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ON THE STATE OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN MINNESOTA

NCTE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS OF 1972 TESTIFY

For the high school student, English class is one of the rigid requirements to be either endured or enjoyed before attaining the certification of a high school diploma. Unfortunately, teachers are too often confronted with those students whose attitude toward English class hovers somewhere between apathetic tolerance and outright hostility. Facing such a classroom of kids takes courage, stamina, patience, and ingenuity. Teaching them English requires nothing short of magic, unless one has discovered how to change their negativism into acceptance.

To do this, one must in many ways be like a magician; able to pull the rabbit out of the right hat at the right time. In some cases, the rabbit may be a spontaneous discussion, the reading of a new and controversial novel, or perhaps a guest speaker. These teaching techniques are but a few of the many possibilities employable in a classroom situation. They are devices which the teacher could use to gain the attention of the class. Although gimmicks must be introduced occasionally for variety's sake, the main emphasis in English class should be, of course, on the basics -- reading and writing.

I do not presume to know all of the rights and wrongs of teaching. The suggestions I have to offer dealing with reading and writing are certainly not new to English teachers. Nevertheless, they are what I believe to be the most beneficial in establishing a classroom atmosphere which is both stimulating and creative.

First I would stress the reading and discussion of a wide range of classic literature. Obviously, English teachers don't need to be told the virture of a fundamental literary knowledge. However, because of the current emphasis for "relevancy" in the classroom on the part of students today, instructors are at a distinct disadvantage when attempting to introduce the classics to their pupils. High school students in particular have come to the conclusion that the classics are something to be kept on a bookshelf and venerated --or ignored -- rather than something to be read and experienced.

Perhaps an argument for the "relevancy" of such classics is given by Northrop Frye in his book, The Educated Imagination, where he concludes, "Literature doesn't evolve or improve or progress." He states that whereas one must look at the present for the best accomplishments in science and technology, one must, of the contrary, often look to the past for the best in

literature. Professor Frye's opinion may cause students to see the classics in a different light. For as time does not change man's basic needs and emotions, so also time does not destroy good literature.

I have mentioned that the classics should not only be read, but experienced as well. This can be achieved in the classroom through thoughtful discussion, providing the teacher has been trained in good discussion techniques. Unfortunately, too many classroom discussions are based on a factual question-correct answer exchange. This method, aside from stimulating no controversy, actually prevents the student from offering his own interpretations of the book.

As a trained co-leader and former participant of the Junior Great Books Discussion Program, I have had the opportunity to discover the essential ingredients of a good discussion, and thereby have known the thrill of really experiencing a literary work. I think the most important rule for leading a good discussion is to avoid asking any factual questions unless one is required to substantiate a point of doubt. Instead, the leader should pose interpretive questions which explore the author's intent. These questions should be ones that the leader himself does not know the answers to, so that the participants are truly challenged to search for acceptable interpretations in the light of their own reading. However, the teacher should definitely not determine whether a student's interpretation is right or wrong. As the discussion leader, the teacher should ask the student to substantiate his individual response with evidence from the reading. After this, the other participants should be invited to agree or disagree, and to offer their own interpretations as well.

I have found that those teachers who initiate and lead well-prepared discussions of assigned readings are rewarded by the eager participation of the whole class. Hopefully, through English teachers' use of discussion and various other educational techniques, high school students will be motivated to temporarily abandon their cry for "relevancy" in favor of seeking a basic knowledge of the classics.

The other possibility I will discuss, and one which I think is an integral part to every English class, is teaching the methods used in expository writing. Because communication today is so often found in written form, it is essential that students be able to express themselves well through writing.

Students should be taught to recognize different writing techniques such as narration, description, and persuasion. They should be assigned papers to help them learn how to use these techniques. The assignments should be stimulating, both for the students who write them, and for the teacher who critiques

them. Students respond better to assignments in which they hav freedom to choose their own subject matter. As an alternative, the teacher could assign a composition on some topic of current interest to his class. Later, students should be allowed to experiment with creative writing, be it in poetry, drama, or short story form.

Regrettably, too often English teachers have so many stude to work with, that assigning and grading compostions on a regul basis becomes an almost impossible feat. Yet, until we devise a system for establishing smaller and more intimate classes, th teaching of writing techniques must unfortunately continue to be practiced on a limited scale.

What I have said certainly contains no magic. In fact, some of my classmates would probably disagree with my "old-fashioned" suggestions, saying that they lack relevancy. They would say that because of radio and television, we have no real need for developing writing techniques as a method of communication. Yet because radio and television appeal only temporarily to our audio-visual senses, it is through writing that ideas can best be presented. For today's students fail to realize that most of what is heard or seen on radio or television is the product of the written word.

Still they argue by saying that the classics are from the past, and we must look to the future. But how can one prepare for the future without an understanding of the past? And what could be more rewarding than a discussion of the past in the light of today's experiences?

Perhaps a recent Peanuts cartoon illustrates my sentiments. Snoopy is on his way to visit Miss Helen Sweetstory, the author of the "Bunny-Wunny" books (to Snoopy, a classic!). He is stopp by Lucy, who, after ridiculing him for his bad literary taste, insists that the books are no longer relevant. After giving Lucy a resounding "BLEAH!", a determined Snoopy continues his journey saying, "I do not suffer fools gladly!"

– Deborah Lamberton,
Southwest High School, Minneapolis

The study of English is many different things to many different people. Its meaning can be as diverse as the number of individuals studying it. The functional approach to studying English is the development of an individual's organizational talents - his ability to organize thought into a communicable form. Perhaps a more romantic view of English is seeing it as the quest for truth in life. English as an art is the practice of expressing what is of more than ordinary significance. To be able to transmit a portion of the truth through words is a creative, dynamic ability. A good novel can be viewed as a way to achieving immortality. It can be said that Melville has gained immortality through Ahab and the great white Leviathan in Moby Dick.

The structured classroom situation does not meet the educational needs of the contemporary English student. Teaching English to students as a class unit in the classroom situation is an outmoded concept. Since English is a required course the type of student taking English varies greatly. The abilities of these students also vary greatly. One student may be barely able to read while another has written a published short story. Trying to teach classic literature to such a wide range of mental capacities seems an impossible job. In the classroom situation both the exceptionally good students and the poorer students lose out. All levels cannot be provided a program suited for their needs. The standard classroom situation does not have the versatility necessary for the contemporary student.

English is the study of life in realtionship to words. The structure of the classroom situation does not allow for this personalized and individualized study. An English course must afford the freedom to allow individuals to search for their own meaning, their own message. Individual reaction to great classic literature or modern poetic verse can differ greatly. A novel can convey a different meaning to many people. The classroom situation does not provide enough freedom for students to develop their own interests and creative abilities. The ordinary classroom situation cannot handle the student who needs to learn the function of English at the minimum level -- newspapers, magazines, and easy books. The level of study is gauged at a degree which is often impossible for the poorer student to attain. For the good student English becomes a boring, conventional subject. For the poorer student English becomes a struggle.

The problem facing teachers today is to provide students with an imaginative course which provides the necessary freedom for creativity but the needed structure for less responsible scholars. In order for an English course to be effective each individual must be considered a separate unit. Every student should have the freedom to choose what specific area he is interested in studying within a given framework of literature and language skills. He must be free to develop his own inter-

ests. It is the teacher's responsibility to develop a broad program to satisfy student choice while still providing the basic communication skills within the grasp of each individual's abilities. An open-ended program which evolves around the individual allows for innovation and creativity on the part of the student. It is the teacher's obligation to create and inspire students to creativity and originality in their study of English.

One program developed and advocated by certain teachers is called the capsule contract plan. Students contract for a certain grade over a specific period of time. Students are assigned work according to their ability, as well as the work accomplished. Work is divided into three major categories - A work, B work, and C work. C work and B work are designed to develop the student's writing ability and enable him to organize thought into communicable form. Because of this writing, grammar and structure improve. Interest ranges from auto mechanics to a great literary work such as Melville's Moby Dick or Dante's Divine Comedy. A work requires the student to develop his own creative capacity. He may be required to write poetry or a short story or develop a theme artistically through a mozaic. Two minor papers are mandatory per quarter which give students background in the four basic forms, fact, value, definition and policy. Speeches are given by students on each capsule contract. Students judge one another's effectiveness through evaluation forms. A series of due dates for material at each level provide the necessary structure for the less responsible student. The creative or hardworking student has no problem adjusting to this program. He is allowed the necessary freedom to search out his own interests.

The capsule contract plan is a tremendous alternative to the outmoded classroom situation. The theory behind the capsule contract method is that a student - by writing about the novel he reads, about issues which are relevent and of current interest, about the experience of living - can learn to write effectively. Each student learns to organize and communicate thought in his own capacity, at his own level. The capsule contract is designed to provide students with the necessary literature appreciation and language skills on an individual basis in a manner the standard classroom cannot match.

The capsule contract is one alternative to the conventional classroom method of teaching English. It maintains the functional approach to studying English by providing the basic communication skills within the grasp of each individual's ability. By giving the individual freedom to choose specific areas of interest within a framework of literature and language

skills the capsule contract becomes as diverse as the number of individuals studying it. Through the capsule contract, English is many different things to many different people.

– Terry Schultz,
Chaska High School

Having been a concerned and involved student in a rapidly changing English department for the past three years, I understandably have certain observations and suggestions to offer on the subject. Some are general and some more specific, but hopefully all will present a viewpoint worth considering when planning future programs.

On the subject of basic format, I favor the system most recently adopted at my school. It consists of a large number of electives covering a wide range of subjects and offered generally without class distinction. Perhaps it is necessary to teach such fundamentals as grammar and composition to all students, but most other subjects can be offered with consideration given to the specific interests of the individual student without sacrificing educational quality. What a student must read, be it American literature or European literature or poetry of any kind, should be left up to the student. This leads to infinitely more retention and enthusiasm than what would result from forcing the material upon him.

Of course, the selection of which electives should be offered is up to the faculty, but I think that the selection should be as broad as possible. Who can say that such modern media as cinema and television may not prove just as valuable to a person's educational background as classic books? And certainly current books should be available as a valid alternative. Furthermore, within the courses themselves, students should be allowed to choose from several offered alternatives, such as more than one book by the same author or dealing with the same subject.

Related to this sort of academic freedom is the specific consideration of how composition should be taught. I was very disturbed by the method with which I was taught, and it is probably similar to that used in many other schools. Certain seemingly incontrovertable laws were taught me which I was led to believe I could not deviate from in the least. There was apparently one "correct" method of composition which had to be followed on pain of some terrible punishment.

Now, I believe that there are two major goals of a method of writing: to facilitate expression and to achieve communication. The former varies with each individual and depends on finding the form which is best suited to the ideas expressed. Certainly this leaves room for variation. The latter depends on the audience for whom the person writes and what can be shown will communicate with them most effectively. Here again the standard form is not necessarily preferable.

Composition must be taught with these considerations in mind. Students should be encouraged to find their own means of expression rather than to conform to the standard mold. They may well find a form that is considerably more effective. Their papers must be evaluated not on the basis of how well they followed the rules but how well the form facilitated their expression and conveyed their ideas. Dealt with individually, each student will be able to determine the form which best suits him, adopting or rejecting the standard rules, which should be considered suggestions, as he sees fit. The teacher must lead each student to discover for himself what his problems are and how he can best solve them. Such an approach leads to greater originality, independence of thought, and involvement on the part of the student.

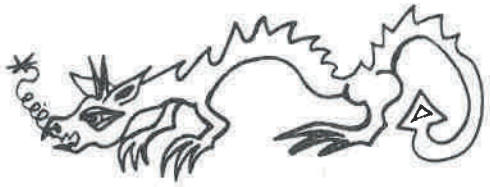
The concrete problem of how this approach can be implemented is difficult but not insurmountable. It requires a great deal of individual attention and teaching skill, but these are not that difficult to attain. If class time is used to write the papers and a considerable period of time is spent on composition alone (a semester, for example), each student should have at least one class period alone with the instructor. Time both in and out of class can be utilized for conferences. Students should be allowed to write on topics of their choice with which they are comfortable, and content should not be emphasized, so that the full attention can be given the form. Questions to be asked the students in evaluating their own papers include the following:

I didn't understand this point. How could you have clarified it?
How could you have said it more briefly?
Is this really what you wanted to say? How could you have said it better?

If you were reading this for the first time, would you understand it?
Does this seem balanced to you? Shouldn't you have something at the end to tie it together?

I hope that this paper has been of some help to teachers. If it has not been entirely original (I am not up on current English educational literature) consider it a strong endorsement of whoever said it first.

– Irving Guttman,
St. Louis Park High School



Hi, Teacher! We are going to spend the next one hundred and seventy days together. Things could be rough if we don't settle a few things right away. I know who you are. I've had four English teachers before you in my high school career. You probably wonder how you measure up. Just as I wonder how I measure up to what you remember. So we are pretty much on even ground. I'm good at English. I am a good speller, I use the correct form of grammar if I know it, I have a vast reading background and a vocabulary to match. I've been through nearly every type of technique that teachers use: the equal time for grammar, literature, and spelling; free form "what shall we do today, class?" style; three novels every six weeks; the repeat-after-me and the Friday spelling bee. I'm pretty sure you and I will get along; I like English very much. I might have loved it if the right teacher had come along. Are you the right teacher? This is my last year of high school English. It may be your first, fifth, or twentieth. No matter which, I'm sure you have ideas, schemes, and plans that will change my thinking. And I've got some very solid suggestions for you. They are actually from my other teachers to you, but I've got them all collected. In my four years I've had five English teachers; male and female, old, middle-aged, and young, radical, conservative, bored and fascinated by their subject. In fact, the only things they may have in common are me and the subject they teach.

What I've learned from them goes far beyond Shakespeare, "A Seperate Peace", and sentence diagramming. If you are a new teacher you are probably wondering about gaining the upper hand. Of course, you should have it, speaking from a disciplinary standpoint; but from a learning standpoint, WE have it. Not WE the students, but we the learners. That means you too, teacher. If you come in, take over, and funnel a lesson plan's worth of material into us every six weeks for regurgitation at exam time, you will learn one thing and so will we - how to memorize, spit up and forget. Also how to become monumentally bored. Perhaps basic training the sleeping with your eyes open will be included. Please don't do that to us.

The classroom discussions are a new trend in formal education today. But what do you do when the bell rings, the discussion is hot, and we are boiling over with new ideas, thought and arguments? "Let's continue the discussion tomorrow"? Who knows what will get lost between now and tomorrow? Yes! Discussion by all means. But while I personally enjoy long involved arguments that go off on fascinating tangents, I will learn more if you keep us on the track we started on. No, you won't stifle our talents and ideas. You will teach us about discipline, maintaining a logical train of thought and presenting it cohesively.

I may be in your creative writing class. My main interest is poetry. If you let me, I'll happily spend the year scribbling fragments and may end up with one or half a dozen good poems. If you gently pull me around to the areas I need work on, such as convincing dialogue, description and essay work, I will be a much better writer.

There are days when a teacher is babysitter, psychiatrist, and janitor. You aren't going to get much work done today, and you know it. I know it, and the principal knows. Storm days, days when half the class has flu, and the day you discover six girls in your class are pregnant are days like that. But a teacher never really knows how far his or her influence will reach; the day you told me that I had the makings of a good writer may have been the day you have to cover four freshman study halls- you won't remember what you said to me, but I will; and the book that wins me the Pulitzer will be the one dedicated to you!

"Power to the Pupil" is "Power from the Teacher." I don't know who said this, or if I've got it right, but it says that teachers are the strongest influence on children from the ages of six to eighteen. If you ever think about the amount of growing we do between those ages, you know what heavy responsibility feels like. Mind shaping, soul molding; that's what you are doing. But that is not a lump of clay you've got there, it's my mind! I'll never really know what you are teaching me.You'll never really know either. We both call it Senior English and never give a second thought or another name to it.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men..."

You are part of the tide in my affairs. The force of that tide depends largely on your influence. If you are impatient with my poems, wish I'd use more conventional punctuation, and dread to see my beaming face coming toward you after class, I'll know it. Maybe it won't show right away, but it will later. Your enthusiasm is important to me. If I'm afraid to show you what I write, a year's growth is lost. A year's growth; I'll never catch up again. I may be the exception: English is the most important subject I've had. Not for the sake of Beowulf, but because I'm a highly verbal person, both speaking and writing. Verbalizing is so important in our society that I am at an advantage in nearly every situation, social, business, and educational. You, English Teacher, are the one who has the most influence on the most important area of my life. I hope you care about me, care about the extent of my personal growth, and urge me, encourage me, and nourish me.

English is more than Spelling, Grammar, Poetry, Lit, and Discussion. It is more than the technique you adopt, that becomes your fame or your epitaph; it is a projection of you. It is what I'll carry away with me after I've forgotten your face, the pair of shoes you inevitably wore on Friday and the last list of spelling you gave us. I never got into the habit of categorizing teachers. Nor of neatly labelling them according to years. But you I'll remember. You are the last one for me, and you will face my brothers, my friends, and my younger aquaintances. You are the one who worries about my preparation for college. You remember lots of students. Maybe you'll remember me. Even if I don't dedicate my Pulitzer Prize winner to you ...

I'll remember what you taught me. Not neccessarily what you said, though; the writing between the lines is so much easier to read when its in chalk on a blackboard.

– Paula Dammel,
John F. Kennedy High School, Babbitt

"Clare, would ya get your nose out of that dumb book and come out and play with me?"

"Uh-uh."

"My mom has popsicles. If we weed the garden she says we can have one each. Ya want to come?"

"Ummm... uh-uh."

"Your're hopeless Rossini, you know that? Go ahead and get moldy with your dumb old books. See if I ever call for you again."

Patty squinted through the screen door, waiting for a perked ear, a sign of re-consideration from the skinny body that now tensed forward, flickered a page of the Nancy Drew book balanced on two bony keees, and settled back.

No answer.

Patty's mouth opened and closed in silent disbelief. A second later I heard her jump the cement stairs, noisily pick up her rusty Schwinn, and leave, clanging her shrill bike bell in irritation.

I don't recall learning to read, but I remember liking the smell of my first grade desk. In second grade, our teacher gave us stars for each one hundred pages we read. What was meant as a harmless game to encourage fledging readers became a friendly rivalry, then a bitter competition to see who could accumulate the most stars before the PTA meeting.

At first, I cheated. I would read a few words on each page of a book and rationalize by assuring myself that Therese Ettel, my arch rival, did the same. How else could she have read eleven thousand pages last week?

But one night, as I was speed reading in my unusual way, I slowly became intrigued with the story, and the pages flickered less often. Finishing with a sigh, I surveyed the ten other books I had planned to finish that night. It didn't bother me-- I had liked reading that book very much.

And so I read. At night I protested when I heard, "Clare, would you please go to bed-- right now!" I would read breathlessly for a few minutes until mother noticed I was still curled under the lamplight with Heidi.

"Clare!"

Heidi bulged under my pajamas and crossed borders illegally into my bedroom. I waited for the TV to be stilled, the bathroom

water to stop running, the creak of the double bed in my parent's room below. Then I crept into the bathroom, settled by the heat register beneath the sink, and returned to Peter, mountains, and goat's milk.

In third grade we did exercises in English Is Our Language, a grammar book that had a girl with gloriously long yellow braids on its cover. I disliked Think and Do, which I did, unthinkingly. We had spelling bees and wrote themes each year on "What I Did Last Summer."

In seventh and eighth grades I wrote poetry. My best production was "And Live, People", which was a combination of every literary platitude I knew at the time set to rythmn. I reproduce the first stanza here:

> Crawl out of your encompassing shell:
> Draw in the fiery breath of life
> Go smell the roses-- war is hell!
> And live, people.

I was a little amazed at my use of the word "hell" in the third line, and for this reason never showed the poem to my parents.

I was not taught-- or failed to learn-- a significant amount of practical grammar in grade school. So when I stumbled into high school ugly, awkward, and horrified at what I knew to be the approach of adolescence (I knew what to expect-- I had read selected chapters of Dr. Spock in sixth grade) I could produce a fairly well written paper on the character of Macbeth, but could not tell my grandmother what a predicate was. This makes me an easily accessable example for my theory that reading by itself can develop a sort of intuitive "feel" for grammar and word usage. Good books create a more powerful example of how our language is correctly used than any grammar book exercises.

Not that I feel my grade school experiences were a loss. Spelling, basic grammar, and reading comprehension skills were capably taught. However, the program might have been more significant if those skills had been applied in creative ways. Thus, instead of documenting previous summers, I probably would have enjoyed a topic like "What if corn grew people?" Writing poetry or soap opera, or practicing some elementary debate would have created in our classroom some of the imagination-stirring variety to which English lends itself so well.

Ninth grade English was a basic basics course. We ploughed our way through poetry, composition, and a few classics whose titles I can't recall but whose literary importance was unquestioned. Our teacher insisted it was grammatically incorrect to use "ands" or "buts" at the beginning of sentences, and every

time I do I expect to see Sister over my shoulder, frowning at my indiscretion.

I enjoyed tenth grade English. We read a lot of Hemingway and Steinbeck, and contrasted their styles and philosophies. We loved mythology to the point of sacrilege in our Catholic all-girls school. The symbolism in Gulliver's Travels and Lord of the Flies was triumphantly discovered and analyzed until symbolism begot symbolism and the battered books ran dry.

The summer following sophomore year I took a poetry class at Twin City Institute, an unstructured summer school held on local college campuses. For six weeks we did sense-awakening exercises, visited with local poets, wrote and read our own poems. My best and most natural writing medium is the poetic form, and I consider that course one of my most stimulating English experiences.

When I took journalism junior year, the school had not produced a student newspaper for three years. By some budgeting oversight they had not allotted us money for production costs, and our first issue was due October 12. We were unfunded, inexperienced, and naive enough to think one hour for paste ups was plenty of time.

We learned.

We learned in a pint sized room with bare bulb lighting and sporadic heat. We learned as we cut apart copy and misplaced microscopic essentials ("Arrgh! No one move! We're missing a comma!") We learned to write all over again, newspaper style. ("Thy shalt not ramble. Thou shalt not editorialize in new stories. Thou shalt not take the administration's name in vain.") Our last issue was a triumphant one-- technically flawless, well received, and finally we had broken even.

My school closed and I'm attending another for senior year. I'm a year-book editor and am presently organizing Imagine That!, an intra-school literary magazine.

English here consists of quarter courses centered around reading and discussion, an approach I like very much. The course organization is also good: books and plays are grouped under themes reccuring in literature, and from these groupings come courses titles like "Father and Son", "The Disintegration of the South", and so on. Thus Shakespeare, O'Neill, Achebe and Hemingway shared time in one of my courses, and I found them not so strange bedfellows.

I'm still reading, and convinced of its worth-- if nothing else, it develops a genuine respect for the art of the language. Tennyson cannot be paraphrased: he must be experienced.

Some day I'll be a journalist, and dedicate my first article to Mom. Being published would make public and official my intimacy with English. I'm not at all worried-- I'm proud of the relationship.

– Clare Rossini,
St. Joseph's Academy, St. Paul

The English language evolved as a means for a certain group of people to communicate. It's too bad, then, that many supposedly English-speaking people can not use their own language efficiently.

An English course could be the most valuable part of a students' education if more emphasis was put on language as a tool of communication, in both written and oral forms.

Three aspects of oral communication, I believe, should be dealt with in an English class. They are writing and delivering speeches, developing poise in front of groups, and reading aloud.

In the first of these categories, a student should be shown how to organize his thoughts and how to speak with enthusiasm. Teachers should not be afraid of being hypercritical when dealing with these skills; a student can not improve until he is aware of what he is doing wrong.

Poise can make or break a speech, in my opinion. A shy person should at least develop the ability to give his opinion in informal situations, such as impromptu discussions, without getting completely flustered. However, gaining poise is not merely a matter of getting used to the audience. In day to day life the "audience" varies all the time. A student can learn to be poised by first learning basic speaking skills and becoming more self-confident.

Although reading aloud may sound like something done only in primary grades, thereafter to be a forgotten skill, many situations may arise in a person's life where he may be called upon to read for any number of people. Many a parent has probably given himself a mental kick because he gets tongue-tied reading Dr. Seuss to his children at bedtime. Any adult active in local politics may be called on to read a resolution or the minutes of a meeting before a large, unfamiliar group. And the way I can think of to improve this particular skill is practice, with particular emphasis on diction.

Students may find the reasons for learning how to write well a little more obscure. One simple, obvious example of how written English works into our day-to-day lives is in letter writing. Many students have hang-ups about grammar. They may use run-ons, fragments, no verbs, pronouns with no antecedents, awkward construction. Again, I say, practice makes perfect. But how about making practice interesting? If the first ten minutes of class each day were devoted to writing a short paragraph in a journal (to be checked by the instructor for mistakes in grammar and expression), by the end of the year almost every student could have a firm grasp on the fundamentals of English grammar.

Most people have some need for the ability to express themselves in a more formal written form. This may be in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, a pamphlet for a political candidate, a committee report in some organization, or a project summary report to an employer. Then, of course, many high school students need to know how to write formally for college work.

Theme writing is a good way to develop this skill. Themes or essays are generally concise and clear and are neither as in depth as a research paper nor as sketchy as a single paragraph. They display organized thought in interesting language.

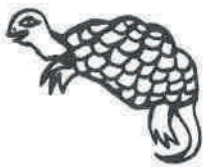
These last two characteristics are especially important. Outlining all themes is the best way I know of to achieve an organized theme. Although students complain about having to do outlines, once outlining becomes a habit, the student is ever-grateful to the teacher who made him write all those "stupid outlines."

As far as the vocabulary is concerned, I say, "Increase, increase, increase!" One can't get too much of a good thing. How a teacher teaches vocabulary is not as important as the fact that he does teach it - every year until the student graduates. Most students these days don't know what a newspaper article says if words are used that are longer than six letters. This is a big weak point in most English curriculums.

These are what I see as the basic skills of English, skills which many students today have not been taught. I got a lot of this from my experience in journalism, since mass communication is dependent on fundamental communications.

For years English courses have been used for studying poetry and novels and such. These still have a place, but not at the cost of teaching students how to communicate.

– Jane Neumann,
John Marshall High School, Rochester



English can be a two-faced subject, depending upon how your students are allowed to look at it. To me, English was just another class where we studied literature and grammar, a carbon copy of what we'd studied last year and would study again next year. It was all repititious, and, if you learned anything the first year, it was no problem, no challenge, and no fun.

The class started every year with a test to see how much we knew. According to the test, the majority of us knew nothing, and we plunged headlong into a study of grammar. Before long, our absurd spelling habits were revealed, and several weeks were devoted to that. We usually spent the last part of the year on literature, reading and studying stories and poems selected by our teacher, an individual whose tastes ran anywhere but parallel to ours, and whose interpretation was the only correct one.

Somewhere along the way, we received the usual dose of composition, and, although writing was a favorite hobby of mine, I didn't find it particularly enjoyable in English class. We all knew when it was coming. Our teacher would get a certain gleam in her eye; and, as she passed out the composition paper, she would inform us that we were about to write a "theme". So, we spent the next day or two turning our thoughts into neat, black writing and squeezing it in between one inch margins, doing our best to produce an appropriate theme. It happened every year, and there was no getting around it.

That's why I wasn't prepared for the somewhat unconventional English class I stepped into in my junior year. I should have suspected something from the giant Peanuts cartoons covering the bulletin boards, and where was the life-sized portrait of Nathaniel Hawthorne behind the teacher's desk?

It wasn't long before I decided I was going to enjoy English this year. Our teacher was a new one, five feet tall and right out of college. What she didn't know about English wasn't worth knowing, as far as I was concerned.

We learned a lot of new things about literature, especially poetry. Men of past centuries had no monopoly on poetry, as we had thought. It includes Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel, and Rod McKuen.

We learned thet Huckelberry Finn isn't just a book for kids, but a master piece of philosophical truths that grow clearer and deeper in meaning each time it is read.

We learned how to get the most out of reading a newspaper and what goes on in the newsroom of a radio station. She taught us how to think a problem through logically to reach the best possible solution and how to become a good public speaker.

Best of all, we learned how to write an essay. We were usually given a highly interesting topic, such as "How Paul Bunyan's Anchor got in Ortonville", or "The Day I Met Huck Finn". Getting the message across in an effective way became more important than numbering pages and measuring margins. We strived to write an essay that was fun to read rather than just pretty to look at.

When we studied literature, we were encouraged to express our own views and interpretations. No one's opinion was ignored and all ideas were accepted.

Our study of English had endless possibilities that year, and, were it allowed, I would have gladly spent another year in her class. She taught us that English can be fun and that there's always something new to learn. I learned a lot, and, although I cannot claim to have mastered the demanding discipline of English, I am now willing to keep striving toward that goal.

– Cheryl Kilvington,
Ortonville High School

A MATTER OF TUNING

Some Notes on the Teaching of Creative Writing

BY KEITH HARRISON
Carleton College

My main contention is that our minds are pinched and starved. There are, of course, exceptions: some teachers of English have been able to avoid the triple dragons of careerism, overwork, and cynicism; some students leave us with a little light on their faces. But most of us feel the weight of an Official Imagination which is both ubiquitous and archaic - and most of our students go out bewildered, inhibited and inarticulate.

I have no space to go into the aetiology of this state of affairs. In any case that has been documented elsewhere. See The Dissenting Academy, ed. T. Roszak, and in particular the articles by Roszak (pp. 3-42) and Louis Kampf (pp. 43-61). The facts of the situation are where a teacher starts, and the facts are that English studies, in the main, constitute a huge and deadening irrelevance in the lives of most students in our universities, colleges, and schools; they are an enterprise which is totally useless to the society at large, and in some quarters they even revel in that uselessness. That this criticism can be levelled with justification at all the other departments of higher education is not in itself a persuasive counter-argument. English language and literature are one of the central concerns of the humanities and the liberal arts and, as one who professes in that discipline, I am disturbed by our failure as a profession, and anxious to come to terms with it. After all, we are still, pace McLuhan, primarily a verbal culture.

It seems to me axiomatic that, if my contention holds, any genuine teaching will be a subversive act. A teacher who cares about poetry and the teaching of it, for instance, will probably be concerned with matters beyond the dead whore of chronology. He will want to emphasize that literature has diachronic and 'contemporary' dimensions as well. He will want to show that if poetry is a music of the being, a voice in the blood and the throat and the belly, then to botch the words of a text or to read them with the wrong tonal emphasis is to commit the same kind of misreading as when a pianist mistakes a key signature or a simple notation of tempo. Yet that kind of mistake is a commonplace in our classrooms.

And if the teaching of language and literature is beset with ills, the teaching of creative writing is in a state of all but complete dilapidation. It is true that some colleges and schools have a liberal and enlightened attitude but, in many, the existence of creative writing courses is rarely a high priority. In academia, writers - like black people and women - constitute a problematic sub-culture and most teachers of English do not con-

sider the teaching of imaginative writing as an activity worth their consideration.

Yet there is some justification for this neglect. For one thing, teachers of Creative Writing - who are very often writers, or writers manqués themselves - do not appear to have much confidence in the enterprise. There is no accepted teaching method, grading seems relatively meaningless, and students' writing is either trivial, precious, stale - or all three. And if the real problem is that of the starved imagination, it has to be admitted that most courses are not designed to deal with the problem at all. The result is that most creative writing courses are sloppy and futile. For these reasons - after some preliminary attempts - I gave up the formal teaching of Creative Writing for a couple of years. I gave it up in the conviction that more useful tutelage could be accomplished in independent study, with occasional meetings of 4-6 students in a group. During the last year, however, whilst working at Northfield High School in the Poets in the Schools program, and at St. Olaf - where Davis Taylor and I have been working with 15 student-writers each Saturday morning for a three-hour period - we began to re-think the whole question of the teaching of Creative Writing at the undergraduate and high school level. Some of our thinking has been put into practice with results that have been instructive (to us, at least) and occasionally highly encouraging. What follows is a summary of, and some observations on a few of the strategies we have used. These are not intended as notes toward a definitive method - though we will probably build on these ideas ourselves - so much as items for discussion and debate. Most of our time has been taken up with the teaching of shorter forms of verbal expression which, for convenience, we call poems.

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I do not see how one can begin a class in creative writing in good faith unless one stands on the conviction that writing is first and last a craft, some of whose elements are transmissible. It is a craft of the manipulation of words so that, in consort, the words contain and articulate energy in the most expressive way that our luck and skill can manage. It is therefore necessary at some stage to make students aware of some of the major conventions of English prosody, of some of the devices that writers use to gain intensity and precision; of rhyme, half-rhyme, off rhyme; of stress, metre and syllable; of blank verse, free verse and projective verse. But it cannot be emphasized too strongly that to introduce technical considerations too early is a fatal mistake. And to introduce them out of context, not to flesh them out with the substance of living poems, is an utterly barren procedure which will damage any course irrevocably.

If my diagnosis of the situation is correct, the first concern is that of giving food to the imagination. To remind students that they have an imagination, and then to remind them that they have bodies, is a double courtesy for which they will be extremely grateful. Then to help them discover that the act of writing is the act of giving body to the imagination is a project which gathers meaning as they proceed. All very well, but how does one go about this? Stated in this way it all sounds very abstract.

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Humming we have found very good. After talking about the whole problem, try sitting round in a circle - Indian-style squats are fine, but not mandatory - and just humming together. You might then ask the students to try to make the sound originate in different parts of their bodies - their navels, their chest and throats and so on. This can be prefaced or followed by elementary Yoga exercises, rolling the head, stretching the arms, and deep controlled breathing.

The aim of these exercises is twofold - to establish a good working relation with the group and to help students to begin to live in themselves. Most people in the West write poetry in a state of neurotic seizure, a defiant other-worldliness, an eruption against the trivial and partly insane extraversion of our daily lives. The humming and stretching exercises are a preliminary toward the deeper aim of establishing the writing of poetry as a normal, healthy activity that can proceed from a state of balance and calm - though the balance and calm might be a form of intense concentration - as well as from fury and neurosis. The rhythm and length of time devoted to these exercises will vary, and intuition is a valuable guide here. Consultation is also important. Do you know any other good exercises? What kind of exercise makes you most aware of the things around you? Is your humming strong and clear or does there seem to be some block? Where?

One can now proceed, perhaps, to another dimension of this exercise by borrowing from the principles of Tantrism. Among other things, Tantrism posits that there are a number of sacred centers - or chakras - of the being. For the sake of clarity we restrict ourselves to talking about five of these (Tantrism has more). Our five are, respectively at the genitalia, the belly, the heart, the throat and the middle of the forehead (one can have some fanciful discussion of the third eye). Now imagine that each of these chakras has its own characteristic 'mode of being' - its own appetites and needs. The whole point of this exercise is to allow us to move freely from one of these centers to another. Our minds are normally so rigid that we find it difficult to make these transitions. But if poetry is to speak from, and to, the whole man then it is salutary and liberating to remind students that their genitals, as well as their minds, will also have a part in any proper song of the being. You might

want to explain that around the Tantric "column" there are two snakes - one moving toward heaven, the other towards earth. The task is to balance them - both heaven and earth are important.

If all that sounds reasonable, you can get down to practicalities:

Element (Quinta essentia)	Chakra	Musical Interval	Note
	Imagination (third eye)	Tonic	C
(Fire)	Throat	Submediant	A
(Air)	Heart	Dominant	G
(Water)	Belly	Mediant	E
(Earth)	Genitals	Tonic	C

Let us say that it is convenient to hum in the key of C. Begin from lower C and, whilst humming, think of the sound as originating in the earth. The note E will correspond to Belly and the element Water, and so on until you get to top C, which is the home of the imagination and the fifth and mysterious Quinta Essentia.

All this can be done with a light touch. You can emphasize the different qualities of the sound from the different chakras - low and dark in the earth - floating and bony in the head. And you can reverse the scale if you wish. Intuition and a concentrated relaxation are important in all these preliminaries. After the students are used to the procedure you might ask them what the genitals would say if they could speak, what the belly, what the heart - and so on. Ask them to write down images, parts of poems. When students freely associate around the "centers" results can be surprising. And in any case the whole experience will be weird enough for them so that they will not be able to lapse into any easy conventionality.

Particularly at first, the keys in all our strategies will be sense of play and indirection. We are after all hoping to stretch, or even discover, the muscles of the imagination; we are not teaching a course, so much as exploring new modes of perceiving the world within us and around us. And learning to wait, and listen, cultivating an alert passivity, are essential to our purpose. A musician has a whole range of traditionally proven exercises at his disposal. For the training of poets in the West there is literally nothing. We are committed therefore to finding ways and, after all, what's to lose if these exercises are inadequate? We will try some others. The field is so new that we have to rely on intelligent guessing, intuition, and pure luck.

Once students grasp the significance of the sense of play there are all kinds of things that can be attempted. Totems, for instance. Most students, particularly those from the spoiled middle-classes, have too strong a committment to their personal failures, triumphs and petty concerns. Part of the imaginative stretching is to get them beyond these solipsistic nets. So, totems. While in the circle ask the students to meditate on the animal that corresponds the closest to the movements of their own psyche - what creature do they most clearly empathise with? When they have found their totem - no need to rush, it might take a week - then ask them to find the Latin name and, depending on the self-consciousness of the group, you might ask them to adopt, and be called by, their totem names for the rest of the term. If this all works naturally, you are in a fine pedagogic position, as you have established the play principle as a normality, and you have provided one stratagem for that essential distancing that frees the mind from its quotidian concerns. Ask them to write a monologue of their totem, caught in a dangerous predicament. You might then ask them to think about their anti-totem, the enemy. What is he thinking? Write about him as well.

I want to underline that the use of Yoga, Tantrism, totems or whatever is not part of a campaign of conversion; they are used merely for the sake of getting students over the malaise I described at the outset, of helping them to think more freshly and with more elan. At first their poems will probably not be very good - though you may be surprised - but you will probably have established a ground of trust and curiosity without which any work in this field - and perhaps in any other - is nothing but dry bones.

Here are a few other techniques that can be used as alternatives or as complements to the above. Without any preliminaries, give the students a list of fictitious animals or beings that you, or they, have invented: dagrymple, chankle-diver, bush-beater, portaquillo, binyok, and so on. Ask them to make definitions of these creatures for those benighted souls who have never heard of them. Results can be hilarious. One student at Northfield described the bush-beater as "a species of North African ape who spends most of his time masturbating behind bushes." Such jokes, apart from their own merit, can be turned to good use; you might want, for example, to stretch the 'definitions' towards a form of nonsense-writing. Challenge the students to write definitions in which the grammar sounds plausible, but which contain no coherent meaning. Example: "A chankle-diver is a three-footed passenger ice-cream which itches terribly just at the moment where the North Pole damages itself with retired vibraphones."

The over-literalistic mind-set of most students might make such exercises difficult for them. You might therefore want to preface them by word-association games in which you try to crack

the literalism. For instance, if you give the students the word "sunflower" many of them will probably write "flower" or "plant" as the first word that comes to mind. But there are many more interesting and legitimate associations that a freer mind could make. The generic aspects of things, is after all, rather dull. Such leaps as:

eye of the sun...
ringed with green daggers...
brightly turning slowly...
yellow wind-gong...

might all be more interesting, and as accurate.

Now it might be objected that that is forcing things, and that's true enough. But we are, after all, working against the kind of mentality that assumes that giving a one-syllable synonym for the word "fleeting" represents some kind of imaginative achievement. (This example is not fictitious. I took it from the London University G.C.E. "O" Level Exam (1965) and I have no cause to believe that the examiners have been converted from the impoverished view of language that this kind of question implies.) Conscious strategies are therefore in order as long as they are seen as means and not ends.

Again, you might try isolating a cluster of images from a poem, asking the students to invent something around them, quickly. Where nothing comes - let it ride...

a wounded man...
almond blossom...
the fire is coughing...
spiders walking in the air...
do not turn around...

Or you might try an actual situation. You have dived off a spring board into a deep, clear pool in a river. What happens? Here's one that came from a sophomore:

Face to face from
fish to fish
it's weird feeling
like a fish blowing bubbles
I'm happy isolated with these
friendly fish but then
sadness comes for I must go back
into the world of hatred and mess

O.K. That's a slow, floating rhythm; now what about something much faster. You are a parachutist in the army, the first in the platoon to jump. The sargent has his knee in your back. Three... two...one. Suddenly you are pushed out into the mad air. What do you experience?

My stomach
where's my stomach
my toes are here
and ten fingers
but my stomach has left
leaving butterflies
behind...

Not remarkable perhaps, but a nice subversion of the cliche. After reading examples it may be a fine occasion in which to ta about the difficulty of creating a sense of action and one can point to how well some people have done it - Robert Sward, Hem- ingway, Spender, there are many writers from whom one can take examples.

"Triggers for the imagination" are practically endless. H are a few we have tried: -

1. Take in a box of wildly various objects. Have student close their eyes and feel them. Describe the object from inside. "I am hollow, smooth and silver" (a piece of tubi etc. Now write about the moment when, by some mysterious force, you are beginning to turn into something else. ("I am bending in the heat.")
2. Continue this poem: "I hate the way toothbrushes..."
3. Address a creature. For example, continue this: "Co roach, you..."
4. Your native language is Impali (a language which does not contain an "s" sound) but you do know a few English words. Your brother comes home after many years away. H do you greet him? (This can be a most useful preliminary for an excursion into "sound poetry.")
5. Describe a creature. Here's one done by a high schoo sophomore on the spot:

Frog, jumping
splash in the water
stop, look around
swim away into the mud
eat some dirt
just can't hack it
going to croak.

6. Write a poem, with two beats to a line, for a dancer, trying to create an image of something very beautiful.
7. Take a Shakespeare Sonnet and break the lines up into phrases, in the manner of a W.C. Williams three-step line This can cause marvellous arguments.
8. Describe a loved person as fully as you can. You may not mention more than three details concerning their phys ical appearance, and these have to be significant.
9. Write out a menu for an ideal meal. Fully described. Colours and textures most important.

10. Think cold. What is cold? What is being inside a cold day like?

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It doesn't matter at the early stages whether the students write poetry or prose. In any case, I am pretty sure that the differences are merely a matter of prejudice and taste. (I am certainly not aware of any workable definitions of their differences.) What matters is that the students' perceptions are awakened, and that they begin to enjoy a sense of words. At the outset anyway, a subtle process of restoring is the thing that is most urgently needed. When the class is liberated and eager to know more, one can then introduce technical matters and, at that stage, they will be much more readily absorbed.

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One morning at St. Olaf, after giving some of the preliminary exercises I have outlined - including Yoga, deep breathing and humming - I explained that many modern poems are crammed with images of death and despair, their movement is centripetal - into a knot of hard anguish. The imagery for such poems comes fairly easily. It is very difficult, on the other hand, to write a poem whose movement is centrifugal, and whose music and imagery lift and open into a quiet joy.

It was a bitter, midwinter morning. I asked students to imagine the first day of spring. One of them, in a few moments, wrote this:

> The sun is not yet golden, but it is very high
> and draws a favoring wind through
> doors and passageways and mouths -
> wind with a hint of cinnamon
> and a scent of lemons,
> which children somewhere must be eating now.
>
> O by the wind
> and by the magnetic power of the sun,
> I taste what they taste,
> and our mouths are one.

He was as surprised and delighted as we were. When moments like this happen, one feels that one's experiments might, with luck, contain the seeds of a new beginning. But it is only a beginning.

A Mini-Bibliography for Teachers of Creative Writing:

Ted Hughes: Poetry Is
Robin Skelton: The Practice of Poetry
Kenneth Koch: Wishes, Lies and Dreams
Babette Deutsch: Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms
Berg and Mezey (eds.): The Naked Poetry

Keith Harrison teaches English at Carleton College where he is also director of the Arts Program. His latest volume of verse is *Songs from the Drifting House* (Macmillan, 1972).

EVERYBODY'S COMPOSITION PROGRAM

BY JOSEPH COMPRONE

University of Minnesota, Morris

Two years ago the University of Minnesota, Morris decided to revise its freshman English program. Certainly that's nothing new; freshman English has been revised, abbreviated, done away with, innovated, strangled and rejuvenated by just about every English department everywhere. We read a great deal in journals about the successes and/or failures of many courses within these new or revised programs. Seldom, however, do we read about the successes and/or failures of composition programs. Perhaps some account of just how we went about devising our new program, some description of what that program entails, and some very brief remarks on the success and/or failure of our program will be useful to other struggling program revisers. In any case, our staff would welcome an interchange of program ideas - including some sharing of frustrations and joys. Misery can often be relieved by another's bright idess.

We began our revision by assembling a list of Exemplary Ideals. In other words, we tried to decide just what kind of composition experiences would prove useful to our students. Morris is a four-year liberal arts branch of the University of Minnesota with a student body of approximately two thousand. Our students come for the most part from rural Minnesota; they are relatively bright but, especially in English and composition, they are usually the products of somewhat rigidly structured high school courses. They are accustomed to approaching composition as a process which can easily be reduced to a sequence of school-marmish procedures.

We hoped to find a program, a group of related courses, that would break down our student's rigid attitude without destroying his ability to communicate effectively. To return to those Exemplary Ideals. After much paring and refining, we dedided on the following:

1. Flexibility and the Freedom to Experiment: we would need a program that encouraged the discovery of fresh forms and styles, styles which a particular student, given rigid background training, might not discover without an experimental environment. Every student, as the linguists tell us, has a wealth of everyday talk in him. We hoped our students would become conscious of their language, in an environment free of social and academic censure.

2. The Discovery of Form in Freedom: we would need a program that, after it had helped the student to discover the

richness of his language, would assist him in finding a suitable mode, a suitable form, for any particular context.

3. Provide the Opportunity to Analyze and Write About Various Kinds of Language: we would require a program that offered the opportunity to read, write and discuss imaginative and discursive language and the language of the media. Students should be able to draw from their own culture, as well as established composition "masterpieces," in preliminary reading.

We used these Exemplary Ideals to produce the following sequence of four courses. Each student is required to take two of the four courses: the introductory course and one of the three advanced courses. I shall include an account of the pedagogy and goals of each course and conclude with some brief remarks on how our program has failed or succeeded.

Writing From Experience (English 10)

This is our introductory composition course; every student is required to begin his composition sequence with "Writing from Experience." In this course we provide a workshop experience for students who have varying interests, and varying attitudes toward writing. We limit the course to twenty-two students and encourage instructors to be flexible in their arrangement of class meetings. We hope that smaller group meetings and conferences can become a standard procedure in English 10. English 10 asks the student to draw from his own experience, his own culture, in whatever he writes. We spend a great deal of time working with persona and the perceptual process in the hope that we can instill in our students a greater sense of drama and a more precise use of detail. We encourage role-playing and a consciousness of one's writing personality as compared to one's oral personality. The instructor in English 10 is a diagnostician - he analyzes writing problems in conference, contributes his opinions to class discussions, suggests methods of improvement and generally encourages students to experiment with many styles and forms. As a staff we wanted to avoid penalizing one student for a faulty English background or for inadequacies in any particular aspect of writing. On the other hand, we also wanted to avoid rewarding those students who had developed a flair for certain kinds of writing. As a result, we made English 10 a non-graded, credit-only course; a course in which students would be free to experiment with various styles, modes and subject-matters, free from any form of academic censure. We hoped to have engineers writing creative narratives, physical education majors writing poetry and future English majors trying their hand at a technical paper.

Language of Controversy (English 11)

English 11 approaches the problems of teaching persuasive writing from several related perspectives. The course includes a basic review of traditional rhetorical principles and applies these principles to contemporary polemical writings. This class should also attempt to develop new perspectives, rhetorical perspectives which lend themselves to fruitful application to the non-verbal language of contemporary media, especially the film and the spoken word. In general, this course aims to transfer traditional rhetorical skills - both in reading and writing - to a contemporary language environment. This course sharpens the expository and argumentative skills of students, while recognizing that such skills must continually be adapted to meet the needs which are produced by a changing language environment.

Writing About Literature (English 12)

English 12 uses literature as experience or subject matter for writing. The course is not a standard introduction to the techniques of literary criticism, nor is it a standard introduction to Literary Masterpieces. English 12 encourages the student to organize and evaluate his responses to imaginative writing, to try his hand at creative writing, and to relate his literary experiences to his own life. Readings should include imaginative "classics" and examples of imaginative language drawn from student culture - including rock lyrics, contemporary poetry, popular novels and advertising. Some time should be allowed for extended analysis of a contemporary artist. Writing assignments should be creative as well an analytical.

Special Problems and Composition (English 13)

English 13 encourages students to approach composition through a specific area of subject-matter of a particular thematic perspective. Subject-matter and theme can be chosen by the instructor or by a group of students in consultation with an instructor. The early weeks of the course might be devoted to definition of subject; the middle weeks to gathering information and arguing different perspectives on the subject; the final weeks to organizing and writing a final paper on the subject. The course should include workshop discussions and individual conferences on various aspects of the subject as well as individualized presentations, by instructor and students, related to the subject. Writing should include practice assignments in which students experiment with different points of view and different styles. The final paper might be a formal research paper; it might be a relatively informal "position" paper in which the student reflects his opinions at a particular stage in his thinking. Hopefully, the course will offer a creative perspective on the discovery, arrangement and presentation of information and ideas as they are gathered during extended study of a particular subject.

Final Remarks

Our program has succeeded in providing two opportunities that we now believe are essential for our students. First, the program provides the opportunity to take an introductory composition course (English 10) which is directed toward the solving of general compositional problems - problems that confront a writer regardless of his special interests or talents. Our English 10 students <u>are</u> experimenting; they <u>are</u> trying out personas, modes and styles they might have otherwise avoided. The course has developed into a functional and effective introductory experience in compostion. Their fears and inhibitions, their belief that they really have nothing to say, seems to diminish after they have experienced the flexible, workshop atmosphere of English 10.

Our program also provides the student with the opportunity to choose among a variety of courses (English 11, 12 and 13) which reflect a variety of perspectives and subject-matters. The combination of introductory workshops and advanced courses seems to please at least a majority of our students. Students are able to choose the kind of writing course they prefer <u>after</u> they have been exposed to a variety of styles and techniques in the introductory course. As a result, they are usually more highly motivated and their performances in the advanced courses are subsequently improved.

Where, then, has our program been deficient? We seem to have failed, at least in some cases, to provide the necessary skills for the successful transfer of students from our introductory writing workshop to the more specialized courses in the program. The freedom and flexible format of English 10 sometimes produce students who are, at least initially, stifled by the more structured approaches of English 11, 12 and 13. We have attempted to rectify this deficiency by preparing the students, during the final weeks of English 10, for the formal problems in the advanced courses. We begin to discuss problems of form - organization, invention, and arrangement and some elementary rhetorical principles - and to apply at least a few of these strategies to the experimental writing produced earlier in the introductory course. We by no means force students to apply specific rhetorical forms; we merely suggest in class discussion conferences and workshops the possible usefulness of a particular rhetorical structure. Most students seem to find these suggestions more palatable when they are not given them in outline form (say as in a classical rhetoric book) and they usually adopt such suggestions only when they become a natural development within the process of composing.

We found yet another deficiency developing in English 10. Like most composition workshops, ours needs resource materials, materials other than textbooks and printed matter, to use as catalysts for writing assignments and discussion. We hoped to have students use their own experience and their own culture as subject matter; yet, we wanted them to learn improved methods of observation, to learn to "see" their experience in ever more complex ways. We have developed a short film library (no film is longer then twenty minutes) which has proven indispensable in solving our resource problem. The films bring experience into the classroom; they allow for precise discussion and detailed writing about problems closely related to student experience. The camera, in a sense, becomes a metaphor for the pen. The organizational principles and perspective of the filmmaker are valuable metaphors for the student writer. The short films, used in correlation with reproductions of paintings, tapes of interviews and sound tracks, helps us to bring student experience into the classroom for discussion and writing.

We are not euphoric. Our program occasionally has failed to meet our needs. We know that our attempt to combine the best of the contemporary and the traditional may result in our developing a program which combines the worst of both. But our meagre successes do encourage us to believe that with constant revision and refinement we may yet produce "Everybody's Composition Program." A composition program which meets the needs of inexperienced writers while allowing every student the opportunity to develop his skills in whatever direction he chooses.

Joseph Comprone coordinates the composition program at the University of Minnesota at Morris. His article on "Pre-Writing" appeared in the Fall 1971 issue of *MEJ*.

SOME SPECIAL TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

BY RITA CAREY

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With the increased enrollment of drop-outs and mature adults returning for training in health oriented programs, the need for successful techniques in the instruction of oral and written communication is mandatory.

This study centered on the area of written communication, and spanned the Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters of 1971 - 1972. One hundred and seventeen students were involved in the three patterned program.

Since all programs would prefer that their students be competent in the writing of reports, lab evaluations, and patient descriptions, the objective of the eleven week course was to train and guide the student in the writing of clear, correct prose. The point of departure for this ambitious course was the same for all; the method used in each section and in each quarter differed. This report is concerned mainly with the evaluation of the three methods used.

Acquaintance with student background and ambitions was gained in the first in-class writing session, a paper, "Meet Me". These were the source of guarded confidence and contained such gems as, "I'm the worst spellar and wrighter"; "I'm glad you said to right from the hart"; "with three children and a broken marriage I need so much." The proof-reading spelling test produced only two perfect out of 117 papers. Sentence fragments persisted, but grammatical errors were fewer than anticipated. Paragraphs lacked organization and sentences were crammed with generalities.

This then was the overview of the needs of the 117 students, ages 18-39, fresh from a senior high or 20 years after a junior high drop-out, many with GED -- some recent, some ten years ago. The unifying element was their desire to improve written communication so that it would not spoil their chances for success in the chosen program.

The content for all divisions was skeletal: composition essentials.

1. Aspects involved in descriptive writing: explanation, classification, comparison and contrast.
2. Objective versus subjective description
3. Generalities versus specifics
4. Organization of a paragraph
5. Mechanics of composition: spelling, punctuation, usage.

The students had a choice of texts: Identity through Prose and Aspects of Composition, supplemented by audio-visual aids, lectures. "Walk in" help was given for pre- (as well as for post-) writing.

Procedure for the Fall Quarter Group

All thirty-six students in the Fall Quarter program, most of whom were in nursing, attended a general session of about twenty minutes with a variety of presentations, a question and answer period, and audio-visual instruction.

After the twenty minutes, the class was divided into three groups of twelve each, meeting on alternate days. These meetings had to be made up, as the group "therapy" was considered vital. This included reading of papers, peer evaluation and justification. These took place only after the group became friendly and confident of their class status. After the middle of the quarter, independent study that involved a reserve shelf of twenty-five writing texts was encouraged for the better writers.

Contract Packs

1. Eight papers plus revisions with due dates
2. Grade requirement (A, B, C) included a high attendance record, plus a gradual improvement shown in the organization of ideas, and a decrease in mechanical errors.
3. Each student, after reading over the letter contracts, signed an intent of his goal.

Results of Group I Procedure

1. Contract fulfillment. 50% signed for an A; 25% attained.
2. Incompletes grew as papers failed to appear on dates due.
3. Before final average all except two students removed their incompletes.
4. Four students were dropped from their programs, and in each case the reasons were failure to fulfill the contract and excessive class absences.

Student Reaction to the Group I Procedure

They favored:

1. Small class discussion sections
2. Chance to attend sections other than the assigned
3. Use of contract packs
4. Definite areas of writing
5. The number of papers required.

They disliked:

1. Incompletes for late papers

2. No make-up tests
3. Stressed attendance
4. Independent study papers.

Procedure and Results for the Winter Quarter Groups

One group of thirty-six followed the objective method, contract procedure set up for the Fall Quarter. The only change was that the Independent Study pack was dropped in favor of the term paper procedure which the students felt was needed in other subjects.

Results of Group II

1. 80% met the contracts.
2. 2% chose to take a final exam instead of the research paper assignment.
3. 50% of the class had been in the Fall Quarter of Oral Communication and showed positive benefits in the organization of ideas.
4. The reactions to the objective method and contract packs were favorable.
5. Limited by a one period class session, no small groups were made. Instead, a weekly forum, a technique learned in Oral Communication, was substituted.
6. Attendance was gratifying.

The twenty-five students in the second section were attending for the first time and had pronounced difficulties that made a two quarter preparation period appear necessary before admission to a program. They met twice a week at the same time as the Fall Quarter group had met. There the resemblance ended.

Results of Group III

1. Only 20% of the section completed contract assignments, because by mid-quarter it was evident that such procedure was only confusing to the new students.
2. For 80% of the class the "walk-in" tutoring method took over with some success.
3. The small group discussion of student papers was retained.
4. Winter weather, home problems, and sickness cut attendance to a significant degree.
5. Because of the lack of motivation and mental ability, success in future programs appeared doubtful.

Procedure for the Spring Quarter Group

With the exception of several students who had been dropped from other programs, all twenty were entering St. Mary's Junior College for the first time.

The objective-contract technique was dropped. The content of the course was geared to individual needs that would be utilized in the various programs. The small enrollment made pre-and post-writing conferences feasible.

Results of Group IV

1. 70% of the class received A or B grades.
2. 1 failed and 1 withdrew.
3. Attendance was excellent.
4. The class endorsed all content that was geared to the needs of the program to be entered in the Fall.

The conclusions drawn from this study of teaching methods are:

1. For large classes of similar writing ability, age, and school gap, the objective-contract plan is both successful and rewarding to the student.
2. For classes, large or small, with sharp differences in ability and needs, the blanket contract plan is useless. A special contract should be made out for each student.
3. The small group evaluation meetings should be retained, as it is profitable for both student and instructor.
4. To retrain the dropout takes time and understanding on the part of the instructor, but we agree with Senator Mondale that it is an economic necessity.

"For the individual, educational failure means a lifetime of lost opportunities. But the effects are visited on the nation as well, for society as a whole also pays for the undereducation of a significant segment of its population."
Speech by Senator Mondale - chairman of the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity.

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A HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO EVALUATING, MODIFYING, AND WRITING BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

BY KAREN M. HESS AND LANNY E. MORREAU.
CEMREL, Inc., Minneapolis

"Behavioral objectives are trite. They don't reflect the goals toward which I teach."

This statement reflects an attitude prevalent among teachers about the relevancy of behavioral objectives in English. Further, it prompts a significant question: Must behavioral objectives in English be irrelevant and meaningless? There are a number of possible causes for seemingly irrelevant objectives, including the confusion of behavioral objectives with accountability systems, the ultimatums to write course objectives without prior instruction, the imposition of objectives written by non-subject matter specialists ("outsiders"), the quantity of "behavioral objectives" which are, in fact, non-behavioral, and the distinct lack of relationships between behavioral objectives and the overall goals of English instruction.

"Behavioral Objectives: The First Component of Humanism," a workshop conducted at the MCTE convention in St. Cloud in April, was designed to evaluate a procedure for assisting teachers: (1) to write relevant behavioral objectives, (2) to analyze existing objectives, and (3) to modify objectives for individualizing instruction -- the three prerequisite skills for objective-based instruction. Could these three processes be made more meaningful through direct ties to general "humanistic" objectives?

The relationship between behavioral objectives and humanistic goals has not been clearly established, as indicated by the most frequently held misconception among workshop participants: "A set of general instructional objectives in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains will guide the teacher in selecting curriculum materials, in assessing student performance, and in evaluating and modifying teaching materials or strategies." Because of the importance of broad, general goals, this response had been anticipated. Teachers do have objectives for their classes, but frequently the objectives are too broad to be useful for selecting curriculum materials, for assessing student performance, or for evaluating and modifying materials or strategies.

Nevertheless, broad objectives are extremely important and should not be disregarded, for without these general, usually very humanistic goals, behavioral objectives are meaningless. Behavioral objectives are a means to an end-- never an end in themselves. They must lead to something -- and where they lead is where the teacher started -- with students meeting the humanistic goals of English.

Having determined the general goals for program development, the teacher must then determine how these goals will be reached -- what the student will do to demonstrate that he has achieved mastery. This transition from the program goals to student performance involves four major levels of objectives--proceeding from the very general to the very specific. The most comprehensive objective of a given educational program is the conceptual objective, which states the ultimate goal of the program . . .what the ideal learner would know and do after completing the course. For example, a conceptual objective in English might be one such as James Squire stated in a presentation to the 1970 NCTE convention on the humanistic goals in teaching Enlgish: "The student would learn to use language effectively and powerfully."

The second level of objective is the educational objective. Educational objectives state the general categories of skill/knowledge needed to meet the conceptual objective. They are, in effect, the units of material to be included in the total program. For example, for meeting the conceptual objective of powerful, effective language usage, the following educational objectives might be stated:

...."to relate through language to one's fellow human beings"
...."to think in and through language"
...."to use language to shape and, hence to control one's experience"
...."to be sensitive to the powerful nuances implicit in the use of everyday language and to the richness and vibrancy of language put to esthetic purposes..." (these first four are from Squire's speech)
...to enjoy leisure-time reading
...to develop imagination in writing
...to appreciate literature
...etc.

The third level of objective is the instructional objective. An instructional objective consists of the specific classes of behaviors needed to meet the educational objective. For example, to meet the educational objective, "to appreciate literature," the following instructional objectives might be stated:

...to analyze literary selections
...to evaluate literary selections
...to discuss styles used in literature
...to interpret literary symbolism
...to identify figurative language
...etc.

The fourth level of objective is the behavioral objective. The behavioral objective states clearly and precisely those

things a student will do to meet the instructional objectives as well as the criterion-measure which will be used to indicate successful completion of the objective. Mastery of these measurable objectives will assure the student and the teacher that one of the instructional objectives has been met. For example, to meet the instructional objective of identifying figurative language, the following behavioral objectives might be stated:

...Given 12 sentences (6 figurative and 6 literal), the student will underline and name the 6 figurative statements.
...Given 5 figurative statements, the student will rewrite each statement conveying the same idea using literal language.
...Given a short poem containing 4 similes, the student will underline the similes.
...etc.

In the workshop the participants wrote objectives at each of the four levels, proceeding from broad, humanistic goals to the specific, behavioral objectives. For example, one participant developed the following objectives for a speech course:

CONCEPTUAL: To be able to meet the communication demands that will be made on students throughout life.

EDUCATIONAL: To develop interest in the workings of political life.

INSTRUCTIONAL: To analyze a political speech or platform or distinguish opposing views of candidates.

BEHAVIORAL: Given an excerpt of a political speech with ten examples of evasive speech, the learner will underline and name at least seven of the ten examples.

Numerous behavioral objectives were used to demonstrate mastery in a given area. A variety of objectives written in several skill/knowledge areas and covering a variety of grade levels from elementary through college were written by participants for use in their classes. Examples of specific behavioral objectives which were developed include:

1. Given three different philosophies of man's nature, the student will state the main premise of each, select one he agrees most with, and give four reasons why he agrees with it.

2. Given a list of 100 titles, the student will select 75 titles appropriate for a given class of tenth graders

with 80% correctness as determined by the consensus of the class (for a college methods course).

3. Having been presented with five thesis statements, three of which are specific and can be developed in 400 words, the student will underline the three that fulfill the specifications.

4. After having reviewed these statements (in objective #3), the student will write three statements of his own that are specific and can be developed in 400 words.

5. Given a group of six letters (upper-case) printed on a sheet, and the same six letters in object form, the learner will identify the given graphemic representation on paper and in object form in a half-hour period. The learner will have immediate recall when identifying these graphemes when presented a day later, a week later.

6. After reading the first three chapters of Black Boy, the student will write a paragraph describing family life in a ghetto, pointing out at least three aspects of life; beginning with a topic sentence and ending with a conclusion.

The participants applied the same criteria for writing their own objectives to the evaluation of existing objectives. Where objectives were not appropriately stated, participants modified them. Some of the appropriate modifications of the ambiguous objectives "The student will write well " were:

1. Assigned a three paragraph essay, the student will correctly punctuate and capitalize complete sentences, with no fragments or run-ons, and no more than one spelling error.

2. Given three topic sentences, the student will underline the two that will lead to an expository paragraph rather than a narrative paragraph.

3. Given a choice of composition topics for a five paragraph formal essay, the student will write an essay containing no sentence fragments.

4. Given a scrambled paragraph, the student will rewrite it with all sentences logically following each other.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation and to provide feedback, the participants were given a pre-post criteria measure. Data collected from this measure revealed the following contrasts in pre-post scores. (Fig. 1)

	PRE	POST
Misconceptions about behavioral objectives (8 points maximum)	6.2	6.8
Evaluating existing objectives (4 points maximum)	2.0	2.7
Modifying unacceptable objectives (5 points maximum)	1.7	3.4
Writing complete behavioral objectives (5 points maximum)	1.7	3.8

Figure 1. Pre-Post Differences in Performance on the Four Major Workshop Topics

The gains made were directly proportional to the amount of time spent in each area and the amount of individual participation. The least gain was made in the misconception section which was presented verbally in ten minutes without active individual participation. The greatest gain was made in writing behavioral objectives -- the focal point of more than half the session during which the individual participants actively participated.

In response to the question, "Do you use behavioral objectives in your class?" only five participants responded affirmatively. When asked if they would use behavioral objectives were they available or were they able to write their own, 50% responded affirmatively on the pre-measure, whereas 75% responded affirmatively on the post-measure.

Using a rating scale of (1) excellent to (5) poor, the participants rated the method of presentation at 1.9 and the content of the presentation at 1.8.

The following comments were representative of the reaction of the participants to the workshop. Some felt there was room for improvement, i.e. (1) "Too much, too fast", and (2) "Same tune, different verse." However, the majority felt it had been a beneficial experience, i.e. (1) "I would like to take a course in this area under you. I feel that I need more time to comprehend all that you gave us today. Very valuable. I did learn" ; (2) "For a first exposure, I find these ideas most interesting and practical; and I'll try to use them soon. This might help me to eliminate some student complaints about vague standards in grading."

Based on data from the pre-post measure as well as an examination of the worksheets completed by the participants during the session, the workshop did meet the objective of assisting teachers in acquiring the skill/knowledge needed to evaluate, modify, and write behavioral objectives for use in their English classes. The effective application of these skills should help to assure that students will have greater opportunities to attain the broad, humanistic goals of English.

Karen M. Hess and Larry E. Morreau are Project Directors for Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. This article is adapted from a presentation made at the MCTE Annual Conference in St. Cloud last April. The opinions expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of CEMREL, Inc.

THE ANTICIPATED ROLE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

BY WILLIAM SHEEHAN
Henry High School, Minneapolis

We are living in the Space Age, the Nuclear Age, the Technological Age; we do not know exactly what to call the present time. It is said that science has determined the age of the world? That is only a rumor; even it does not know, though it would like to make us think that this is the Age of Science. And many are willing to accept its word and to look for nothing more; after all, through science we can satisfy our pleasures. What concern should we have if we destroy the world, if it pleases us to do so?

Examine the general school curriculum as it stands today. There has been a continuous expansion -- nay, explosion! -- of emphasis on mathematics and the sciences and, in another aspect of the educational structure, on the business and industrial-type courses. The school today is in almost every fiber and sinew -- even in its nerves! -- a product of the Twentieth Century, the Modern Age. Possibly it is too, too modern; in other words, may we call it too technological?

But it is unusual to speak of too much technology in this age, when the cold and unwavering eye of the scientist is admired and when the scientist himself is idolized. Science has become the new Oracle of Delphi, and the various branches of technology are the new gods. And what of appropriate heroes to emulate? Perhaps the child of today worships, more than the astronaut, the shining beetle-like machine from which he crawls. If this is the case, then perhaps we should begin to consider the possibility of the next generation actually turning, through gradual metamorphosis, into machines. It may well be that man has reached the crossroads in evolution at which he is to shed his shell of humanity.

The English language itself seems particularly tractable to a form that will just suit the anticipated new man, the man that is not man. With all the curious, intricate involutions of the language, the scientific-sounding functions (such as "diagramming sentences," an example which immediately come to mind), there is the chance, till now only unsatisfactorily explored, of making the language a completely set and predictable machine. For what expresses so clearly what is meant as "F = ma," Newton's formula relating force to mass and acceleration? What force, indeed, this has! But what expresses Isaac Newton the man as well as " . . .I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of

truth lay all undiscovered before me" ? This part of Newton seems to me as important as the other; let us not lose sight of it beneath the formulas, this side which shows how Isaac Newton felt in finding those formulas -- even of it betrays that he was a little human, and more than just a shrewd calculating machine.

Do we even know, these days, what it means to be human? For example, have we any idea at all of what Shakespeare intended when he wrote of Brutus: "His life was gentle, and the elements / So mixed in him that Nature might stand up,/ And say to all the world, this was a man!" And, again, have we any idea of the elements mixed in Ulysses, the wandering king, who, through the imagination of Tennyson, says: "Come, my friends, / 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world. / Push off . . . / To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths / Of all the western stars, until I die." Is he not summoning us? Do we not hear his voice or see the aged king's silhouette etched against the fading twilight's grey, even across the sea of years that separate ourselves from him? He will wait for us till then. But would we know for whom to look? Would we recognize him today, that aged king? It is a question that probes my heart and makes it burn! Would we recognize him today?

Or do the words of Alexander Pope have meaning for us today? Speak forth, Pope, from your honored pinnacle of fame -- you, who are honored now but unfortunately never read: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of mankind is man." Yes, you are right, Pope. But where are we to find ourselves? What better place than in literature? What better time to look than during that swirling, tumultous period of transition, adolescence, when the basic question is one of evaluating the self? And, too, might not the daring figure of Ulysses, the noble and thoughtful poise of Brutus, and even the harsh, outspoken stubbornness of Satan as Milton sketches him record ourselves as we might like to be! Does it not show man as he should be?

"I teach you beyond Man. Man is something that shall be surpassed. What have you done to surpass him?" -- Nietzche. We have surpassed him in what we have written of him. Is that not the first step, Zarathustra, in reaching the superman: to wish for him? And must we not set him as a goal? Must we not know what superman -- shall be? Let not only the technologists define man; let the men of all ages, through what they have written to us, have a voice.

And shall we let science get too firm a grasp on the subject material of the school curriculum? If we do, I fear that we shall lose the delicate side of human nature apart from the cold, fact-finding side; let us keep in sight this

other side, which lives and breathes in literature: the side that can be moved to an immeasurable, pulsing joy by the odoriferous glory of the flower and even more so by the sight of the starry sky above, which cannot be had from within the claustrophobic lecture hall of the astronomer (refer to Walt Whitman's poem, "When I Heard the Learned Astronomer"). This side of human nature is, I "feel," definitely worth nurturing; it is to be found where if not in literature?

If we cannot "feel" beauty, if we lapse into a morbid senselessness of it which so grasps us that we cannot any longer look at the features of the universe and "feel" them -- and I suspect that many scientists today are out of this special kind of touch -- then it shall have been one of the greatest tragedies of any age. The English class of today faces the problem of keeping man human when it is so easy to lose him in the spider-web tangle of freeways, the smoke-obscured factories, and the offices in skyscrapers. I only hope that it is not too much to ask.

It may well appear that I have been trying to tear science and technology to shreds. However, this has not been my purpose: it is only that I think we may have compensated too far in their direction for our own good; we are knee-deep in technologically caused problems, and the water is growing ever muddier and higher. Still, to borrow a flat-out optimist's phrase: "If it has gotten us this far in, it should be able to get us out." I believe that the technology that succeeded in putting men on the moon can accomplish just about anything we want it to, provided we desire it sufficiently and are resolute enough. Landing on the moon was, after all, an emotional goal we set for ourselves, a goal set to show what we, in the guise of our technology, could do. Are some of the problems we have in our heads for future solution more hopeless in appearance than that one was? It is only that we need to write their solutions down as our goals and set to work.

But why is it that the present generation is so frighteningly pessimistic when it has watched technology deftly hurdle every obstacle presented before its path? I answer, it is because technology has hurdled man, too, and dehumanized him. Man does not wish to be an automaton, after all! Therefore, let us augment his aesthetic nature.

As author of this essay, William Sheehan was the recipient of the Minneapolis Area Council of Teachers of English Scholarship in 1972.

TWO POEMS

BY KENNETH WARNER
Northfield High School

CHAPLIN'S DANCE

Gritty images up against a screen;
Phantoms lit in chiaroscuro.
Perception is suspended in time
As motes of dust in a projector's beam;
And darkened walls are echoing
To flickering voices of light.

These images are flukes
They flip and flutter
While ghosts of comedians
Riding flittering candle light
Haunt as Hapsburg memories do.

The days seem best served by a tramp
Who invites princes to suicide.
Myerling runs a shop in the Bronx;
And grandparents come over by boat.

During the Gold Rush
Charlie throws a party
But Georgia doesn't come.

In his innocent sleep
He dreams of a dance--
The dance of the oceana rolls.

His dream conjures a face in the darkness--
A benevolent white mask
With a questing moustache
Behind the gentle candle glow.

The mask is watching two hands
Guide two rolls in a dance
At the tips of two dervish forks.

The rolls are tramp's shoes
In the ballet of a hapless dreamer
Speaking to the purity of illusion.
As we slouch in our seats
We drift out to the sea in ships
To the dance of the oceana roll.

THE FEAR OF OUR FATHERS

With grandmother and brother
As the audience,
His father did the dirty work.
The boy sat uncertainly, listing forward, then sideways
In the wooden swing.

His father saw this clumsiness as charming.

The father spins the swing slowly,
Slowly corkscrewing
The clothesline above his head.
The swing begins its spin
Backwards
In a series of benign loops,
Slowly, then faster,
As the child giggles with a delight
Poised on the nape of fear.
The swing jolts suddenly,
Hesitates,
Then repeats itself in reverse.

Thrilling to the laughter now,
The father repeats the process.
He winds the rope even tighter,
But this time, at the end of its run
The swing lurches violently.
The child's head rolls back;
His arms flail for help.
His eyes look in terror toward his father,
Revealing a stricken eagle afloat in his heart.

Before the shudders can turn to tears
His father lifts him from the swing.
He holds him tightly to his chest.
THe boy's hair is moist and feathery
And brushes at his father's neck.

Why has he frightened his child?
He was only dizzy. It was his first time.

He thought of it often though,
And came to see later that
Our fear of our fathers
Is the father of our fears
And each generation pays a visit against the next.

AN ACRONYM EXPLAINS ITSELF: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ERIC SYSTEM

BY DANIEL J. DIETERICH
Research Associate, ERIC/RCS

The acronym ERIC/RCS stands for the Educational Resources Information Center on Reading and Communication Skills. ERIC is a national information system designed originally by the United States Office of Education and now under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE). The Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (located at NCTE headquarters, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois) is responsible for collecting, analyzing, evaluating, and disseminating educational information and materials related to research, instruction, and personnel preparation in English, Journalism, Reading, Speech Communication, and Theater.

The English/Journalism Module of ERIC/RCS is responsible for educational information related to teaching and learning the English language, to educational journalism, including the learning and teaching of journalism in print and electronic media, and to the training of teachers at all levels.

One needs a working concept of the parts of the ERIC system in order to make the best use of it. The following descriptions and definitions of ERIC terms were written to lead the beginning user of the system to the information he needs.

THESAURUS OF ERIC DESCRIPTORS

The key to the entire system is the THESAURUS OF ERIC DESCRIPTORS. This volume, which is continuously being updated, is the source of all subject terms (descriptors) used for indexing and for retrieval of documents and journals in the ERIC collections. Each document entered into the system is assigned several descriptor terms selected from the THESAURUS that indicate the essential contents of the document. Descriptors marked by an asterisk delineate the major concepts of the document, while the unmarked (minor) descriptors denote concepts that receive only passing attention or minor emphasis in the document.

(In cases where no descriptor term adequately describes some important feature of a document, an identifier term may be assigned in addition to the descriptors. Any word, name, or phrase may be an identifier. For the most part, identifiers are useful only to information specialists and not to the average user of the ERIC system.)

RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Abstracts of documents thus indexed, using the descriptor and identifier terms, are printed in RESEARCH IN EDUCATION (RIE), the monthly journal published by the National Institute of Education. About 1000 documents from all eighteen ERIC Clearinghouses are indexed and summarized in RIE each month. Each volume contains, in addition to the main entry section, indexes arranged by subject, author, and source (institution or publisher).

The subject index is arranged, alphabetically, by descriptor terms. Under each term are found, ordered numerically by ERIC document numbers, all those documents which have been assigned that particular term as a major (starred) descriptor. Thus, a document which has been assigned five major descriptor terms may be found in five places in the subject index.

Most documents abstracted in RIE are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) in two forms: microfiche (MF), a four-by-six-inch mocrofilm card containing up to 98 pages of text; or hard copy (HC), six-by-eight-inch, black and white, photographically reproduced pages in a paper binding. A few documents listed in RIE are not available from EDRS. In these cases, ordering information and current price are listed with the abstract in the main entry section.

CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Articles from nearly 600 educational journals are indexed in the same manner in another ERIC publication, CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCAITON (CIJE). These articles are assigned a six-digit EJ (for Educational Journal) accession number and are often annotated. Semiannual and annual compilations of CIJE are available. Copies of the journal articles indexed in EIJE are not available from ERIC. They must be obtained from your library collection or from the publisher.

USING THE ERIC SYSTEM

Information may be found most economically in the ERIC system when a simple step-by-step procedure is followed. First, phrase the question you want answered as precisely as possible. Then go the THESAURUS and locate the narrowest descriptor terms that seem most closely related to the topic of interest. To assist the user, most descriptor terms are followed by a list of cross-references to other descriptors, classified as narrower terms (NT), broader terms (BT), and related terms (RT), worth referring to.

Next, refer to the subject indexes in RIE and CIJE and read the titles listed under the descriptor terms you have chosen.

Note the ED and EJ numbers of those documents that seem appropriate for your purposes and locate the document citations in the main entry sections. By reading the abstracts in RIE and the annotations in CIJE, you can decide which documents and articles you with to read in their entirety. Microfiche copies of most documents indexed in RIE are filed sequentially by ED number.

For futher information on how to use the ERIC system consult the librarian in charge of your local ERIC collection. (Most collections have a variety of brochures on ERIC and how it may best be used.) If you wish, you may also write for a copy of an illustrated step-by-step introduction to the system entitled "How to Use ERIC." It is available from the Supt. of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock Number 1780-0796)/ 35¢.

LOCATIONS OF ERIC COLLECTIONS

There are over 500 complete ERIC microfiche collections and numerous partial collections across the country. Many university libraries and educational agencies have a collection of ERIC microfiche or a list of locations of complete ERIC collections. Write to any ERIC Clearinghouse for further information about the ERIC system.

FUTURE ERIC/RCS ARTICLES

Future articles by the ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse will deal with current issues in English education. By using the information contained in the present article you will be able to locate the journal articles and documents which can contribute most to your professional development in the various areas to be discussed.

THINKING ABOUT A "VACATION": TRY STRATFORD, ONTARIO

BY RAYMOND BINGEA

There ought to be a law: Teachers shall be granted summer school credits for attending the Stratford Shakespearean Festival in Ontario. Where else will you find such care for language: a whole environment for an effective phrase, down to the precise amount and slant of light cast upon the speaker. Such a trip isn't a busman's holiday either. There's not an inkling of the classroom. The emancipated classics you see there are freed from the book and onto the stage.

Attending a festival such as Stratford's is not like seeing local efforts. Playgoers pack their bags, load down the Ford, and travel to a strange land. Once around Chicago, through Detroit and into Canada they are on the same road with many others from the U.S. The MacDonald-Cartier Freeway through Ontario is the quickest way east from Detroit to Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and points north of New York. The drive through agricultural tableland is pleasant and uncomplicated by heavy traffic.

About an hour and a half down the road, midway between Detroit and Toronto, the twenty-five to thirty-mile digression to Stratford begins. Along winding roads visitors get readings on countryside character: farm houses that have received special care, some composed of native stone patiently fitted with a mason's skill, most with porches that are really used--for socializing or for quiet reflection at day's end. Arriving in Stratford one finds himself in the middle of a small town with the brightness and glitter of a big town. Main Street, Ontario, is lined with maples; light posts are decorated with regal banners; traffic is efficiently controlled.

The visitor's first consideration is not the plays but the practical one of accommodations. Almost everyone at the plays will have had similar concerns. There's an unusual commitment in this audience to the theater, a willingness to travel hundreds of miles to tee the masterfully performed plays. Only a sprinkling of the 367,000 attending the Festival in 1971, for example, could have been natives of Stratford, population 23,000. The promenade of patrons that precedes each performance is a fascinating international mix.

It's a good idea to arrange for rooming ahead of time at one of the excellent motels and hotels, or, if you prefer, to take a camper to Wildwood Park, seven miles away. However, staying with the people of the town is the most interesting. Hosts need not be theater enthusiasts, but they are friendly and welcoming, the type of people who try a little harder. It's also considerably cheaper, leaving money for those pleasant meals at the Bamboo, the Lamplighter, and the Ali Baba.

Whether for tickets, accommodations, or simply a fond look at the beautiful landmark, the early swing by the theater is an accustomed action. It's not often one finds a town where theater is the most important industry. Perhaps there are citizens of Stratford who will argue with the statement, but the reason so much industry has located in Stratford is the famous performances of the plays of Will Shakespeare.

Atop the hill of a park, the Festival Theater has been given a suitably impressive setting, overlooking a widening of the Avon River called Lake Victoria. As one looks down from the theater, the Shakespearean Gardens, where it's possible to see flowers alluded to by the bard, are to the left of the lake. Rothman's, a jewel of an art gallery where there is always an exciting display of painting and sculpture, is located out of sight a half mile to the right. It used to be the waterworks building, but has been so elegantly refurbished that its origins are not readily distinguished.

Arriving at twilight, we drove straight to the home the accommodations office had arranged for us by mail. Our host, a semi-retired railroad employee, was sitting on the porch with his wife, waiting for us. Driving there through the streets of the older parts of Stratford, I was impressed suddenly with the unreality of the whole thing. This Shakespearean Festival should not really have happened at all in such a faraway place. One keeps bumping into the wobbly framework of a miracle.

In fact, it's possible to make a long list of impossibilities: The thought, for example, should never really have entered the mind of Tom Patterson to make that transatlantic call to Sir Tyrone Guthrie in Ireland inviting him to start the whole thing. Then,it's only logical that once the great director understood what the journalist was up to, he would have been mildly flattered dismissed the idea as one man's madness, and gone on to more pressing matters. And why would Alec Guinness turn from the lucrative film industry in England to accept a much less remunerative and more demanding role as Richard III?

Then, when Guthrie terminated his responsibilities as artistic director, how could the Festival hope to find a replacement? And such a replacement: Michael Langham -- a director capable of producing the award-winning "Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" when he decided to give Broadway a whirl. But not just an exceptional artist, an administrator as well, capable of making an impressive number of sound decisions over the twelve ensuing years he was artistic director. He is credited with building the formidable organization the Festival has become. Now he is in the process of performing similar wonders for the Guthrie theater in the Twin Cities.

Such retrospective thoughts were natural this year when the Festival celebrated her twentieth season. Stratford's two papers, the Beacon and the Times, publish supplements similar to those heralding the Twins or Vikings openers. These supplements tell of the season's plays and those associated with their production. Incidentally, sending early for these supplements can help make one's stay more profitable. (They could also help the teacher explain to school officials a projected trip to the Festival.) Last year, banner headlines in the supplements reminded playgoers that the season was a historical event.

We learned in advance that the exhibition was to be housed in the city hall, recently saved from the wrecker's ball through the petitioning of citizens and visitors the year before. The exhibition has been the Festival's answer to the disturbing question: what do you do with priceless costumes and props once the season is over? Stratford displays them. Volpone's bed, the "wall" worn by Kenneth Welsh in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", and the black gown with twenty foot train worn by Alex Guinness as Richard III were among the articles on display.

But the emphasis was upon the historical event. Relics related to the theater's opening in 1953 were displayed. Early correspondence between Tyrone Guthrie and Alec Guinness revealed that "Hamlet" was to have been the first play instead of "Richard III", and that Guinness preferred "Julius Caesar." The original promotional model of the tent that first housed the Festival made it clear that the tent was the basis for the present, prize-winning edifice of concrete and steel. In a glass case was the crumpled, straw hat of Skip Manley, the legendary craftsman responsible for the maintenance of the huge tent.

We arrived last year later in the season than we have ever arrived. Fall was in the air. We thought the audiences would be small, but we were wrong; houses were packed. As the season progresses the character of the Festival changes. One thing is sure; you can never have it all. "The Three Penny Opera" had closed. It had played during midseason downtown at the Avon Theater, the Festival's proscenium stage located just off the square downtown. We also missed the contemporary works presented on the Third Stage. The feature of this theater is its great staging flexibility. It is located on the shores of the Avon near the boat house, bowling green, and the Shakespearean Gardens. The barn-like structure contains eight modules of seats, easily rearranged to form a different theater for each play.

We also missed the music. By mid-summer a rich musical program is available. I remember especially an impromptu picnic

one evening a few years ago down on the island, when we listened to a Dvorak divertissement and feasted on Colonel Sanders' chicken. "Music at Midnight" at Rothman's Gallery after the plays on Thursday evening offers a mixture of chamber music, champagne, and fine art. The music season had closed the day before we arrived with "Music for a Summer Day", featuring concerts from mid morning to midnight.

The reason we attended the festival when we did was to keep up on a recent type of entertainment that is becoming a Stratford phenomenon, the one man show. We especially wanted to see G.K.C., Tony van Bridge's show derived from the works of Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Patrick Crean had presented a version of his show of the works of Rudyard Kipling, "The Sun Never Sets," and Eric Donkin his, called "The Victorians," earlier in the summer at Rothman's Gallery.

So on the last rainy Sunday afternoon in August we saw Tony van Bridge transformed into Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Many would recognize van Bridge as the ghost of Hamlet and Tiresias in "Oedipus the King" of the Britannica humanities films. The instant he walked onto the stage -- walking stick in hand, opera cape over massive frame, on his nose the pince nez, under it the walrus mustache -- Edwardian grandeur filled the arena house of the Festival theater. The show places the audience in a turn-of-the century living room. It's always fascinating how the expanse of a spectacular battle scene in that theater can be shrunk to intimate interior by the simple expedient of placing an oriental rug and a few pieces of furniture on the platform stage.

The show is a good-natured encounter that never degenerates into dead seriousness. On the threshold of each elaborate sentence one has the feeling of setting out on a new expedition into the way language happens to people. A teacher could hardly expect more prestigious support. Van Bridge avows one of the reasons he put the show together was a love for good language. "I wanted to do it to put the English language back on the stage," he said.

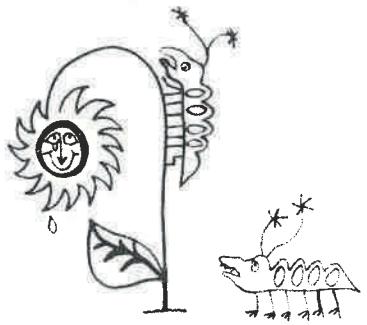
So popular was Van Bridge in last year's "She Stoops to Conquer", that the old work horse of high school curricula will repeat in repertory during the 1973 season. Alan Scarfe as the master of mischief, Tony Lumpkin, once more will provide the vigor that moves the play along with such competent ease. Marlow, played by TV's Michael Mont, of the Forsyte Saga series (Nicholas Pennell), did not stammer the show to a standstill. Pat Galloway's Kate is another example of the versatility of these classical actors. One never feels that the comedienne has returned fresh from the somber title roles in the tragedies of "Lorenzaccio" and "The Duchess of Malfi."

Alfred de Musset's "Lorenzaccio" was, incidentally, something else we missed, but we had seen it during Stratford's winter tour to the Twin Cities along with "As You Like It." Perhaps Nicholas Pennell's Orlando had become animatedly rural, but Rosalind, played by Carole Shelly (Gwendolyn Pidgeon of TV's "Odd Couple"), remained a kookie rather than a poetic Rosalind. Critics in the Twin Cities had complained of the interpretation during the tour, but the Canadians didn't seem to mind at all. They seem to have learned to take their Shakespeare as they find it.

And this was the year we finally saw a piece I had thought would not play well, "King Lear." But Stratford's forthright interpretation totally erased the idea. Only a few key props were used. There was, for example, the heroic-sized map that tells the audience immediately that Lear divided the kingdom equally among his daughters before he proposed his embarrassing test of affection. Lear's rage became more understandable to me as self-destructive rage gripping the nearly senile old man. Goneril's and Regan's monstrous acts became more real as part of the emotional turmoil that can result when a father picks a favorite.

Personal discoveries such as these from "King Lear" go into an ever-growing collection of many other memories. The play happening on that stage inspires it all. From the actual experience of these plays emanate valuable products for the teacher that are unpredictable in nature. Surely the desire to find ways to give these experiences to one's students has to result in a more realistic treatment of plays in the classroom.

Once a North High School (North St. Paul) English teacher, Ray Bingea now works for 3M, developing "sound page" curricula.



BOOKS

FEARS AND FAIRY TALES

BY TOM WALTON
John F. Kennedy School, Ely

Traveling once more through my paperback edition of John Holt's How Children Fail (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1964, Pittman Publishing Corporation), my mind caught on a series of statements quoting negative attitudes about exposing children to the fears brought out by "fairy tales." Whatever it is that cards and files within the mind almost immediately drew out a comment from one of my former writing classes that fairy tales were "out" because there was no such thing as magic in that sense any more. If there is no magic in that sense, there is the desire to believe in its power if even for the space of a few/many pages. I offer three of my own experiences in recent years entitled for this review:

Three Thes

The Thirteen Clocks, James Thurber. (Simon and Schuster, 1950).

I worried for the prince; despite his daring and trust in magic elements that tottered constantly on the edge of failure and his self-appointed guardians seemingly no more stable, I worried as he traversed the course set to free and win the princess. I hated the villain; though I did chuckle over his elaborate schemes. I hoped, yet more, I held my breath for the princess so carefully described as to allow the most beautiful princess I could conjure. I liked the story. I liked it best when I read it aloud; (though I think this was smugness on my part as I explained the literary skill and meaning of Mr. Thurber).

For fairy tales of this nature, there need be highborn people, person(s) aspiring to new heights, a task impossible, magic and devices to overcome the impossible, and a happy ending. Mr. Thurber does this with one eye always on his audience as he twists his characters through the magic maze and lifts his audience with rhythmic alliteration, rhyme, idiom, and logic. It is a beautiful book.

The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster. (Random House Inc., 1961).

Newer still, containing the elements of a fairy tale, and carrying on into fantasy, The Phantom Tollbooth surface travels on a study of language in a dictionary world while laterally developing interesting studies of personalities. Understanding will depend upon a verbal group or, again, oral reading and many explanations and discussions in the upper grades. Jules Feiffer adds interesting illustrations to aid in visualizing the many characters encountered by the boy, Milo. It is a thought provoking book that might scare off many readers with its size and vocabulary; yet, its story and characters are well worth the venture. Its humor is subtle and plentiful.

The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1943).

I met the Little Prince through college students when today's 20 - 30 year olds were gaining momentum in their concern for people as people. Though I've often thought about reading his story to my children, I've been reluctant to do so for some unexplainable reason that might just be the feeling that this is a book for adult contemplation. Inside the covers are words that touch inside through the philosophy of "caring." When I think about the book, I think about students that I have - have had. Read it.

TWO POEMS

BY CHET COREY
Worthington State Junior College

EARLY MORNING HOURS

The fumbling for a familiar word
in the afterglow of an affair
is automatic, a semaphore
to flash traffic floors below.

Metallic voices rise on elevators
of air, and cigarette smoke
in ceiling corners stretches webs
that brush against the window glass.

Damp windows grey as these are found
propped open by bottles in such hotels.
They mirror nothing more of day
than night and early morning hours.

We knowingly come to expect no more
than looking for small change or cabs.
We seldom find the words as fresh
as fragile trees attired in ice.

CROSSING MINNESOTA BY NIGHT

1
Slat houses, a grain elevator and trees
move in the opened eyes of freight cars
that pass where siding warps in blue snow.

2
A switchman has left his warm car,
its lights dimmed for flashlight,
an arm to direct a lack of traffic. . . .

3
I have walked along steel rails
out of grain elevator shadow into bright snow,
tracking life that fills a drifted ditch.

4
When hills are bare trees
and steeples arise--ancient swords
thrust into dark earth--
I have counted the miles
between small, southwestern towns
by the disappearance of grain elevators.

5
They catch in a departing sun
the private destiny of distance.

The English and Education departments at St. Catherine's are offering a four week Poetry Workshop from June 18 - July 13. It is specially designed for elementary teachers, and will include both poetic analysis and teaching techniques.

Sessions will be held each morning and some afternoons. The Workshop will be directed by Sister Angela Schreiber; Sister Helen Coughlan will be in charge of the classes.

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A new collection of poetry by William D. Elliott, associate professor of English at Bemidiji State College, has been published by Windfall Press, Chicago. Mapping of the Brain is a record of states of mind that start with the author's birthplace in Minnesota, range through the South, Europe, and Australia, and end with summers at the sea in Cape Cod and Maine. An article by Mr. Elliott, "The New Commonwealth: World Literature Written in England," appeared in MEJ, Spring 1968. A poem, "Shell Station Near Detroit Summer," was printed in the Fall 1968 issue.

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In view of the current legislative status of a bill (S.F. 1844, H.F. 1779) designed to give the effective power of teacher certification to a commission dominated by members with MEA/MFT affiliation, a resolution adopted by the NCTE at its national conference in November seems particularly pertinent.

Although the NCTE resolution is concerned specifically with collective bargaining between teachers and their employers as negotiated agreements affect working conditions and curriculum in English and language arts instruction, the issue is large enough to include teacher preparation and certification. At stake is the right to professional self-determination.

Accordingly, the NCTE resolution proposes:That the NCTE appoint a committee to survey the experiences and recommendations of English and language arts teachers who have been working under collective bargaining contracts, with the aim of publishing information and guidelines for others in the profession seeking to bargain for improved programs and teaching conditions for English and language arts teachers.