at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, but the principles which underlie it may apply in several other circumstances as well.

1. Assumptions and Objectives

This program was designed to fulfill several long-range and cumulative objectives which, though limited in some important ways, provided a substantial basis for further work in English composition. Briefly stated, these objectives were as follows (in order of priority):

1) To develop a heuristic for the discovery and sorting of things to be said;

2) To develop control of a specific model for argumentative paragraphs;

3) To develop control of a specific model for argumentative essays;

4) To develop control of an acceptable written dialect, and especially its high-frequency, high-utility features.

The decision to begin with argumentative writing was made because argument is highly structured (thereby lending itself to an imitative approach) and very common in an academic setting, and because argument involves the most obvious awareness of occasion, audience, and logical progression (adequate evidence, warranted conclusions, etc.)--an awareness which the students intuitively possessed in advance.

The program was designed under several specific assumptions about the teaching of composition which have been borne out by the results of the program during the past two years, although it should be emphasized that this is an interim report, rather than a final evaluation. Early results, however, have been sufficient to suggest that these assumptions have merit and deserve more extensive testing. Briefly stated, the underlying assumptions of the program were as follows:

1) It was assumed that students could best learn to structure their material by imitation of specific models;

2) It was assumed that students could progress more rapidly if the long-range, cumulative objectives of the program could be broken down into a series of immediate but incremental objectives whenever possible;

3) It was assumed that students could best learn the features of an acceptable written dialect by imitation (including copying, substitution, and embedding), rather than by analysis of grammatical structure;

4) It was assumed that students could progress more rapidly if they were consciously aware of the specific, immediate objectives (and consequent criteria for evaluation) of each assignment as well as the cumulative objectives of the program.

It is obvious that these assumptions are not original to this program; however, they do take on specific meanings in the total design, especially since their advantages are not cancelled out in the combination.

Finally, the program was designed in view of several facts about the students themselves, facts which probably apply in some measure to most students in a beginning composition program. Their conscious recognition, however, is basic to the design of any productive approach to teaching composition:

1) The students were inexperienced writers, but they were experienced and competent speakers of English;

2) The students were already aware of many features of argument, including an intuitive sense of occasion, audience, and logic;

3) The students already had a sense of "fair play" in

argument: they knew that rational argument (<u>logos</u>) was not always persuasive; they knew that emotional appeals (<u>pathos</u>) were frequently persuasive, especially in advertising; and they knew that, rightly or wrongly, their projection of self (<u>ethos</u>) could inhibit or enhance their ability to persuade an audience;

4) The students were already aware of the need to adjust to specific audiences and occasions, especially in the oral language but also in writing, and already knew how to make these conventional adjustments at several levels.

2. Paragraph and Essay Models

The idea of imitation is nothing new--<u>mimesis</u> is a technique as old as the Greek rhetoricians. This idea, coupled with the assumption that long-range objectives are best achieved in incremental steps, led quite naturally to two basic argumentative models. The paragraph model, already a smaller step, was further broken down: first, students copied a typical claim-support-conclusion paragraph; second, they were asked to sort out the claim, the conclusion, and the support from a scrambled paragraph; third, given a claim and support, they provided several possible (and warranted) conclusions; fourth, given a claim, they provided several possible supporting statements (statistics, authoritative opinion, personal experience, examples), sorted out the most persuasive, and drew a warranted conclusion; finally, they were given a few assignments with the claim-support-conclusion paragraph model to be sure that they could control both its structure and its logical progression. To no one's surprise, they could.

Essentially the same procedures were used to establish an argumentative essay model, again breaking the essay into incremental steps, of which the claim-support-conclusion paragraph model was one. First, the students copied a typical essay with the model organization indicated in the margin; second, they substituted other transitional phrases for those used in the model; third, they practiced imitating a concluding paragraph containing a conclusion-signal (<u>therefore</u>, <u>thus</u>, <u>in conclusion</u>, etc.), a summary of the essay's arguments (<u>two or three claims</u>), and a restatement of the thesis (a major claim); fourth, the students worked on an introductory paragraph containing an "opener" and a thesis statement. At this point, the students controlled the basic ingredients of the essay model, so they were given several essay assignments to see if they could imitate both the structure and the logical progression of the model. And, again to no one's surprise, they could.

This approach no doubt appears to be very restrictive, and

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it is, though at the same time it should be obvious that these basic models have wide application, especially in the academic setting. In addition, it should be obvious that other models could be designed (see below, section 5). In our work with the Concentrated Employment Program in Duluth, for example, we used models for business letters, memoranda, and a variety of reports. Other models can be designed to provide a point of departure for other kinds of expository writing. The point of the whole series is to establish a basis for writing, not a fixed and unbreakable mold, and students at a more advanced state should be invited to transcend the models. The problem for most inexperienced writers is finding some way to organize their ideas, and models provide at least one way. It is not a big problem to establish several models among which students may choose.

3. Mechanics and Style

For many years, problems of mechanics and style have been a major concern of English teachers, but the approaches have not changed much, even though a myriad of new materials has been produced, from traditional to structural to transformational grammar, from workbooks to handbooks to programmed texts. The basic problem, as indicated by many research reports, is always the same: the analysis of grammatical structure does not appear to transfer to writing. With all of this research, it certainly seems futile to try to teach new writing habits by analysis.

In designing our program, we decided to emulate some of the methods of modern foreign language teachers by emphasizing productive imitation of standard patterns, rather than conjugations, declensions, underlining subjects and verbs, correction of errors, and all the other analytical devices that apparently go nowhere. Basically, our approach involved copying, substitution and pattern drill, and embedding, all of which are productive and not analytical. Again, this is nothing new. Fisher reports positive results with a pattern-drill approach in <u>Linguistics and Remedial English</u>, and Mellon reports positive results with embedding in <u>Transformational Sentence-Embedding</u>, a recent publication which anticipates several features of our program. Our materials ran concurrently with the work on paragraph and essay models, but did not interfere, since the models remained a separate part of the program in which mechanics and style were not directly involved.

Throughout the term, students were asked to copy some materials into a journal which was periodically checked. Typically, the journals were collected at the end of each week, so students were copying at least 300 words each day, four days a week, approximately 12,000 words in the quarter. Half of the journal assignments were generated by the instructors,

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while the other half were chosen from respectable magazines (Harper's, New Yorker, Esquire, Ramparts, etc.) by the students themselves. The students were also required to comment upon the significance of the journal selections. If any errors in copying were made, the students were asked to copy the selection over. Naturally, this was onerous work, but it did involve a steady kinetic reproduction of standard prose patterns and compressed, as it were, the effects of extended reading into a shorter span of time, with a minimum of supervision and class time. We were satisfied that this kind of exercise did transfer to writing, since the number of infelicities at all levels of structure was significantly reduced (see below, section 6).

In addition to the copying exercises, students were given specific instruction in highly frequent mechanical problems such as confusion of to/too, their/there, know/no, its/it's, etc. Since we couldn't work on everything at once, it was decided that specific attention would be given only to those forms which were very frequent in the language and which generated the most negative responses in the reader. The problems individualized quite rapidly, which was to be expected; thus, on a given assignment, a student might be responsible for imitating the structure and logic of the model, documenting his support, and avoiding confusion of their/there, to/too, plus a few specific misspellings of frequent words. This meant that the evaluator was forced to wink at several other problems which might be developing in the same assignment in order to concentrate the student's attention upon a few. This procedure seems very sensible and could be expected to work. It did. Naturally, many problems remained at the end of the term, but the students were in control of the most frequently-occurring forms, which substantially reduced their chances of making errors in their assignments in Freshman English.

Besides copying and concentration upon highly specific individual problems, two other devices were used to try to develop some specific syntactic habits. Following the lead of foreign language teachers, we set up some specific syntactic patterns and asked students to manufacture a large number of similar patterns, both orally and in writing. For example, if students were having some trouble with subject-verb agreement, it was always because something (phrase, clause, or whatever) intervened between the subject and the verb, something which contained an item of different number than the subject. It was a simple matter to set up several sentences involving such a pattern, elicit some of the same type orally, and ask students to write many sentences of the same type, using their own vocabulary. Naturally, no mention was made of technical grammatical terminology, since the studetns already knew the patterns orally anyway. This technique was supplemented by a program involving the embedding of smaller sentences into larger, more

complex sentences. Kellogg Hunt has suggested (probably correctly) that stylistic "maturity" can be measured in terms of the number of embeddings occurring in students' sentence-output. Mellon has capitalized on this observation in his recent work. For us, there was little doubt that students began to have syntactic difficulties as they tried to relate their supporting remarks logically, rather than simply listing them, and a series of embedding exercises appeared to improve their capacity to do this. Again, it must be recognized that the students already have this capacity in the oral language as native speakers of English; the concern of the embedding exercises and the pattern drills was to transfer that prior competence to their written work.

4. Invention and Pre-Writing

Thus far, we have described the program as it applies to three of the four major objectives, emphasizing the need for incremental steps in each. But its most important objective, the development of a heuristic for discovery and sorting of material, remains to be discussed. In a companion article, Mr. Bacig has presented a broader analysis of the problem of invention. Here, our concern is to describe the classroom techniques that were used in the program, techniques which were called "pre-writing." These techniques were aimed at the problem of establishing a discovery procedure for things to be said. This was not an analytical program; instead, an effort was made to elicit materials from the students themselves as they confronted an issue.

It was remarked earlier that students came to the program with considerable intuitive awareness of occasion and audience from their oral experience. This awareness can be made conscious and then usefully exploited in pre-writing. Too often, students do not write to a real audience; but in an argumentative format, they can write to each other, as in an oral debate situation. The demands of the audience can be openly discussed, especially in terms of the audience's values and consequent expectations. If the audience is clearly in mind, then all the students have an objective basis for selecting, from all the possible arguments, those which are most likely to be persuasive.

Another basic idea in pre-writing emerges from the fact that students have considerable prior linguistic competence in the oral language. Oral discussion of an issue generated more ideas in a given time span than writing out tentative outlines, since the exchange and the feedback were immediate in the oral situation. More important, one student's remark often triggered a more useful response in someone else, so that the teacher no longer had to function as a prod or a filter. These unstructured discussions, then, provided the basis for a better-informed approach to the ensuing debate, out of which some specific arguments and specific supporting statements emerged.

Pre-writing proceeded in incremental steps, following the steps for control of the paragraph and essay models. After a general discussion of the topic, students were asked to provide support (orally) for a specific claim which had emerged from the discussion. For example, given a general discussion on the question of college credit for the remedial course (a subject close to the hearts of the students, who were currently enrolled in it), some students made the claim that giving credit was a good idea because the students would be better motivated. The next step was to elicit some evidence which would support this claim: 1) rewarding students was better than punishing them; 2) students deserved credit for the heavy work load in the course; 3) during examination periods, students would be forced to spend their time on their credited courses, rather than the non-credit course; 4) the students were put behind schedule in completing their degree work in four years, which was discouraging. These pieces of support were recorded on the blackboard. Then the students had to decide on the strongest support in terms of the claim, the audience (in this case, the Freshman English Committee), the accuracy of the support, and draw a warranted conclusion. As the students progressed, they were confronted with a proposition (thesis) and asked to produce claims in its support--claims which in turn had to be supported. Finally, general topics like "Industrial Pollution" were introduced, and the students, again orally, had to restrict the topic ("Pollution of the St. Louis River by the Cloquet Wood Industries", for example), generate a proposition, and form a thesis. If the discussion broke down for lack of information, this was a signal to head for the library, especially for articles in current journals. This approach, by the way, was much better than a "busy-work" library exercise for persuading students to use library resources. Finally, the students wrote their papers, following the paragraph and essay models, documenting their sources, and aiming their work at a specific audience.

As the program continued, formal pre-writing was reduced more and more, so that individual students had to fill in the gaps on their own, until finally they were able to confront a proposition, generate a thesis, find support for claims, and draw warranted, rational conclusions. We found that, as the students increasingly worked on their own, a brief introduction of the classical topoi (topics) was useful, especially the cause-effect, antecedent-consequence, and problem-solution constructs, as well as testimony (authority, testimonial, law, statistics, etc.). Of these, cause-and-effect was the most productive of arguments, and testimony was most productive of evidence. These constructs emerged rather naturally from the general discussions, but their formal specification provided a conscious, rational sorting-device for breaking down a proposition and finding arguments and evidence when students were

working alone.

5. Abstraction of Paragraph and Essay Models

Although from some points of view the methods used to abstract the models used in this program may be irrelevant, it would seem that a specification of these methods, simple as they are, might enable other teachers to abstract their own models to suit their particular needs. More important, such a specification would enable a considerable expansion of our admittedly restricted program to cover other kinds of composition.

The basis for this procedure is tagmemic grammar, the slot-filler system. Originally, tagmemic analysis was designed to abstract "formulas" for word formation, phrases, clauses, and sentences in a given language. Recently, however, in an article in College Composition and Communication (December, 1965), A.L. Becker attempted to apply tagmemic analysis to paragraph structure, arguing, essentially, that the paragraph could be seen as a linguisitic unit. This kind of analysis was discussed in greater detail by Francis Christensen, Paul C. Rodgers, Jr., and Becker in a symposium on the paragraph in the May 1966 issue College Composition and Communication. This application is productive because it enables the abstraction of paragraph structure by a definition of the "slots" (such as claim-support-conclusion) and a sense of the "fillers," i.e., the nature of claim-sentences as opposed to support-sentences and conclusion-sentences. Moreover, at the essay level, it is easy to specify other slots and fillers, such as transition-slots, as well as expanding paragraph structure to essay structure, with specific slots defined in introductory and concluding paragraphs, as indicated in section 2 above.

To demonstrate the procedure more explicitly, we might examine another kind of paragraph. In an effort to set up a model for a compare-contrast paragraph, several examples of such paragraphs were examined, both in successful student essays and in professional work. These were broken apart, sentence by sentence, to determine the relationship between the first and second sentences, the second and third, the first and third, the second and fourth, etc. It was easy to show that the first sentence typically established the basis for comparison or contrast, and the next few sentences typically described the first member (person, project, policy, etc.) of the comparison in terms of the basis previously established. Then a "shifter" (likewise, on the other hand, etc.) appeared, followed by a description of the other member of the comparison, again in terms of the basis for comparison established in the first sentence. Finally, a concluding sentence evaluated the significance of the two members in terms of the basis for comparison.

Out of this analysis emerges a model for a compare-contrast paragraph: 1) statement of basis for comparison; 2) description of A; 3) "shifter"; 4) description of B; 5) evaluation. This turns out to be a productive paragraph model, once its structure is abstracted, and it is readily expanded to a compare-contrast essay model, just like the claim-support-conclusion model. More important, the logical progression of this model is easier to manage, since the basis for comparison is available for reference and testing. Naturally, a pre-writing technique emerges too, with discussion of both members, establishment of bases for comparison, etc., and students then fill in the slots of the model with their own material.

This same procedure is adaptable for many different kinds of writing, a fact which is tacitly recognized in the forms for business letters, police reports, memoranda, casework reports, etc., that appear so frequently in training manuals for industry and government agencies. While working in a communications project in the Concentrated Employment Program in Duluth, we had to abstract models for several kinds of institutional communications, since the people in the program were being trained for paraprofessional positions in schools and government agencies. This experience persuaded us that the imitation of models was indeed a widely adaptable approach for many kinds of composition.

6. Interim Results

The program described in this report has not been tested long enough to warrant definite conclusions. At the same time, it seemed that some purpose would be served by reporting the progress made thus far. In the fall quarter of 1968, two experimental sections were arranged (with a total of 65 students, 31 in one section and 34 in the other--an absurd overload!). By the quarter's end, sixty students remained in the program. Of these, 90 per cent definitely controlled the structure of the basic argumentative paragraph and essay models, and about 72 per cent could manage the logical progression inherent in the models. By checking the frequency of stylistic and mechanical errors in earlier and later papers, we were able to show an average reduction of errors of about 50 per cent at all levels of structure: spelling reduced from 71 errors in the first set of papers to 39 in the last, with more drastic reduction of errors in frequently-occurring words; punctuation errors reduced from 22 errors in the first set to 8 in the last; syntactic errors reduced from 19 in the first set to 8 in the last; stylistic errors from 11 in the first set to 6 in the last. Errors in high-frequency forms like its/it's, their/there, your/you're, to/too, etc., were virtually eliminated--from 47 in the first papers to four in the last papers.

In order to get some sense of the efficacy of the remedial program in preparing students for Freshman English, we obtained their final grades in English 1 and a verbal estimate of their work from their instructors. This last step was necessary because of the common final examination in use at the time, an examination in which students' papers (written during the two-hour examination period) were read and graded by two other instructors in the Department. If a student failed this paper, he failed the course, no matter what his prior grades indicated. This practice (which has since been abandoned as grossly unfair) would have made for considerable distortion of the results if the instructors' opinions had not been solicited prior to the common examination. Of the 60 students who finished the remedial course, 36 were allowed to register for English 1 (10 failed to pass the course, and 4 withdrew before the end of the term). Of the 36 who passed the remedial program, 13 passed and 11 failed. The remaining 12 were not able to enroll in English 1 because the sections were closed. Of the 11 who failed, five were doing passing work prior to the common examination. Of those who passed, one received a B, eight received C's and four received D's. This improvement over the previous quarter was no doubt due in part to greater experience in teaching the program and the substantially smaller class size, as well as some improvements in the materials. Moreover, by this time we had argued successfully for the abolition of mandatory F's for students who failed the common examination, so the instructors' judgment of a student's progress was more likely to stand.

In the Fall quarter of the following year (1969), we had five sections of remedial English, with about 25 students per section, and three sections are currently being offered in the Winter term. Although final grades for English 1 in the Winter term are not yet available, we were able to obtain some sense of the students' progress to date, and indications are that about 80% are doing passing work, which represents a substantial improvement over the average during 1968-69.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The experimental program in remedial composition described in this report was designed on the basic assumption, borrowed from the teaching of foreign languages, that students could best learn to write minimally acceptable compositions by productive imitation of paragraph and essay models which had been divided whenever possible into a series of incremental steps. The cumulative objectives of the program were to develop a heuristic for the discovery and sorting of material, to control specific paragraph and essay models, and to control the high-frequency features of an acceptable written dialect. These objectives were fulfilled in incremental stages by exercises based on tagmemic substitution and embedding at several levels

of structure and by pre-writing exercises involving prior oral discussions, debates, and speeches, thus moving from oral to written discourse. Preliminary results have indicated that the program is productive and can be modified to deal with several different kinds of writing.

8. Some Useful Sources

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Fisher, John A. Linguistics in Remedial English. The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966.

Mellon, John C. Transformational Sentence-Embedding. National Council of Teachers of English Research Report No. 10, 1969.

Donald Larmouth's report for the MCTE Duluth Conference this May, "Sentence Models and Paragraph Models in Remedial Composition," reflected upon the same problem that he and Tom Bacig discuss in collaboration in this issue of MEJ.

Film-Making
and Teaching Composition

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Since the rise of universal college education in the United States, there have been increasing cries of alarm in academic circles about the unwillingness of today's students to read. Newsweek critic Jack Kroll wrote that "the act of reading is not central to the youthful sensibilities of our age, which have forgotten that this act is the original, the true psychedelic experience" (April 13, 1970). And Karl Shapiro, one of our most respected contemporary thinkers, wrote in a nationally serialized newspaper editorial that we are experiencing a "literary break-down," a vulgarization of young minds seduced by "kitsch-camp-op-pop-absurdist-revolutionary sweepings and swill" (Minneapolis Sunday Tribune, April 19, 1970). Shapiro arrogantly accuses today's youth in sweeping generalizations of snivelling self-pity, "mindlessness," and subjective "gibberish."

Now it is evident that many college students suffer from verbal and visual illiteracy in that they lack the sensitivity to appreciate good books and good films. There is a definite breakdown in "sensibility" and it is alarming. However, what most advocates of academic despair often fail to realize is that the contemporary young person is not without great emotional and intellectual potentials. This is, indeed, the age of television and films more than a great age of literature; but, contrary to much academic assumption, the influence of film is not neces-sarily negative. Teachers who scoff at films and expect only 30% of their students to learn what they teach are more at fault, I submit, than their subjective students. Although movies are visual, they do deal with principles of composition, with character, with plot, with symbols, and with moral implica-tions. If verbal literacy has suffered, then educators must find a means of restoring its value. Today's students have a highly developed visual imagination, and this alone perhaps makes them better potential learners than students of preceding generations. Literacy is not merely the province of the printed page, because it involves numerous senses and media.

An experimental freshman class at Bemidji State College during the 1969-70 term produced several short films and studied the relationships of verbal and visual composition. It was a successful effort to fuse the interest of the teacher in poetry,

fiction, and non-fiction with the interest of the students in film, "rock," and the "hippie" movement--what Shapiro and others call "kitsch." It was an effort to involve the freshmen with structural principles and to stimulate the discussion of literature. The goal was not simply to teach rules of composition but to stimulate the students to learn through creative participation and to make literature come alive.

The Bemidji students produced "interpretive" films based upon poetry--"interpretive" in the sense that it is impossible to establish literal visual images for poetry and in the sense that the class had to select symbols and settings and music. It is evident that the potential of short student films need not be limited to poetry alone, nor to lyrical poetry alone. The alternatives are perhaps limitless given an imaginative teacher and interested students. The specific goal of the experiment at Bemidji was to relate visual and verbal composition in conjunction with learning English, though. A documentary film tends to detract from literary relevance, and a feature film or a dramatic film is too complex and requires too much time. Consequently, the short lyrical poem, which is suitable to short films, was ideal for the purposes of the project.

The first step was to introduce film-making to freshmen. This was done by viewing brief "experiential" films. Through an analysis of such films, the class learned techniques which they could use in producing their own films. Many, available through companies and universities through the country, include films dealing with numerous facets of experience and reality, such as sand dunes, the sea, or the journey of a leaf into oblivion. (A few major outlets include Pyramid Films Corp., P. O. Box 1048, Santa Monica, Calif., 90406; McGraw-Hill Films, 330 West 42nd St., New York, New York, 10036; and Field Services, Audio-Visual Center, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., 47401.) One film which particularly fascinated the students was the Kodak production "The Searching Eye" about a young boy's developing powers of observation. Throughout the film, the camera juxtaposed what the boy saw, like a bird in flight, with more universal human impulses, such as flight and the conquest of space. The film did an excellent job of relating the subjective experience with the aspirations and knowledge of mankind. Sensibility, therefore, begins with observation.

The second step was to define guidelines applicable to both visual and verbal composition. Over-all Design: Every film and everything written in poetry, fiction, and non-fiction adheres to some controlling emotion or concept. As essays require outlines, films require carefully planned scripts. Coherence, Transition, and Continuity: Both films and literature of necessity are based upon sequential images or scenes which must be linked coherently to achieve the specified effect. Emphasis, Economy, and Selectivity: In order to fulfill the over-all

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intention, both verbal and visual forms of expression require moments of emphasis, the elimination of irrelevant details and actions, and the selection of settings, symbols, or incidents which will best develop the themes. As the students could see demonstrated in the commercial films--or even in feature films or in television commercials--repetition is one of the most common techniques and involves motifs that often develop suggestive levels of meaning through symbols.

Although film and literature have similar principles of composition, they can be radically different. Whereas film has spatial-temporal restrictions, poetry is not as limited. Whereas film involves the senses in a denotative, concrete manner, poetry is more flexible, more ambiguous, more connotative, and more imaginative. How does one, for instance, visualize Shelley's "The sea-blooms and the oozy wood which wear/ The sapless foliage of the ocean"? Film has been an impersonal, public media, whereas poetry has been a subjective personal experience. One person may write a poem or read it, but dozens make a film and great numbers see it. Film is involved with social and factual experiences, but literature, especially lyrical poetry, is involved with psychological and emotional experiences.

Nevertheless, the visual and verbal media are both extensions of the same human power of sensibility. Both are dynamic in that they constantly shift focus visually and imaginatively. If anything, films have become more poetic and more verbal in order to involve viewers more subjectively and to penetrate beyond the physical exterior and surface. Consequently, we have seen in recent feature films an increasing attempt to break spatial and temporal barriers through flashbacks, stream-of-consciousness, and psychedelic effects. Film has, in other words, sought "objective correlatives" for emotional experiences.

In the process of viewing commercial films and attempting to define guidelines, the Bemidji class learned that poetry depends in its basic composition principles upon sensations and ordinary observations of experiences, although its ultimate effect was far more emotional than the surface representations of a film. For example, Robert Frost created his poetry out of the materials of the New England countryside--the animals, trees, seasons, and farm rituals. Although much poetry is far too abstract to be clearly visualized, it is also true that most poetry derives from the phenomenological reality of commonplace objects and events. Witness, for instance, the poetry of Emily Dickinson or William Carlos Williams. It was Coleridge who said that poetry is a merging of the concrete and the abstract. The film-making project at Bemidji was an effort to merge poetry with the visual and the auditory, with as many facets of sensibility as possible. The films produced by the students, therefore, combined the visual and verbal with a musical background.

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The third step of the experimental class was the process of actually producing short films and demonstrating the principles of composition to the students. The class was voluntarily divided into interest groups. The script team took all the essays written on the poems discussed in class, condensed them, and reworked them into a finished script--essentially a highly detailed outline. This included pictorial representations or drawings for each sequence of images. Three film teams were established on the premise that filming is best done by groups of three or four. Each group had its opportunity to do actual filming. Another group was selected to edit and put together the final product. The sound-synchronization group was composed of students interested in music and sound effects. Most of the class, consequently, was involved in the project. If a similar venture is undertaken elsewhere, it is possible that one general group of interested students could handle the entire operation in all its facets.

For the initial experiment, the instructor selected several poems which loaned themselves to visualization and to the limitations of the season--winter. Among these were Robert Frost's "Desert Places" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Wallace Stevens' "Snow Man," Kenneth Rexroth's "Snow Storm," and Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Snow Storm." In such a project it is recommended that the students be given greater leeway than several poems; it might be possible, for example, to produce a film interpreting the lyrics of a popular song.

It is through the process of evaluation and script writing that the greatest benefits occur in relating the visual and verbal media. Analysis of the poems revealed the power of figurative language and demonstrated the differences between denotation and connotation. On the literal level, "Desert Places" operates spatially and temporally within definite limitations, beginning with the downward motion of "Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast." A lonely man pauses by a snow-covered field and is overwhelmed by its emptiness. The movement of the poem goes from the skies across the barren field, into the woods, and finally to animal lairs before returning to the "empty spaces" of the sky. The final movement is psychological and penetrates the "desert places" within the man. In effect, Frost's poem operates sequentially much like a film. The visual reality becomes emblematic through its process of accumulation of the internal emptiness of an individual who finds no meaning in reality.

Given this spatial and psychological movement, the students concentrated on the actual montage, shot by shot. A first rule of verbal analysis is that the individual slow down the vague, elusive imaginative processes. For instance, some of the first spontaneous scripts called for a total of one minute of filming

because students were unable to relate external time to the internal process. The crucial problem in communicating one's feelings and insights is that one must halt the rapid speed of impulsive associations, to organize a response. Self-expression is a discipline. The imagination, the realm of verbal power, has much more scope and breadth than the visual reality, for it includes not simply the physical but also the psychological and the spiritual. As Emily Dickinson wrote:

> The brain is wider than the sky,
> For, put them side by side,
> The one the other will contain
> With ease--and you beside.

> The brain is deeper than the sea,
> For, hold them, blue to blue,
> The one the other will absorb,
> As sponges, buckets do.

The imagination is quicker than the visual image and can contain all the sequences of a film. It breaks spatial, and temporal, barriers. Emily Dickinson also wrote:

> Infection in the sentence breeds--
> We may inhale despair
> At distance of centuries
> From the malaria.
> ("A Word Dropped Careless on a Page")

Through the film-making a teacher may make such truths evident, and he may thereby broaden the sensibilities of his students.

A second rule of verbal analysis is that the writer always must become more specific and detailed. The Bemidji students encountered problems when they attempted to describe in the script the exact visual representations they wished to film. Emptiness is easy to film. It calls for a snow-filled field and a gray, bleak sky. But what about the lonely man? Is he to be young, middle-aged, or old? The students argued this point and concluded that he was to be an old man. The "absent-spirited" definition given by Frost is ambiguous, but the total effect of his poem is more suggestive. Snow is falling, the end of the year is near, the end of the day is near, and the "few weeds and stubble showing last" all imply that the fullness of life has passed.

A comparison of student scripts--and every student wrote his own version--demonstrated the differences in sensibility between members of the class. For one student, the persona was just a man. For another, it was "a man slumped by defeat and coldness whose face is half hidden by his collar." For another, it was a small figure walking down an old dirt road in

an isolated place beneath a darkening sky.

A third rule of composition is that the writer follow patterns of transition or punctuation. In the poem, Frost uses not only the line and stanza, but also directs the imagination with periods, semicolons, and the like--as students themselves must do in writing. In the film, the imagination is directed by cinematic techniques such as fade-in and fade-out. Communication depends, in the final analysis, on form and pattern.

When the actual filming day arrived for "Desert Places," three students, one "actor," and the instructor drove to a secluded road and spent two and a half hours filming about eight minutes of film. Since the poem repeats its mood so often-- Frost uses the words "loneliness," "lonely," or "it" eight times --the film team selected symbolic representations for the words --a solitary leaf, a tree trunk sunk in snow, a broken limb, and concealed holes for the "animal lairs" of the poem. In this way, the visualization adhered to the principles of repetition, selectivity, and symbolism. The screen images attempted to correlate the verbal and emotional experience. Yet it must be remembered that the film will always remain one possibility, one interpretation.

Another rule of composition which the students discovered was that of juxtaposition. In poetry, we encounter the comparisons and contrasts of figurative language. In film, we are presented the side by side shots that establish tone. For instance, the "Desert Places" film goes from the man's face to the field, from the man's face to the woods, from the sky to the man's face, and so on. The visual images of loneliness of isolation were constantly juxtaposed with the man in order to build up towards the definition of his own internal isolation.

In conclusion, it can be recommended that other colleges allocate funds for similar projects. If students approach poetry with rigid, undeveloped sensibilities, they will leave capable of reading with more appreciation if they attempt to create a film version. As one Bemidji student wrote in a critique of the experiment, "I can't look at woods or fields any more without thinking of poetic images or film shots." The poem had come alive through the film, and the student had discovered for himself the dynamic process of the imagination. The students also learned basic principles of composition. Another critique said that the script writing assignments enabled the student to learn how to order her own thoughts and make them concrete. The final step, that of editing and adding sound, also demonstrated the necessity of pruning irrelevant details and of correlating the auditory and imaginative experience. Sensitivity, then, is not limited to one sense nor to one media. It is a power of reconciling the internal and the external.

How does the college teacher implement a film-making program? It is not without difficulties. The most apparent problem is the lack of academic training among instructors that would qualify them to produce films. Nevertheless, with some basic research, any teacher could handle the project. He can turn to numerous books and articles. The National Council of Teachers of English in Champaign, Illinois, provides free bibliographies. Numerous articles are available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at the National Cash Register Company, 4936 Fairmont Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland, 20014. Perhaps the richest source of materials is the Consumer Market Division of Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, New York, 14650. See, for instance, "Pictorial Continuity, How to Shoot a Movie Story," Meredith Press, 250 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017; "The Motion Picture and the Teaching of English," Appleton-Century-Crofts, 440 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016; A Casebook on Film by Charles Thomas Samuels, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York, N.Y., 10001. See, also, the Winter, 1970, issue of the Minnesota English Journal.

The teacher can also turn to his audio-visual department. There must be one or more Super-8 Cameras and projectors; there must be editors and tape recorders. During the Bemidji experiment, an audio-visual consultant worked closely with the students on several occasions. He gave a lecture on films and film handling. In addition, he accompanied the film teams on field trips. Since an expert was available, the Bemidji project also produced some 16 MM films, which are of course of a higher quality than Super-8 since they can be reproduced. However, 16 MM films cost about three times more to make than Super-8. The average 200 foot, 10 minute Super-8 film costs approximately $30--and this includes the cost of film, developing, and the addition of a sound track. A budget of $100, therefore, would cover at least three Super-8 films, or more if they are of shorter duration. Costs can be cut by putting sound on a magnetic tape instead of a sound track.

Audio-visual experts will tell you films are produced by amateurs on a 3-1 or 4-1 ratio. For every three films shot, one can be put together after editing. But I would point out that during the Bemidji project an almost 1-1 ratio was achieved on a few of the films because of the emphasis placed on pre-planning. If the scripts are carefully developed, and if the film-makers are willing to go through the extensive maneuvering required to actually make the film in the sequence it is planned, costs can be kept down and students will learn more about the value of pre-composition.

The teacher must be the coordinator; he must set up a working schedule which permits pre-planning, filming, and the two weeks needed for developing and editing, as well as the several

weeks necessary for addition of sound tracks. It is his job to make the films relevant to literature and to composition. Most of a film-making project should be an out-of-class assignment. Instead of assigning ten themes, in other words, those students working on the films might only write eight. Instead of assigning overloads of reading and writing, the teacher could assign important short poems and ask students to first write an essay evaluating the poems and then to write a full script on how they might film the poems. That, in itself, is a process of teaching that stresses the student's own act of discovery. And if the contemporary teacher is to help illiterate students become literate, if he is to broaden their sensibilities, he must offer them a learning project that involves them in creative participation.

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Ronald L. Lycette, who teaches at Bemidji State College, gave this account of his film program at the MCTE Eleventh Spring Conference in Duluth in May 1970.

Imitation, Parody, and Composition

by PAUL H. GRAWE
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I will always remember that day in high school when I was first made aware that composition should be creative and a matter of personal experience. It was not, as we so frequently assume in teaching composition, a great liberating experience. We were given a simple open assignment to write a poem on anything we wished. That was all. And the only thing that came into my mind was a vast terror that I wouldn't know what to write or how to write it.

I also remember the poem I finally handed in. "Inspiration" struck after I had gone to bed the night before the assignment was due. Mentally, I developed the total, two-stanza poem and then rushed from my bed to find pencil and paper before the idea vanished. It was a dreadful piece in heroic couplets, a completely unimaginative, cliché-ridden description of a robin. I was not impressed with what I had written, but I was glad to be done with the assignment.

Too often as I look over open and general area assignment papers today, I have the uneasy feeling that my present students are repeating my own experience with creativity and personal expression. Like me, they are terrified by a blank piece of paper and a vague command to write a poem "about my world," or "my favorite thing." Like my poem, their work seems often a desperate effort to get something, anything down on paper. They are so busy finding something to write on and a basic organizational principle to use, that any more sophisticated matters such as style, a definite attitude toward the material, or a definite sense of the probable reader are totally forgotten or ignored.

There is, of course, a great deal to be said for creativity and for personal expression, but we may need a great deal of sophistication in our assignments if we are to achieve them. Above all, we are unlikely to be able to directly assign students the task of being creative. One of the best methods of indirectly soliciting creativity from students, I believe, is to assign parodies. Parody sets students free in a remarkable and strange way. My best way of explaining why it does so is to say that

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parody, right from the beginning, gives the student something to do. Even if he has no idea what he will write on, he is not left confronting a blank sheet of paper. Instead, he can continue to read good work that might provide a vehicle for his composition. As a pure by-product of the assignment, he is paying closer attention to his reading as purposeful, organized, stylized writing.

Once an embryonic idea does come to him, the student can try it on several models to see what kinds of possibilities open up. Whether he succeeds or fails in fitting his idea into a particular model, he is developing the sense that a writing assignment is not a single idea, but a developed pattern. Whether his idea does or doesn't fit a particular model, he is getting some sense that his parody will have to develop definite attitudes toward its audience and material if it is to be a satisfactory imitation or exaggeration of the original.

When the student finally has both an idea and a model in mind, the model will often force him to work up to his fullest abilities. Say the student has chosen to write about a tank crossing Viet Nam as John Steinbeck described a tractor crossing miles of Oklahoma fields in Grapes of Wrath--as one of my students did this year. Steinbeck's choice of hard, clean adjectives will force the student to search for his own, equally powerful adjectives. The student may be tempted to write a melodramatic ending, but Steinbeck's consistent impersonality will force him to see and to imitate the elegance of understatement. While the student working without a model easily slips back "to his own level" or even below it, just to finish the assignment, the student parodist is forced to put his ideas into advanced, artistic forms he could hardly be expected to master on his own.

The amazing thing about parody assignments is that they are so greatly enjoyed by so many students. Students enjoy reading parody--witness Mad Magazine among many others--but more importantly, a great many of them can enjoy writing parody. Last year in one of my classes, more than one fifth of the class wrote extra parodies beyond the assignment, evidently simply because they enjoyed it. The obvious explanation for this joy students take in parody is that parody appeals to a youthful sense of fun. Take, for example, the following parody of Robert Frost's elegantly simple poem "The Pasture," which begins:

    I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
    I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
    (And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
    I sha'n't be gone long.--You come too.

The student parodist, who was in a sophomore college survey of American literature, wrote:

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The Bowling Alley

    I'm going out to have an evening's fun;
    I'll only stop to have a beer or two
    (And wait to see the dancers--just a few):
    I'll be gone quite awhile--you stay here.

    I'm going out to bowl with the team
    That's number one in the league. It's so fun
    To go out with the boys after we're done.
    I'll be gone quite awhile--you stay here.

The parodist in this case was only a better than average student. But with the crutch of Frost's elegant simplicity, she found a voice that was creative and memorable. Despite a metric problem in the second stanza, the student, in general, managed to imitate Frost's sophisticated and subtle reliance on the iambic line. But, most importantly, freed from worrying about saying anything, the parodist went on to advanced techniques, notably the assumption of a persona of the other sex.

While humor is obviously a significant factor in students' interest in parody, perhaps a better way of explaining their enthusiasm is to recognize that young students have unique abilities of verbal imitation. The older we become, the less imitative we become. At eight or ten, most of us could learn a new language fluently without formal training; at sixty, none of us could. At forty-five, few of us are given to imitating the verbal idiosyncracies of those around us; at fifteen, our teacher's favorite phrase or our parents' too-oft-repeated formula are sources for careful imitation and hilarity.

When a student attempts serious imitation, he gives up the easy successes of burlesque and the sure reinforcement of humor. Yet, after I have explained to my students the essentially dual nature of imitation--serious and comic--I find that a great many of them prefer to attempt to say something personally meaningful to them rather than to debunk a literary style. Aided by the serious tone and elevated techniques of a great original, they often write something that gives them great satisfaction and that says things they would never dare say on their own. The following serious parody of the "What the Thunder Said" section of T. S. Eliot's Wasteland came from one of the brightest students in the same class in American literature.

    Here is no love but only hate
    Hate and no love and the desolate world
    The world populated with machines
    Which are machines of hate without love
    If there were love we should stop and care
    Amongst the hate one cannot stop or share
    Laughter is silent and peace is in jeopardy
    If there were only love amongst the hate

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Dead machines mouth of carious teeth that cannot kiss
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even kindness in the machines
But automatic selfish existence without love
There is not even awareness in the machines
But dull lifeless eyes ignore and overlook
From doors of crowded tenements
                                    If there were love

And no hate
If there were hate
And also love
And love
A seed
A leaven among the hate
If there were the sound of love only
Not the H-bomb
And the missiles singing
But the sound of love over hate
Where the peace-dove sings in the olive trees
Love peace joy love peace joy
But there is no love

Imitation, as a pedagogical device, has been around a long
time. Milton learned his craft in part through it, as did Cicero
before him. It is an ideal tool for pushing students to the
limits of their ability and beyond those limits with the aid of
the great works of their heritage. It appeals to the vivacious
humor of youth and to youth's imitative instincts. In advanced
sections, it can be used as an introduction to the analysis of
literary techniques. And, though classical in origin, it often
achieves our elusive modern goals of creativity and personal
expression.

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Breaking Down Resistance to Writing:
the Multi-Media Assignment for
the Adult Student

by RITA CAREY
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Just what topic assigned will encompass the interest, exper-
ience, the aspiration of this heterogeneous Freshmen Composition
class? Perhaps half the class, ages 17-19--fresh from writing
literary evaluations--could grind out pages on research topics.
However, the remainder of the students are returning adults, Viet
Nam veterans on the educational programs. A fraction of the
adults are anywhere from five to twenty years away from class
room writing assignments. Those years in between held work in
industry, travel, marriage, children,--divorce.

"You write best of your own experience." "But I can't think
of anything to say." "Sit and write for an hour; I'd rather be
shot." "The kids are always interrupting." "Try to write a
class theme after fifteen years; it takes me twenty minutes to
compose the first sentence." And so go the echoes throughout
the class room of English Composition 103.

Behind the brooding eyes of the returned G. I. must lie
strong emotions and vital ideas waiting for expression. The
teenage Freshmen have thoughts and aspirations to be sorted out
and laid down on a sheet of paper. The ambitious mother could
write of both comedy and human tragedy if but given the incentive.

Try the multi media spark. Have set up in the class room or
writing laboratory: an overhead projector, a slide projector,
a record player, a tape recorder. The student is asked to note
down his reactions to: 1. pictures (no title); 2. scenes of
distant or near locale; 3. a song, a ballad--preferably of a
little vintage so as to have memories or associations to record;
4. readings of several poems either by the instructor or some
familiar professional voice. Any media that lacked impact on
the student were to be disregarded, and the writing time spent
only on the meaningful experiences. Be prepared for an out-
pouring of memories, some touched with the emotions of inter-
vening years, some deep philosophical explorations--all with
lively feeling--their best writing. This assignment breaks down
that fear of seeing the idea spread out on the white sheet of
paper.

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Here are some of the results of the multi-media writing assignment:

"The Bells"--a song.
My thoughts swiftly moved in the direction of life. How auspicious is birth--the miracle of it all, from the union of two bodies in love to the beginning of independent breathing. Bells or joyous noises should be made for every babe that is born into this world for I believe that birth is beautiful--an experience that God, himself, devised. Birth and life is an entity within itself.

Bells ringing, ringing, ringing--do they clank their clankers when the mind dies? I think not, oh, but the physical death--then?
Yes, then if a great President, a Pope, has fallen prey to the Angel of Death the wagging tongues of the bells tell the world. But for us unadulterated folk, who die a thousand deaths in our short lives, no bells ring--or cannons roar, nor do guns salute. Death for us can come long before the statistics get the news.

Slide of a country scene--to the Viet Nam veteran come pungent memories.
"A soldier is trying to climb the mountain, trying to forget, to collect his thoughts, to re-live his youth. He's trying to forget his past--Asia, the war, Oriental prejudices, slant eyes. Now it is round eyes that fill his mind in this Victorian ? West. Can he forget those refugees? They are many, countless coming from nowhere, those children, crying, contemptuous.

A picture--a paragraph response.
"A flash of light ahead of me. A small square filled with color and the image. It's a red Spanish tiled roof on a whitewashed house. Oklahoma City? No, somewhere in Arizona where its warm. I can feel the sun warming my face. All over the Southwest there are many such houses. In Mexico I saw a house made of beer cans and mud. Yes, that was at San Louis two weeks before I gave birth to my first son."

A muddy road scene via the overhead.
"We were bouncing along when all hell broke loose." Charlie decided to hit. We managed to get a break in the cloud cover so some air support

helped us. What I really did that day doesn't matter. We fought and "Charlie" fought. We took some casualities and inflicted some. There were lives I saved and those I couldn't save. How the final tally came out I don't know; it was just another page in the chapter called "Nam" in a book called Army written by Doc, the senior Battalion Medic.
I thought I could never write down what happened to me there, but when I saw that road of red mud, I was back on Highway One. Now I want to put it down on paper.

Masterpieces of correct writing? No, there was much to be done in areas of organization, revision, etc., but the students had written fluently, joyously. The multi media assignment had banished that fear of the blank page. The student realized his bountiful storehouse of knowledge from which he could draw material for his themes.

Young Writers' Conference

by NAOMI CHASE
University of Minnesota

One Saturday in May, 1971, the campus of the University of Minnesota will be the scene of a young writers' conference. Pupils, with their teachers, will join with others to converse, discuss, and write. The theme will be creativity, and the writing will be on-site creative expression.

Because facilities for housing such a meeting are as much related to its success as classroom and school arrangements are to progress in young scholarly pursuits, a compact facility has been tentatively selected: Nolte Center for Continuation Study. The number which may be accommodated will thus be limited by the space available.

At present, plans allow for a teacher with one or two pupils, all of whom have been working with creative writing, to further their study by pooling their experiences and gaining new ones from discussions with authors and teachers. The talk would be interspersed with writing, and the product would be published. A great deal of responsibility for the success of the venture will be placed on the participants.

As for the total number who may constitute the conference, it cannot be large. Neither the nature of the work planned nor the possible facility allow for large groups. Probably a hundred persons, teachers and pupils, would be practical and productive. All contained in one building with rooms for general meetings, or smaller meetings, plus a noon meal, the conference would be appropriately isolated for work. The Museum of Natural History next door might provide a needed change of scene and pace.

A maximum of thirty-three Minnesota communities could be represented by a teacher and two pupils each. A more flexible designation of participants may, and probably will, be used. At present the entire project is only in the projection stage. Further information will be made available through the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, and later through the Nolte Center for Continuation Study, University of Minnesota.

Some elementary school teachers may not realize that the MCTE has a growing membership and concern for the English (Language Arts) phase of the education of young children. With so many areas of proficiency adopted by elementary teachers, it is sometimes difficult to choose emphases. Will it be social studies, mathematics, science, English? This next year it is hoped that some will emphasize English, and give considerable thought and time to children's writing, enough to wish to attend the conference. The winter issue of the Minnesota English Journal will be devoted to articles about creative writing for and by children, one source of motivation for teachers to plan especially for a writing emphasis.

It is through the interest in education expressed by the McKnight Family Foundation Fund that funds will be available for publishing the writings accomplished by the children at the conference. Whether or not the articles will be immediate or delayed products has not yet been determined. It is possible that there may be a choice in the matter. However it turns out, the published writings will be created and edited by the writers themselves.

The conference will not be a contest. Every child will have an opportunity to contribute something to the total effort of the conference without relative evaluation. The principle of individual worth and uniqueness will be maintained. The program to be followed will be available in October, 1970. It will show evidences of many freedoms involved in creative writing as well as numerous responsibilities to the readers for whom the writing is meant.

The persons who are serving as the planning committee for the conference are Pat Connors, St. Louis Park Public Schools; Enrica Fish, University of Minnesota; Geraldine Kozberg, St. Paul Public Schools; Nancy Johanson, Macalester College; Norine Odland, University of Minnesota; Ruth Stein, University of Minnesota; Thomas Walton, Ely Public Schools. The chairman is Naomi Chase, University of Minnesota.

Fragment: On Violence and Children

by TOM WALTON
John F. Kennedy School, Ely

The flux of society's values daily leads us to question what is accepted, tolerated, or deemed a right. One area of concern in recent years has been the material presented to children by the TV screen and the movies. Questioning of these media brought an evaluation of some of their practices. From it came a changing of time slots for a portion of the advertising and material presented during some hours of the day by the television industry. The movies also made an effort to give parents a better concept of what form of movie was being offered through a new rating system. Before us now is the moot question of what is happening in children's literature.

With fifteen children, I have explored a very small number of books entering our school library and/or entering the home through the increasing offerings of paperback books. Our discussion began with a book found in our reading series at the end of the guided study of the selection. Not all of the children responded to the questions presented, but earlier questioning sessions prompted some of the questions now asked as we had encountered the violence in the selection. The book was Helen Griffith's The Wild Heart (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963). We began our discussion with the author's skill in making the incidents seem real - with the author's ability to draw the reader in to become a part of the story. Part of the children's answers are included in this review. Follow-up responses by the teacher or other children have, for the most part, been deleted. Immediate response was given to the incidents in the corral as the gauchos methodically killed the horses for their hides, to the horse killing the puma to protect herself and her foal, and on to the point where the horse kills a man who has cruelly attempted to break and ride her:

> "I didn't like it where the horses couldn't get any grass or water for days; it was like a nightmare."
> "The thing that bugged me about this was that the gauchos were treating those horses that way and forgot that they should be treated like them (the gauchos)."

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"What bothered me was that every time they talked about the blood type of air, it smelled real awful. I mean---it sounded real awful."

"She had a right to do it (kill the man), because he was so mean to her."
"I think this was different. The horse killed the puma in fear. The man had no patience. He was so eager to ride, he sort of lost his mind. The man, she had encountered before and seen how cruel man was. Now she had felt his spurs and his whip and she did it in her own mind."

question: Did the violence bother you?
> "She had to save her life."
> "No, because many of the things that happened had a right to happen."

question: Would you have read this book if I had not been reading it with you?
> "No, when we discussed the book, I got more out of it. There were a lot of hard words."
> "I'm not sure. The beginning was kind of boring, but as you went on (the children in their own reading) it got more interesting."
> "I would have if I had run across it because I would have wanted to know what was happening."

question: We've had other stories that had violence in them. Did any of you have books that had things that bothered you, or did not bother you?
> "One when the father died...The child became an orphan...The child became responsible for everything." (also) "Bayou Backwater!" (Written by Allan W. Eckert; Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968).

question: Didn't you like this one, and why?
> "Well, sort of. It explained a lot on what animals ate and that stuff, but I didn't like the part where the crocodile got the deer."
> "Because the crocodile is mean and the deer is pretty and delicate and along comes the big crocodile."

question: But in our other story, La Bruja stomped the puma. What is the difference in the two stories?
> "The deer is like La Bruja. It doesn't hurt animals. It runs free. It couldn't see the crocodile and run. You see?"

question: Sort of. Something that would destroy another living creature? Why not La Bruja and the puma?

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"The puma, he can kill other things, but La Bruja eats grass."

"Well, I can sort of understand the crocodile and the deer. It was sort of like the crocodile kills and they (the other animals) don't overpopulate."

question: We had another book that came in, that I objected to. Can you remember which one?

"Member of the Gang." (Written by Barbara Rinkoff; Crown, 1968).

"They were having rows."

"There was swearing in it."

question: Did this bother you?

"No." (group)

"Well, they are sort of popular words now when you get angry." (laughter from the group)

question: Are swear words nothing?

"They are sort of something, but, uh, I've been around people who use them and they just do it to show their anger. They are a popular way to show anger."

question: If the swear words did not bother you, what was there in the story that did bother you?

"When they were having a row, one of the guys got his ear cut off."

question: We have another story where someone loses an ear and you do not object to that. Where is it?

"Savage Sam." (Written by Fred Gipson; Harper & Row, 1962).

"The Indian."

"Arliss bit it off."

question: Why is this different?

"I think the Indian deserved it."

question: Any other books?

"My sister brought one home where the kids take bottle caps or can covers and cut each other and I didn't like this."

"Last year we read a Hitchcock book about a boy and a cocoon .... (relating the story and picking out the horror parts)."

question: What is the difference?

"The stories about the can covers, they just did it to be mean."

"The cocoon, oh ---- I think it was just made up."

question: La Bruja? Is that made up?

"Maybe not. It's sort of, but you think that it might have happened."

question: Bayou Backwater?

"Oh, they're real!" (group)

question: Is this what bothered you about the books?

"Yes."

question: What other books are we going to read that you are looking forward to? Our next one is about Thomas Jefferson.

"Oh, Hakkon of Rogen's Saga is coming up." (Written by Eric Haugaard; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963.)

question: Why are you waiting for this one?

(boy gestures with a knife thrust to the chest)

question: Is this what you are looking for? Will it be real?

"No." (group)

question: Is it all right then if it does not seem real?

"Yes."

Through the continuing discussion and the subsequent listening sessions with the tape of the class discussion, I find that I have several thoughts centering in my mind. Bayou Backwater is a very graphic description of life and death struggles in the animal world. The illustrations that accompany the text are very interesting, but there are two of the "crocodile" and the deer showing the approach to the deer under the water and the violent tearing of the deer in the water. Member of the Gang is realism at its best as the young boy attempts to find himself in this changing society with all of its problems. The physical contacts are no doubt a reality and the problems real, but it leaves me wondering how capable my children are at recognizing the implications, since they find themselves in a similar search for self without being able to avoid its problems. Finding the Lord's name in print in much the same manner that we find so many of our words appearing with new meanings, and uses, is a rather difficult use to accept in a child's book - in any book, for that matter.

Beyond the immediate books, I find myself wondering just what is the purpose of literature on an elementary level--to serve as a model? to raise questions without assistance in answering them? to just be realistic? I wonder if we do not capitalize on man's curiosity with carelessness at times. Are we responsible for our words, be they in print,

in illustration, in speech? How much of what our children read is related to what they see on TV, and is it then an isolated incident or an overall picture of what our world really is?

Do the book reviews from various sources and the cards in the card catalogue give explicit warning of the vehicle or message carried in some books? Are the reviews available to all teachers in a system, to parents when paperbacks are purchased? Federal funds to increase buying power for libraries, new authors, improved methods of illustrating, paperback books--all combine to bring more and more books before us. Who reviews all of these books?

Does exposure to violence again and again finally leave me immune to it so long as it does not physically touch me? In this flux of changing values, is there a line at which there is a place to stop? Who will do it?

Problems, Problems

by JOHN STREED
Minnetonka High School

The title I have chosen is useful for more than just rhetorical emphasis. "Problems, Problems" means lots of problems, all right. But it also is meant to suggest that there are two categories of problems. I call them "inner" and "outer" problems, problems that have to do with the choices I as teacher confront. And it does seem, to be sure, more and more, a confrontation. Yet there is something else about the title, a certain tone, a hint that things can't be quite all that bad.

As a preface to this consideration of problems facing the teacher of literature, I had better propose the definition of literature from which my comments arise. Literature, I suggest, is twofold: it is the analysis of the way things are and the affirmation of the way things ought to be. The second part of that definition lifts literature from the purely physical world-- the definition goes beyond science--and sets literature squarely in the moral universe. Further, literature tends to deal artistically not just with human experience but with humane experience. It follows, then, that the teacher of literature is or should be engaged in the process of literature, that is, in analysis and affirmation. In so doing, the teacher of literature deals with the content of literature, which is chiefly the record of humane experience, the accumulating wisdom of mankind. There are problems from the very beginning.

Consider, first, the teacher's role in analysis and affirmation. Should I push one view, or should I be an impartial critic? Should I, in other words, give a course in what I think and how I react to a particular bit of literature? Or should I keep my own views out of sight? The standard answer is easy. I'm a teacher, not a preacher. My job is to present the content in as plain a manner as possible. I open doors. I make introductions. I conduct tours. But I do not exhort or persuade. I am objective and impartial. My students read a book; they are to get the author's philosophy, not mine, for a literature course should not be the philosophic testament of the teacher. For example, perhaps I do believe in the doctrine of human progress. My students should never discover that as we read Lord of the Flies together. Perhaps I am an atheist. They should never suspect that from the way I teach certain passages in Dr. Faustus.

Perhaps I am a Catholic. That should not affect the way I treat the Reformation. And so on.

All well and good. The teacher lays out the data; the student makes the judgment. And how else could it be? What could be more dangerous than a school full of teachers all pushing their own views on students who--let it be admitted--are easily influenced, particularly in junior high? Be objective, be neutral, be a careful critic. Give all sides of the issue. Do not push your own views. Educate, don't propagandize, that's the best way.

But no sooner do I agree to refrain from propagandizing than I remember that that is an impossible dream. Objectivity is a myth. Neutrality is an illusion. The very selection of materials or points to emphasize in those materials is an expression of my views. And I interpret from then on. From the first word, I am persuading, persuading, persuading. To be fair, therefore, to compensate for the inevitable bias, I should announce to the class what my own views are.

I am an atheist, I should say, or I am a Christian, or I am whatever. The students, then, will at least be aware that they are in a company store. They will then expect me to be hostile to or sympathetic to certain ideas found in the readings and will accordingly weigh their own responses. Also they will be more likely to challenge and question me, and that is a good thing--isn't it?

Further, I have to look at the material from some point of view, why not let it be my own and let that be known? After all, the kids are against pretense, aren't they? And for openness and honesty, aren't they? Very well, let us be honest and open. Say "I believe" once in a while.

There are other reasons, some say, for taking a stand. The impressionable young student, when his teacher seems never to be either for or against anything, may all unawares come to feel that there is really nothing very important about literature. Books and ideas may appear to have no real impact on the teacher. And the obvious conclusion will soon follow. Or in the case of the student who likes books and who might be heading toward a bookish life, the objective pose may suggest that there is something unscholarly, something undignified, about getting excited about a cause. The English teacher of literature, this student may conclude, is a little above the struggles of mass man. If in the earlier case, impartial objectivity nourishes an anti-intellectualism, here it may encourage a certain snobbery. Either prospect is depressing and reason enough for preferring commitment to neutrality.

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That is problem number one: what to do? Since the choice of one course or the other will obviously make a great deal of difference in what goes on in the classroom, I am anxious to resolve the matter the right way. But I don't know what the right way is. The common resolution, I suspect, is simple enough: give all points of view with emphasis on the right one. But that in the end is not very satisfactory; the dilemma remains. And in view of the power a good teacher has over opening minds, the responsibility is grave. Especially so in the junior high school where, I believe, so many drifting ships fix on a permanent course, albeit unknowingly.

Most of you, I think, will agree with me that there really is a problem such as I have just described. I doubt that there is equal agreement on the existence of problem number two. Some of you do not hold similar premises and, therefore, do not face the same dilemma. But however little company I have on this one now, I suspect an increasing number of teachers will be similarly troubled in the future and so I bring up inner problem number two, the problem of knowledge and power.

Our efforts, presumably, yield knowledge. Perhaps it is not always the knowledge we specified in our lesson plans, but it will be some kind of knowledge. One way or the other, the student is learning something. And as Bacon reminded us, "Knowledge is Power." But any optimism generated by Bacon's words about the mechanics of human development is tempered by Lord Acton's claim (after Pitt) that power corrupts. Those who are able to, do. And somehow it turns out that somebody somewhere suffers in the process.

Those who can, do, and their doings, naturally, are in their own best interests, or alleged best interests. When there are conflicting interests, which is all of the time, then the stronger power prevails. And in prevailing, the stronger power tends to revise upward its conception of its own relative status and importance, thus making the next use of power all the more justified--in the eyes of the stronger power. As the cycle continues, truth and justice are of less and less concern. This is not all there is to the manner by which power corrupts and destroys. But it is enough to show that Acton's line is no idle slogan. Now if A = B and B = C, then A = C; if knowledge is power and power corrupts, then knowledge corrupts.

That's hard. And I don't think it will do to dismiss the equation as a gimmick, or as word play. How many thoughtful men, do you think, are entirely easy about man's use of knowledge? In fact, how many of you believe, as it is carved in letters of stone above Northrop Auditorium, that men are made noble by a college degree? Socrates thought that knowledge made men good. Is it not increasingly easy to think he was mistaken?

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I suppose I am really dealing with two questions here, or perhaps two phases of one question. First, are men good by knowledge; that is, do they get better, more considerate, patient, rational, loving, tolerant, and just? Is the fruit of knowledge more peace and less pain? Some say yes. I can't see it. Second, are men, if they are not made better, actually made worse? Do they use their power to hurt or destroy, knowingly or unknowingly? One question or two, it is all the same thing. In general, so far, what seems to be the result of accumulated power and knowledge?

Well, supposing Acton is right. I believe that he is. As we teach, you and I, what, really, are we doing? This problem is largely theoretical--until we are asked to write objectives for our curriculum, or to defend our work against the charge I have just made, or to justify our existence during times of depression and sleepless nights. The second problem, then, is to find a satisfactory answer when we ask ourselves, what are we doing?

The third problem if it exists, is related. It is an aspect, and only a potential one at that, of the problem of freedom and responsibility. Does the former imply the latter? The moralists says "yes"; the scientist says "no". Let's consider the alternatives.

We are always aware of those who would guide--or censor-- our work. The pressure varies from place to place and from time to time but it is always there. Happily, we teach in a relatively free land in what many believe to be a relatively enlightened time. We may, therefore, with virtually all educated opinion, take a stand against censorship. And not just the banning of books, but against all external controls and pressures on the curriculum. Thus the view prevails in our academic culture that ideas should not be suppressed. Not only would suppression stifle thinking in general, but the wrong ideas, that is, the new and the unconventional, would be the first to suffer. The liberal anti-censorship view is also nourished by the Socratic tradition that knowledge is virtue. Truth drives out error, we say, as in a recent issue of the MCTE Journal. Don't worry about bad books, we tell the self-appointed censors; they can do no harm. "No girl was ever ruined by a book", and besides, students will, if they have a choice, naturally prefer the good books. Censors can't tell a good book from a bad anyway. Therefore, we believe that censorship is dangerous and we may be glad that it is as weak as it is; we may be glad that we are as free as we are. Yet again, complications.

Remember the headlines that told us of the murders of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King? Or the incredible accounts of England's Moor Murders? What, in God's name, we asked, was

happening? But headlines don't tell much. The assassinations or the atrocity were but dramatic examples of the larger problem that could apparently be seen in the cascade of statistics about increasing crime and violence. Now I know thare are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. Still, if we can conclude anything at all from what we seem to be observing, it is that something undesirable (at least in and of itself) is happening. We are a long way from barbarism, but it does look like our fellowman is a bit more dangerous than he was ten years ago. The question is, why? I don't know. But there is an increasing amount of data that suggests that the issue is related to cultural diet. The evidence is accumulating that violence begets violence. This is by no means a settled issue. All we have now is a suggestion. But it is a sobering one.

Pre-schoolers and adults alike have participated in experiments which at present seem to show that the sight of violence (real or dramatized) and even the sight of instruments of violence does in fact encourage violent response. As one study put it: "The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger also urges the finger." Now the relationships between violence portrayed and violence for real, and the effect of different kinds and amounts of violence on human behavior are matters not fully understood. But suppose the future bears out the present, and it becomes probable that violence in the movies and on TV does indeed on occasion draw out violence in some people? Computer people have a saying, GIGO, Garbage In, Garbage Out. What if we find ourselves saying, VIVO, Violence In, Violence Out? At the moment, this seems to be the conclusion towards which the evidence is pointing. Might it also be possible, then, that what might be the case with these two media might also be the case with other arts? Could it be that drama, still photography, painting, and even--do I dare say it?--even literature operate in the same fashion? We're on dangerous ground, are we not? It is to the point that Clarence Darrow, in the famous Loeb-Leopold trial of 1924, claimed that the books in the library of the University of Chicago should be blamed for the murder of young Bobby Franks, not the defendants who had been led astray by what they had read.

Worse yet, suppose, as the psychiatrists suggest, there is something of a relationship between sexuality and violence, any relationship at all. There's a rat's nest for the progressive and enlightened teacher. Or think of other possible relationships, for example, social theory and social behavior, or economic behavior. Suppose, in fact, that we are eventually faced with the unpalatable fact that what we have been proclaiming for many hundreds of years is really true? Suppose ideas do influence behavior? Suppose the arts, literature included, do engender actions? What then? And if it is even possible, in the smallest degree, that our students will be more or less

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violent because of what we present to them, what responsibility do we have? Can we say the good outweighs the bad? That a little violence is the price of progress?

Now this may be, in part, a false alarm. Perhaps the statistics do err. This problem then will become something else. But no matter what it becomes, we're in trouble. There is a trap in every direction. Do we want to assert that there is no connection at all between books and behavior? Why teach? Do we say there is a connection? Then do we plan a curriculum to improve behavior? Or to avoid encouraging wrong behavior? Either way we are doing something that looks suspiciously like manipulation, propaganda, and censorship. Or do we acknowledge some connection but just teach anyway? Let someone else worry about the consequences. As did those good scientists who taught nuclear physics to the bomb builders. Or the gentle chemists who taught Hitler's wardens how to make gas.

There is a tangle of issues here, but the essential point is this: a controlled curriculum--censorship--may be dangerous; an uncontrolled curriculum--no censorship--may also be dangerous. I don't see, incidentally, that anything is changed by saying that organizations of teachers should make the decisions. That would be censorship by an elite, and would introduce a political element. All the worse.

These three problems--two are with me now, one seems to be on the horizon--are dilemmas or contradictions. They may be called "inner" problems, for they are intellectual in nature; they are problems in my head, so to speak. But there is another category of problems, although the distinction is more a convenience than a necessity. This second kind is "outer"; that is to say, these problems characterize the world of the classroom-- and the larger world outside as well. If the first problems affect the way I steer the ship, the second group affects the sea ahead. These problems are, in fact, features of modern life that hinder the teaching of literature. These problems seem very grave; they alarm me very much. I'm not thinking now of those fearful prospects that face everyone. We literature teachers have, in addition, (they are not, however, unrelated) our own problems of a more refined nature.

One of these is simply that the modern world is no place for literature. Books are in a hostile environment. Activism, materialism (the commercial variety), mechanism, plasticism-- all these stifle literature; they make it harder to read books. Literature--I mean printed literature, not the "literature of the film," etc.--needs time; it needs peace and quiet. But what with crowded schedules and multiple responsibilities, what with the pressures and conflicts of our culture, what with Hondas, snowmobiles, transistors, and--it's a triumph of advertising--the "whisperjet," time and peace and quiet are hard

to come by. How many of you, for instance, have enough time to read? And as for finding peace and quiet in this world, one might as well look for brook trout in the middle of Lake Erie. I have about concluded that only the dead have peace, and only the deaf have quiet. Insofar, therefore, as literature is reflective, it is at a disadvantage in a culture that values activity and experience so highly. This is no new problem although I think it is indisputably getting worse.

The first outer problem, then, is the problem of environment. This great big flexible learning center that we live in, the world, is like the one in my school. It may be good for some things, but quiet, reflective, meditative intellectual work is not one of them. This is a serious problem, but easy to identify. The next two take more digging.

In my opening definition of literature, I asserted that literature has to do particularly with humane experience. This is to say, the humanizing thoughts and actions of life as distinct from, say, digestion which is simply a human experience. The distinction is not air tight; doubtless, great poetry can be written about the stomach. But the general trend is clear.

Now humane experience necessarily includes past humane experience. It cannot include all past experience, so a selection is made, and this selection becomes, in part, the accumulated or collected wisdom of mankind. And here is the next problem. I observe an increasing disrespect for this collected wisdom. True, this is nothing new insofar as the outside world is concerned. In fact, we expect it. (Although, strangely enough, the very people who ignore (what I regard as) the treasures of the past, are the ones who first cry out in PTA meetings for a return to the classics instead of all these sex novels!) Be that as it may, what concerns me is that not a few English teachers seem to be ranging on that far side. Traditional literature is not relevant, is the way the anathema is usually worded. It does not really speak to the unique, particular condition of the modern adolescent. The collected wisdom of mankind doesn't mean much any more. But I do not mean to say that this is the problem. There is disagreement about the value of traditional literature, it appears, but that is a fact, not a problem. The problem appears when we plan curriculum. If we disagree, what do we do? If traditional literature is not relevant, what is? What books should we read in our classes? How do we decide when there is fundamental difference? Compromise? Majority vote? Student choice? Pot luck? Are these satisfactory foundations for curriculum planning? We are called upon to provide an English curriculum that is relevant and meaningful, but we don't agree on what is relevant and meaningful. And what do we do while we're arguing?

This business of relevance and meaning shades into another matter. Or, more precisely, dispute over relevance and meaning is evidence of a much deeper dispute over the whole matter of direction in the universe. It is at this deeper level that we encounter the third troubling feature of modern life, the sixth and final problem in my series, and, in my view, the real threat to the teaching of literature in our time. This particular problem has been with us all along. It lurked, smirking, in the definition of literature that I proposed; it has been lolling in the background as we considered the other problems, and now it swaggers up to stage front. Literature, you remember, was, partly, "the affirmation of the way things ought to be." There it is. How ought they to be? To what end should we be heading? What, ultimately, is the purpose of teaching litera-ture? There is some disagreement on the matter! But we can at least agree that we won't settle for simple answers, that is to say, the usual lists of aims and objectives. They don't mean much.

It is always taken as self-evident that we should teach our students to understand what the author is saying, to think critically, to organize and conclude, and to express their thoughts in writing. Why? What is it all for? The usual litany says, "A meaningful educational experience." What is that? "An educated citizen?" Define him. "A useful member of society?" Describe, please. "A good man?" There's no need to continue. When we usually talk of ends, aims, and objectives, we use terms that are coming to be either labels for operational skills (reading, writing, critical thinking, and the like) or empty platitudes and slogans.

For example, a recent NCTE publication, The Growing Edges of Secondary English, contains an essay entitled "A Rationale for Curriculum Decisions." It is a useful article, but it deliberately stops before it reaches the matter of ultimate meaning and purpose. These, the essay asserts, "are matters of private conviction and eternal controversy rather than bases for consensus and action," and "we are sufficiently divided in matters of purely educational concern" (NCTE, 1968, p. 15). True enough, sadly true enough.

There used to be a consensus on certain ultimate concerns. In general, Western men agreed that God gave meaning to the uni-verse, value and morality to human life, and force to reason. Meaning, value and morality, reason--these were absolutes, starting points, grounds for analysis and affirmation. It was possible to conceive of ultimate ends in light of these quali-ties and by means of reason--with a little help from revelation. I think we agree that the situation is changing. The philosophi-cal foundations of Western thinking are dissolving into nothing at all. I suggest to you that the consequences are serious, for without some kind of agreement on ultimate matters, it is not

possible, I think, to have much agreement on temporal matters. Without agreeing on a destination, we can hardly agree that we are heading in the right direction.

Formerly, the important issue was, is something right or wrong? Now the issue is, is there right or wrong? Or, are there any grounds for saying that something is right or wrong?

Or again, take reason. Formerly reason was thought t be a unique characteristic of man, a special power by which man could perceive, at least partially, truth, that is, God and His creation. But now we live in a mechanical universe, reason can only be assumed to be a casually related series of electro-chemical events occurring a few inches below the top of the skull. Reason is a tiny, electric current in the brain. Ration-al conclusions, then, are nothing other than portions of that current, nothing more than events in the series. Conclusions, then, can be neither true nor false, they are simply results, just as other bodily functions are neither true nor false, just results. No longer, therefore, may reason be conceived of as a beacon illuminating truth. Today, the light of reason has become a flickering strobe meaning, when you think about it, nothing.

Formerly the issue was, is a chain of reasoning valid or invalid? Now the issue is, quite irrationally, almost the same. It shouldn't be, but we cannot quite get ourselves to admit the full implications of our modern world view. Reason, in fact, is something of an embarrassment to the modern mind. It is sort of like the wealthy industrialist father of a hippy. His existence cannot be justified, his life style is abhorred, he is insufferable company, but our hippy regularly cashes his allowance checks.

This is not to say, however, that reason has the status it formerly did. The whole wave of drug experience has some-thing to say about the relative worth of reason and logic as sources of meaning and direction. A considerable part of the arts say the same. Theater, music, painting, poetry, other writings--much of it seems to show that experience and sensa-tion more than, or even rather than reason are the sources of truth and value. And consider the significance of those entertainments known as happenings in this light. Increasingly, it appears, reason is discounted as a guide for men. And its role nowadays seems to be to justify rather than to direct the affairs of individuals.

Meaning, value and morality, reason--they all enjoy ill health today because of profound changes in Western thinking. Now it happens that I regret this, but that's not the point I want to make. I do not propose any new absolute truths, nor am I going to argue that it is either possible or desirable

to resurrect the old truths. I am only saying that this is the source of many problems. Without agreement on ultimate matters, we really cannot agree on anything else except, possibly, day to day survival techniques.

If literature is to be relevant, it must be relevant to something, presumably, relevant to life. At least that is what I continually hear. And what does that mean? Well, for most of us, that means that the literature in question relates to certain experiences. And what does that mean?

It usually means that it analyzes those experiences (in whole or in part) correctly and affirms something about them. Affirms what? Affirms that a proper reaction to the experience (acceptance, rejection, whatever) will ultimately contribute toward a better life. And what does that mean? That means a life that is in some sense preferable to the present one (unless, of course, the present one is completely satisfying). But in what direction does that better life lie?

Well, here we find ourselves pointing in all directions at once, and more than a few, if honest, will only shrug their shoulders. What, ultimately, is a better life? That is the final problem, outer problem number three. The reference points are disappearing, we have no faith in the maps, and we're not agreed on where we are going. And if we do not agree on the ends, how can we agree on the means? As the old Jewish proverb puts it, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

It seems to me, then, as I survey things from the perspective of a teacher of literature, that there are problems, they are making things difficult now, and there is worse to come. The future will be marked by even more discord than the present. And that's a lot.

We have been teaching within a tradition that emerged within the context of those old reference points. That tradition has shaped our entire curriculum and much of what we do is nothing other than inherited tradition. But that tradition and the intellectual context that shaped that tradition are rapidly disappearing (a very good thing in the eyes of many). Changes will occur, therefore; they are occurring now, and who knows what to expect? Aims, objectives, analysis, affirmation, humane experience, traditional wisdom--all will be altered almost beyond recognition. It will then be very hard, I believe, to find much of the old tradition, the one that lives in the definition of literature that I gave at the beginning, in the curriculum of the future. Oh, we will still say that we are teaching literature--and we will be according to our new definitions--but there will have been big changes. As C. S. Lewis puts it:

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All things (e.g., a camel's journey through
A needle's eye) are possible, it's true.
But picture how the camel feels, squeezed out
In one long bloody thread from tail to snout.

Now whatever else that camel feels, he is going to have trouble with his sense of self-identity. He will have trouble deciding just what he is and just what his purpose in life is. And so with the teaching of literature.

One thing is certain. As the number of commonly held premises about life decrease, discourse is hindered; as the number of common reference points diminish, communication and understanding--mind speaking to mind--become increasingly elusive. Necessarily, there is less and less likelihood of resolving and reconciling the tensions and pressures of life. I believe it is a very serious matter.

Is that the only prospect? Is discord inevitable? Are things really so dark? It is perfectly proper, even fashionable, to paint scary, grim pictures these days, but it is only polite to conclude with some note of hope. You know, the "things will be terrible unless" kind of thing followed by an exhortation of some sort. And did not the third use of the title hint that things were not quite all that bad?

Truthfully, I don't have much hope. It seems to me that if there is to be agreement, there must be agreement. That doesn't seem too probable right now. True, there are some signs: a growing awareness of the delicate balance of nature might call into question the modern creed that there are no limits to the works of man. An intuitive turning against the machine seems to be healthy. What appears to be an awakening social conscience is a good sign. But these are more than balanced by bad omens. In sum, I am not hopeful.

Still, there is something yet to be said. As things change, as discord and difficulty increase, one good might come of it. A lot of illusions will be swept away. This could mean considerably more realism about educational and other social matters. But then again, it might not. Very likely we will go down--but with open eyes. Such views, I know, are not very popular. They go against the humanist tradition as well as the characteristic optimism of Western culture. I would therefore, be very surprised if there were not a number of you who are not only skeptical of the pessimism of these remarks but are, in particular, trying to shoot down the elements of that last problem, the one about value and meaning. Well enough. Skepticism is a great defense (though a poor foundation) and honest argument is always helpful. In the meantime, though, we've got problems.

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Teaching a Course in Literary Criticism

by DAVID V. HARRINGTON
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Principles of critical thinking are so obviously fundamental in any course in literature that the college teacher offering a course in literary criticism can expect his students to come to him possessing greatly varied backgrounds in dealing with critical ideas. Two big problems for the teacher are being tied down seemingly to the limited possibilities of whatever textbook he orders for the course, and despairing at the thought of making orderly progress in such a many-sided subject with students possessing the suggested unpredictable preconceptions.

Available textbooks and catalog descriptions of courses indicate that exposure to literary criticism might consist of highly miscellaneous materials. One can study it as a history of critical ideas (as in A.H. Gilbert's Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden); as a supplement for courses in literary periods (any of the Goldentree Books on literary criticism edited by O.B. Hardison Jr., Samuel Hynes, or Daniel G. Hoffman); as a survey of modern schools of criticism (Wilbur Scott's Five Approaches of Literary Criticism); as suggested tactics for literary interpretation (Zitner, Kissane, Liberman's A Preface to Literary Analysis); as exercise in memorization of literary terminology (A Handbook to Literature by Thrall, Hibbard, Holman); as indoctrination in a special critical point of view (Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism or I.A. Richard's Principles of Literary Criticism); as training in elements of research (Barzun and Graff's The Modern Researcher, good even though written for historians); or as practice in becoming literary critics. It may seem pretentious to prefer the last choice, as the term "literary critic" suggests a lofty level of achievement; but it is most important to extend the range and depth of the student's own critical thinking, so that all other possible objectives are subordinated to this idea.

In order to extend the student's quality of thinking about literature one must first find out what the student knows about critical theory and what he does when he reacts to a poem, a play, a novel, or a short story. Every course he has had dealing with literature is in a sense a course in literary criticism. In fact, every poem, novel, story, or play, read alertly, is an exercise in critical thinking. Thus all students have quite a number of critical preconceptions whether they think about them as such or not. The most important activity in class is to find out what these preconceptions are, to test them with a barrage of related questions, to see how well they hold up, to compare them with other preconceptions, to make modifications or adjustments wherever necessary, to do everything to improve, refine, and discipline student thinking about literature.

A technique that helps get this started is to ask the students during one of the first class periods, perhaps using two class periods, to take turns offering general questions which they would probably ask themselves when studying a literary work. Everyone must ask aloud a general question when his turn comes and everyone must record all of these questions. The person whose turn comes up asks his question as soon as he has finished recording the previous question. Some typical questions are as follows: Is it any good? Can I relate it to my own personal experience? Does the author show insight into character? What does it mean? What led to the author's viewpoint? What kind of imagery does he use? Does it seem based upon a literary tradition? What techniques of prosody does the poet use? What is the source for the work? How do his techniques further his purpose? Students are to keep this long list of questions, the accumulation of which serves as a supplementary text of literary values in that the questions generally imply values. Experience dealing with a small class reveals that students can suggest and record about eighty questions in an hour; but there suddenly comes a time when the pace slows down perceptibly. Students have a good sense for recognizing questions already asked. As soon as the teacher notices several students struggling to come up with new questions he might as well quit. They have already recited the questions they consider most important, and the teacher has a reasonably clear indication of student values. The teacher in subsequent meetings might single out representative questions from the list as examples of historical criticism, the generic approach, aesthetic study, psychological criticism, archetypal criticism, etc., to illustrate relationships between student thinking and dominant trends.

But it is one thing to discover in this rudimentary form the student's knowledge of critical theory. It is a much more complicated problem discovering what ideas he actually puts into practice when he reacts to a literary work. We can emphasize the importance of key values in writing about and discussing literature, but we should at the same time observe the frequency with which we as teachers as well as our students limit ourselves to immediate impressions and memorable passages. In our most common lectures and in our class discussion we rarely get beyond a limited view of a literary work. We may talk mainly about the historical backgrounds of Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" or limit ourselves to the relationship between autobiography and

the pastoral tradition in a study of Milton's "Lycidas." In tackling a modern unfamiliar novel like Kawabata's Thousand Cranes or Achebe's Things Fall Apart, we might deal at first only with characterization. There is an obvious relationship between the limits of student responses in writing or oral discussion and the similar limits of teachers who "do what they can" when tackling works to which they have not devoted exhaustive study. The teacher of a course in literary criticism should accept this common practice of relying upon immediate, intuitive responses as one of the "facts of life" and devise teaching techniques to build upon this tendency. But such intuitive responses, though generally sound and potentially informative, need considerable development.

Rather than impose a consistent "air tight" approach to literary study upon students in an undergraduate class, the teacher may do better by giving them constant reminders of the previously suggested variety of questions and approaches. The teacher should plan to bring in pieces of information or suggestions about literary criticism at irregular, perhaps unannounced, intervals: a brief review of different ideas about Aristotle's notion of catharsis one day; an outline of Susanne Langer's definition of art the next; I.A. Richards' list of ten chief difficulties of criticism; some modern theories about the creative process from the psychology of learning; Croce's equation of intuition and expression; some consideration of William Empson's ideas about ambiguity; and much more. These bits and patches, each of which could be an exhausting study for a semester in itself, should in an undergraduate course be given in the form of a brief advertisement, a ten minute shot, so to speak. Some will need to be repeated now and then. Obviously no student can digest all of this in a semester course; but neither does any teacher regularly keep in mind all of these principles. The object is to increase the student's awareness of the breadth of critical thought as well as his own critical sensitivity, not to indoctrinate him in a special pattern of thought, or force his memorization of a complex body of ideas.

If the teacher can sucessfully structure the course so that the ideas about critical study can be kept in rather constant circulation, then students, while working on their critical papers, can profit from reminders to look at the work they are studying from quite a number of different vantage points. Since students tend to work better when faced with short term goals, it is good to ask them for an early submission of a "complete" paper. This paper, however, perhaps without their knowing it at the start, will be rewritten several times. The first version is to be as good a paper as he can prepare. It should be comparable to papers he normally writes in other literature courses. But of course the teacher rather confidently can read these papers expecting that they need more judiciously qualified generalizations, more careful use of illustrative evidence, and, perhaps

most important of all, more emphasis on testing the quality of the literary work according to more varied and sophisticated literary standards. We can tell students, quite honestly, that papers always can use further refinement. In making suggestions for revision, the teacher must also give practical instructions for expanding and altering later drafts of a paper. Thus the course in some respects involves study in advanced composition. The teacher of literary criticism could ask his students to rewrite their papers perhaps as many as four times, making profitable gains each time and ending up with a truly admirable paper, at least in comparison with other projects the student has completed.

Still, another technique, which can contribute to a surprisingly important dimension in the course, involves the teacher's participation on relatively even terms in writing activities. In the ideal classroom situation everyone is influencing and is influenced by everyone else. No one person's ideas dominate. Such an atmosphere can be augmented noticeably by the teacher's participation in the writing assignments and by participation of the students in reading and making marginal suggestions on each other's papers. The teacher will have an obvious advantage in possessing much greater previous experience with critical ideas and wider reading, but he also has greater obligations in the course as the organizer and discussion leader. Each teacher, however, should accept the challenge of writing a paper on much the same basis that he imposes on his students, perhaps preparing a critical study of a work which he has only recently encountered. In the process of struggling with this writing assignment and disciplining himself to meet the same deadlines, he should not only be able to develop a desirable rapport, he should also be able to understand in a more practical way the special problems connected with preparing a required paper. The teacher may find it an interesting challenge, for example, to put into practice those same critical principles which he has been fervently espousing.

In addition, such participation will remind the teacher that the understanding of what criticism consists of cannot be separated from an honest recognition of the whole process of critical thinking. We rarely see any hint of this process in the textbooks on criticism, in the great examples of practical criticism, or in the instructions for writing about literature. In short, there is the need to admit candidly that the process of critical thinking starts off with a miscellaneous collection of wildly futile questions about structure and theme, odd recollections of unusual characters, striking episodes, or memorable images. This leads into a period of collecting apparently unrelated bits of critical judgments and patches of illustrative evidence. Ultimately, if sufficient time is allowed for rereading, questioning and thinking, the writer arrives at the

decisive moment calling for disciplined effort during which
phase the miscellaneous materials are hammered out, organized,
and rephrased in more elegant and polished language. The teacher
needs regular reminders that there is a good deal more to criti-
cal writing than the apparent calm, confident, logical analysis
one finds in the finished essays anyone can read. From experi-
ence in such participation, the teacher also learns much about
the practical need to schedule his assignments and deadlines so
that sufficient time is allowed for realistic completion of
work.

For ultimate evaluation, the teacher, after imposing the
discipline of rewriting and bringing this great variety of cri-
tical options before the student, should grade the student
according to the degree of sophistication in his practical
employment of critical principles. No matter how inadequate such
a basis for accurate grading is, the important result would be
to emphasize growth in range and depth of critical thinking.

David Harrington has contributed several stimulating articles to MEJ
on teaching problems and techniques.

Chapter V. In Step with the Regulations: College Programs for the Preparation of Teachers of English

by GERALD THORSON
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This spring the colleges and universities of Minnesota will
present their second class of teaching majors in English for
certification under the new state regulations. These students
have been prepared in programs of study set up to meet the mini-
mum standards put into effect by the State Board of Education on
September 1, 1968. There are perhaps several questions that
ought to be raised at this point: has there been a drastic
change in the curriculums at the colleges; are the majors now
better prepared for teaching in the secondary schools; have the
regulations made a difference in the hiring practices of super-
intendents--do they, in fact, insist on English majors in the
English classrooms? Preliminary to such studies, however (in-
deed, it is perhaps too early to make such studies), is a con-
sideration of what the college departments are actually requir-
ing as minimum standards for certification.

An examination of the programs at nineteen of the twenty-
three state institutions preparing teachers of English reveals
a fairly uniform course of study. Specific requirements at
each institution are quite rigid: specific courses stipulated
for the major make up the bulk of the requirements for a major.
Flexibility within a given program is generally limited to a
choice in the actual course or courses to satisfy an area
requirement. Variations among the colleges occur not in the
nature of the curriculums but in the specific number of credits
required in the areas of literature, composition, and language.
There is a very strict adherence to the regulations of the State
Board of Education.

A summary of the requirements of these nineteen institutions
accompanies this article. For the sake of facility in comparison,
since individual institutions list their requirements in quarter,
semester, or course credits, these requirements have all been
expressed in semester credit hours. In considering this compi-

lation one should bear in mind that what is listed is, after all, a minimum requirement. The preparation of an individual student is not limited to it.

All but one of the institutions requires a minimum of 36 semester hours or more of work in composition, language, and literature above Freshman English—the minimum stated in the regulations. The median number of credits is 36.5. However, since some institutions offer their speech courses, adolescent literature, and methods courses in the department of English, they have stated a minimum requirement above the 36 required in English. For courses in composition, language, and literature, then, the minimum requirement is the same as that required by the regulations.

Specific credit requirements in advanced composition vary from zero at one college to 4, with the median requirement at 3 credits. The one college that does not require a specific course in advanced writing has courses available for all students but allows for other forms of academic instruction to meet the requirement.

Language preparation is also a part of the requirement at all institutions. The minimum requirement (at two institutions) is 2 semester credits. The highest requirement (5.33 semester credits) is found at the University of Minnesota: Minneapolis. The median requirement is 4 semester credits.

Requirements in literature, as is to be expected, make up the major part of the requirements for teachers of English. State regulations require no specific number of credits in literature; nor do they specify exact areas of literature that must be included as course requirements: they simply elaborate on the kinds of preparation that would provide a meaningful background in literature. As a result, colleges vary most noticeably in their specific requirements in literature. The number of semester credit hours required goes from 15.33 to 32, with a median minimum requirement of 26. All require courses in British literature (median: 10 credits) and American literature (median: 4 credits). Four colleges require a specific course in world literature; seventeen require a course in Shakespeare; ten require a course in literary criticism; and fourteen require a course in modern literature. The median number of semester credits required in these specific areas of literature is 0 in world literature, 3 in Shakespeare, 2 in literary criticism, and 2.66 in modern literature.

Adolescent literature is required as a specific course at ten institutions, with a median requirement of 2 semester hours. At eight institutions the course is offered by the department of English; at one it is given by the department of education; and at one it is taught in the department of library science. Others include instruction in adolescent literature as a part of the course in the teaching of English.

The colleges are perhaps most rigid in their speech requirements. The median number of semester credits in public address is 2.66, with a high of 5.33. In oral interpretation the median is also 2.66, with a high of 4 semester credits.

Basically, then, not only do the teacher-preparing institutions in Minnesota conform to the state regulations; they also are very much alike in their specific requirements. There is little of the variety one would expect and hope for. This probably indicates a fundamental agreement on the core preparation needed for teachers of English in the secondary school. At the same time, since so little creativity or flexibility is found in the individual programs, it may suggest that either the regulations are too rigid or that the college departments have been too literal in their interpretations of them. The experimentation in curriculums that has characterized so many of the educational programs on college campuses these past few years, even in departments of English, is not really noticeable in the teacher-education programs. There is need for experimentation and creativity if the preparation of teachers of English in Minnesota is to keep pace with the demands of the days in which we live.

Gerald Thorson, chairman of the English department at St. Olaf, is a past president of the MCTE. This June he concludes his long service as chairman of the Association of English Department Chairmen of Colleges in Minnesota, in order to go on sabbatical leave.

State Department Minimum Requirements for Preparation of Teachers
of English, Effective September 1968.

These requirements shall constitute minimum programs of preparation in the teaching fields to be set up by the colleges. Each prospective teacher shall have at least the amount of preparation indicated in each of the fields. The standard requirements for credits in professional education shall apply except where requirements are specifically mentioned.

(c) English or Language Arts. The prospective teacher of English or Language Arts shall have:

(1) A teaching major in English or Language Arts of not less than 36 semester (54 quarter) hours to include academic instruction in language, literature, and composition beyond the freshman English requirement in (aa), (bb), and (cc) below, plus academic instruction in speech in each of the two following areas, (1) theory and practice of public address and (2) oral interpretation or play production and direction, in addition to such demonstration of speaking proficiency as the individual institution may normally consider appropriate. This major should include the following areas:

(aa) Expository writing.

(bb) The nature of language, and the historical development and present structure of English language, especially as used in the United States.

(cc) Development of English and American Literature; intensive study of at least one major English or American author; theory and practice of literary criticism; analysis and interpretation of the various literary genres; literature for adolescents; literature of the 20th century and of at least one other century.

OR:

(2) A teaching minor in English or Language Arts of at least 18 semester (27 quarter) hours, including academic instruction in language, literature and composition beyond the freshman English requirement, plus academic instruction in speech as defined in the major in English or Language Arts (c) (1).

Summary (19 colleges)

Fr. English
  Minimum: no requirement (4 colleges)
  Maximum: 8 (4 colleges)

English Above Fr. Eng.
  Minimum: 30 (1)
  Maximum: 48 (1)
  Majority: 36-42

Literature
  Minimum: 15.33
  Maximum: 32
    Br. Lit.: 5.33 to 20
    Am. Lit.: 2.66 to 8
    World Lit.: 0 (15 colleges) to 4
    Shakespeare: 0 (2 colleges) to 4
    Lit. Criticism: 0 (9 colleges) to 4
    Mod. Lit.: 0 (5 colleges) to 5.33

Adolescent Lit.: 0 (9 colleges) to 2.66
    English course: 8
    Educ. course: 1
    Lib. Sc. course: 1
    Part of Eng. Methods: 6

Language
  Minimum: 2
  Maximum: 5.33

Advanced Composition
  Minimum: 0
  Maximum: 4

Speech
  Public Address
  Minimum: 2
  Maximum: 5.33

  Oral Interp.
  Minimum: 0
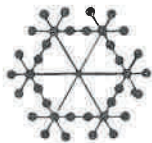 Maximum: 4

English Methods
  Minimum: 0
  Maximum: 6

Minimum Requirements for an English Teaching Major (expressed in semester hours)

College	Fr. Eng.	Eng. Above Fr. Eng.	Lit. Total	Br.	Am.	World	Shak.	Lit. Crit.	Mod. Lit.	Adol. Lit.	Lng.	Comp.	Speech Pub. Ad.	Oral Int.	Eng. Ed.
Augsburg	3.33	36	21.31	9.33	2.66	3.33	3.33	0	2.66	2.66 (Lib)	3.33	2.66	2.66	0	2.66
Bemidji	8	36	15.33	5.33	4	0	2	2	2	2 (Eng)	2	2	2	2	2
Bethel	3	39	17	6	6	0	3	0	0	2 (Eng)	3	3	3	3	3
Carleton	1.66	36.63	26.66	23.33		0	3.33	3.33	3.33	0 (Ed)	3.33	3.33	3.33	0	3.33
St. Benedict	4	36	28	8	4	4	4	4	4	0 (Ed)	4	4	4	4	4
St. Catherine	0	36	20	8	8	0	0	4	0	2 (Eng)	4	4	2	2	2
St. Scholastica	0	36	17.33	5.33	2.66	0	4	0	2.66	2.66 (Eng)	4	4	2	4	2
Saint Theresa	6	31	25	14	3	0	3	0	5	2 (Ed)	3	3	2	3	2
Hamline	0	36.63	26.66	13.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	0 (Ed)	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33
Macalester	0	36	24	20	4	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	4	4	4
Mankato	6	36	26	6	6	0	2	2	0	2 (Eng)	2	2	2	2	2
Moorhead	8	42	29.33	16	8	0	2.66	0	5.33	0 (Ed)	2.66	2	2.66	2.66	2.66
St. Cloud	5.33	42.66	26	14.66	7.33	0	2.66	2	2	2 (Eng)	5.33	2	2.66	2	2.66
St. John's	4	40	28	8	4	4	4	4	4	0	4	4	4	4	4
St. Olaf	3.65	36.5	25.55	10.95	3.65	0	3.65	3.65	3.65	0 (Ed)	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	2
U - Duluth	8	42	26	10	4	0	2	0	2	2 (Eng)	4	4	3.33	2	2.66
U - Mpls.	6	48	18	12	6	0	4	0	0	0	5.33	4	5.33	2	6
U - Morris	0	36	32	18	6.66	0	4	0	0	0 (Ed)	4	2	2	2	2
Winona	5.33	41.33	32	20	2.66	0	2	2	2	2 (Eng)	2.66	2.66	2.66	2.66	0

Somewhere Between Rigidity and License

by K. E. HENRIQUES
Bemidji State College

Complexity has become the characteristic of practically all academic disciplines, English included. The knowledge explosion, to be sure, has not affected English as profoundly as it has the physical and biological sciences, but it has tended to further compartmentalize the study of literature. What was once, for instance, a period course in 19th-century British Literature, is now invariably one course in the Romantics and another in the Victorians; American Literature of the 20th century is usually divided into two distinct courses with a division point at either 1925 or 1945.

This increasing complexity has not been restricted to the traditional literature courses. The past fifty years of linguistic research have added at least a couple of courses to every curriculum. Rare is the list of undergraduate offerings that does not include at least one course in Modern Usage, Structural Grammar, Transformational Grammar, Tagmemic Grammar, English as a Second Language, etc.

On top of all this, the sixties, as a result of ever-increasing campus awareness of the nation's social ailments, have brought us courses in Black Literature, Chicano Literature, Indian Literature, Protest Literature, etc., along with a substantial number of inter-disciplinary courses linking English with most of the other academic disciplines. And now, as we move into the seventies, we find supra-national concerns beginning to be reflected in courses on the Urban Novel, the War Novel, etc.--and the decade has only begun.

We face an avalanche of change. It is being sparked by ever greater numbers of students crying for relevance and demanding increased freedom of choice in determining the content of a college education. It is foolish to consider the majority of student militants demanding educational freedom as silly sausages. How does an English department structure a contemporary program that adequately combines an appreciation of the past, an understanding of the present, and an awareness of the future? How keep the discipline relevant in a sea of change? How accede to legitimate student demands for freedom of choice--electives-- in structuring their own individual programs? These are no

longer merely rhetorical questions. They are realities already with us, and if we do not adjust to the temper of tempestuous times, English (or Literature, or Language Arts--call it what you will) may well stand in danger of disintegration as a viable discipline for a generation that insists on its own thing, come heaven or ebbtide.

At Bemidji State College the English department found a ready answer to half of the problem. For English majors who were not concerned with certification for teaching in Minnesota schools, a completely elective program was introduced. This means that there are no required courses for English B.A. majors. This does not, however, mean that all discretion has been thrown to the winds, for the department suggests a core of courses integral to a "solid English program." The success of such a completely elective program depends, to be sure, on a close association of student with advisor. It will be the latter's responsibility to counsel and advise lest the student, upon graduating, awake suddenly to the realization that personal whim, momentary interest, and transitory concerns had dictated choices no longer as important as they once seemed relevant. This completely elective major, it is hoped, will do something to close the teacher-student credibility gap.

Not nearly so simple was the problem for English majors concerned with certification to teach in Minnesota's secondary schools. How were we to allow for legitimate student freedom of choice in the face of requirements, which, if translated into standardized courses, left almost no room for electives in a major program of 50-60 quarter hours? The attempt to increase the number of student electives to approximate at least two-fifths of the total hours was not simple.

The present requirements had their genesis at least ten years ago--before Berkeley, Cornell, Santa Barbara, Kent State, etc. The ideal behind those requirements was for a common substratum that could be presumed to be the possession of every graduate of a teacher-training college in Minnesota. Abstracting from the question of whether or not this is a desirable thing, it soon became clear that the common substratum had grown so large that there was precious little latitude for either individual preference, specialized training in particular areas, or for new literature courses that were springing spontaneously out of a contemporary world. Both teachers and students found themselves locked into a regimented program that seemed to enshrine the past and sacrifice individuality on an ancient altar of methodological utility. This may be an over-statement of the negative aspects of present certification programs, but it is surely an understatement of what many teachers and students feel.

Because present certification requirements envision competencies, and not merely quantitative accumulation of courses, a

compromise was sought between the scylla of rigidity and the charybdis of license. Here is what resulted:

English Major (B.S.)

1. English Requirements for Certification:

220-Advanced Composition	3
223-Modern Usage and Structure	4
241-Introduction to English Literature,I	4
242-Introduction to English Literature,II	4

260-Amer. Lit., History of		
261-Amer. Lit., to 1836		
262-Amer. Lit., 1836-1880	Any two:	
263-Amer. Lit., 1880-1920		
264-Amer. Lit., 1920 to present		6

313-Literature for Adolescents	3

441-Chaucer		
443-Shakespeare I, or 444, Shak.II	Any one:	
446-Milton		3-4

293-Critical Approaches		
493-Literary Criticism	Any one:	
494-Modern Criticism		3
		27-28
English Electives		27-26
	Sub-Total	54-54

(Note: Students must take a course in 20th century literature and one other period course in English or American Literature.)

2. Non-English Requirements for Certification:

Education 410-Methods	3
Speech 210-Fundamentals of Public Speaking	3
Speech 220-Oral Interpretation	3
TOTAL	63

What has resulted is not ideal. It is, however, a small step in a better direction, for it does allow the future English teacher a greater degree of flexibility in meeting his individual needs than has hitherto been the case. Many feel that a realistic ideal would be an arrangement that allows for approximately a fifty-fifty division between requirements and electives.

Ken Henriques is the chairman of the English department at Bemidji State College.