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FOCUS: READING

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TYPES OF READING VOCABULARY TO TEACH

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(The following article is an introduction to a series of articles on work being done in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota on reading vocabulary. Other articles in the series will appear in later issues of the Minnesota English Journal. Editor)

A great deal has been written about the importance of vocabulary development, and various strategies for teaching vocabulary have been suggested. O'Rourke (1974), for example, stresses the utility of teaching prefixes, roots, and suffixes, arguing that by learning a relatively small number of these elements students will be prepared to unlock the meanings of a great many words. Herber (1970) notes the advantages of students' learning words in context and contends that teachers should select words representing the most important concepts from the students' texts and teach these words before students come to them in the texts. And Thomas and Robinson (1977) advocate a variety of techniques, including teaching of roots and affixes, preteaching specific words, teaching the use of context clues, and others.

This diverse information about methods of teaching vocabulary can be very useful. Such diverse information is useful in fostering variety in vocabulary instruction. In general, using various techniques to teach vocabulary makes good sense. Certainly, students are more motivated to study vocabulary when their study involves a variety of different activities than when it repeatedly involves the same activity. Yet this diversity is not always appropriate. Certain methods of vocabulary instruction are only appropriate

in certain situations. Therefore, before deciding which method or methods of vocabulary instruction to employ in a particular situation, one needs to consider the situations in which the methods are or are not appropriate. One important aspect of the teaching situation to consider is students' previous knowledge of the words being taught. This paper presents a scheme for classifying words according to students' previous knowledge of them, and this paper and those of my colleagues, which will follow it in later issues of MEJ, present detailed discussions and plans for teaching these various types of words.

This classification system identifies four types of words:

Type One -- words which are in the student's oral vocabulary but which she/he cannot read.

Type Two -- new meanings for words which are already in the student's reading vocabulary with one or more other meanings.

Type Three -- words which are in neither the student's oral vocabulary nor his or her reading vocabulary but for which she/he has an available concept.

Type Four -- words which are in neither the student's oral vocabulary nor his or her reading vocabulary and for which she/he does not have an available concept.

One general feature of the scheme should be mentioned. The order in

which the types are listed indicates the difficulty of the teaching task. Teaching students to read words which are already in their oral vocabularies and teaching them new meanings for words they already know are relatively simple tasks. Teaching new words which represent available concepts is a more difficult endeavor. Finally, teaching new words which represent new concepts is a still more difficult task.

I turn now to detailed consideration of Type One words -- words which are in children's oral vocabularies but which they cannot read -- and to specific procedures for teaching these words. Similar considerations of Types Two, Three, and Four words and plans for teaching them are given in the papers of my colleagues (in a later issue of MEJ).

A reasonable starting point in considering Type One words is to give some examples of words that might fall into this category. Since both students' oral vocabularies and their decoding abilities grow as they progress through school, words that fall in this category and need to be taught will differ from one grade to another. For first graders, such words as boy, dog, and said might well fall into this category. For fourth graders, possible words of this sort might be different, measure, and shoulder. And for at least some secondary students, the words accelerator, bayonet, and extinguish might be of this sort.

Mention of the fact that these words differ for students in various grades suggests consideration of the extent to which students at various grade and ability levels need to be taught such words. For the beginning reader, such words constitute virtually all of the reading vocabulary that needs to be

learned. Kindergarten and first grade children come to school with relatively large oral vocabularies. Estimates of vocabulary sizes of six-year-olds range from 2,000 to 10,000 words. But with few exceptions, children of this age can read only a few words. Primary grade texts limit themselves almost exclusively to words that are in primary grade students' oral vocabularies. Thus, for this age student, the teacher's main task in teaching reading vocabulary is to teach such words. Over the first three years of school, students will encounter in the neighborhood of 2,000 to 5,000 such words in their readers and some additional ones in their other texts, and many of these words will need to be directly taught.

By the time average students get to fourth grade or so, things have become quite different. As noted above, by this time students have probably encountered over 2,000 words in their reading,and most of these are now in their reading vocabularies. By this time many students will also have acquired some decoding skills. With the aid of phonics skills and context clues, average and above average students will be able to read a number of words that were previously only in their oral vocabularies. This does not mean, however, that such students do not continue to have oral vocabularies that are larger than their reading vocabularies or that teachers do not need to continue to teach some vocabulary of this sort. Students' oral vocabularies have continued to grow during their years in school. And some words are not decodable using phonics skills and will have to be taught essentially as sight words.

By the time the average student gets to seventh grade or so, the situation has again changed considerably. By this time, students may well have encountered 10,000 to 20,000 words in their reading. And at about this time, average and above average students will have acquired reading vocabularies as vast as their oral vocabularies; that is, they can read nearly all the words that they use and understand. Moreover, by this time these good and average readers will have acquired word attack skills that enable them to decode most of the relatively few words that are in their oral vocabularies but that they do not recognize instantly in print. Therefore, these students need to be taught to read words in their oral vocabularies only rarely.

But what about below average students? With these students the situation is very different. Like better readers, these children also enter school with relatively large oral vocabularies and with virtually no reading vocabularies. With these students too, teaching them to read words which are already in their oral vocabularies is the teacher's principal vocabulary teaching task in the primary grades. And these children too will increase the size of their oral vocabularies, although probably not as rapidly as have the better readers.

Here, however, the parallel between better and poorer reader's learning of reading vocabulary ends. When these poorer readers get to the fourth grade or so, they will not have encountered as many words in their reading as have the better readers; they won't have read as much. More importantly, however, many of the words that they have encountered in their reading will not have

become part of their reading vocabularies. Even after having been taught a word several times, they may not recognize it when they subsequently see it. Equally importantly, these poorer readers will not have acquired adequate decoding skills; they are frequently unable to use phonics skills and context clues in order to read words that are only in their oral vocabularies. These students are going to continue to need their teachers' assistance in learning to read words that are already in their oral vocabularies.

Unfortunately, everything that has been said with respect to fourth graders who are poor readers can also be said with respect to seventh graders who are poor readers and, in fact, with respect to older secondary readers also. To be sure, the percentage of students who cannot read the words that are in their oral vocabularies decreases with each passing grade. However, substantial numbers of poorer readers in the secondary grades still don't have reading vocabularies that match their oral vocabularies.

The next question that arises is that of how important it is to teach the words in this category. The answer is that it's extremely important. As an illustration of this importance, I'm reminded of an encounter we frequently had with a seventh grader who was in our remedial clinic several years ago. I'll call the youngster Timmy. The problem grew out of the fact that Timmy could both read and spell the word obliterate. He constantly reminded us of his ability and demonstrated it. Timmy's argument was that since he was so adept with obliterate, he didn't need to learn to read words such as those we were trying to teach him, words such as house and from, which he could not

read. Instead, he wanted to read more words like obliterate. Of course, Timmy's argument is fallacious from a number of standpoints. Most importantly, the argument is fallacious in that it fails to consider the utility of being able to read each of these words. If Timmy is unable to read obliterate, he is going to be stumped about once every 10,000,000 words he reads because that is the frequency with which obliterate occurs in reading materials of youngsters about his age. This means that he would be stumbling about once every 500,000 pages or so, hardly a significant problem. If, on the other hand, Timmy can't read from, he's going to be stumped about once every 200 words because that is how often from occurs (Carroll, Davies, & Richmond, 1971). This means that he will be stumped about one time on this word for each page he reads. Stumbling over frequent words like from creates serious problems indeed.

The position I have presented thus far can be briefly summarized. Primary grade children need to be taught words which are in their oral vocabularies but which they do not recognize in print. Poorer readers in the intermediate and secondary grades need to be taught such words. And average and above average intermediate and secondary grade students need to be taught such words when they are not decodable. Learning these words is very important because words that are in students' oral vocabularies are the more frequent words, and not being able to read them will cause students frequent problems.

Two important considerations remain. These are, one, identifying words which are in students' oral vocabularies but which they cannot read, and

two, devising ways of teaching these words. I'll deal with identifying the words first.

The problem of not being able to read words that are in their oral vocabularies is, of course, most serious for students who have virtually no reading vocabularies, who cannot read even the most frequent words. For such students, identifying appropriate words to teach is a fairly straight-forward task. For primary grade children, the words in their reading series will make up the majority of such words that need to be taught. For older students who read primarily in a single series, the same source is appropriate. However, for older students who read in a variety of materials, other sources must be found. Fortunately, several lists of words that occur frequently in the reading students do are available. And a very reasonable strategy is to test students on the words on these lists, beginning with the easiest lists, and then teach those words the students don't know, dealing with the words in the larger lists after those in the smaller lists have been mastered.

The easiest list I'm aware of is the Dolch list of 220 words (Dolch, 1945). This list is composed almost exclusively of very frequent function words, and the majority of students will have learned these by about the end of second grade. But they occur extremely frequently. It has been estimated, for example, that they make up 60 percent of the words in intermediate grade texts (Bond and Tinker, 1967). Thus, it is crucial that older students who don't know all of these words be taught them.

A more extensive list is the revised version of Dale's list of 769 Easy Words (Stone, 1956). This contains nearly all of the 220 words on the Dolch list, and an additional 500 or so words. Because this list was used for a number of years in conjunction with a widely used readability formula for primary grade materials, the Spache Readability Formula (Spache, 1972), and because the readability level indicated by the Spache formula increases as the number of words in a selection which are not on the list increases, publishers who wanted to produce material with low readability levels have frequently used these words exclusively or nearly exclusively. Thus, a lot of primary grade material and much of the material written specifically for older children who do not read well employs these words exclusively or nearly exclusively.

The final list that I'll suggest here is the Dale List of 3,000 Familiar Words (Dale & Chall, 1948). This list contains nearly all of the words on the Dolch List and the Dale List of 769 Easy Words. And it has been used in conjunction with a widely used readability formula for middle-grade materials, the Dale-Chall Readability Formula (Dale & Chall, 1948), for a number of years. Consequently, many materials written for children in the middle grades or for older students who read at middle grade levels employ these words exclusively or nearly exclusively.

The Dale List of 3,000 Familiar Words is probably as large a list as one would want to teach directly. I say this for a number of reasons. For one thing, the systematic teaching of much more than 3,000 words would be an

extremely time consuming and ponderous task. For another, many of the words that would be on a list much larger than 3,000 words would be very infrequent, making it unlikely that students would often encounter them and, hence, making the teaching of them outside of a specific instance in which students needed to read them very questionable. And for still another, by the time students have mastered a vocabulary of 3,000 words, they are likely to have learned some decoding skills and should be able to use these skills to identify many of the words which are in their oral vocabularies but which they don't recognize on sight.

None of this, however, means that there are not other words that are in students' oral vocabularies but not their reading vocabularies that need to be taught. Students certainly encounter words of this sort in situations where they need help. Specifically, students will need help with words which are already in their oral vocabularies when the words are irregularly spelled (preventing students from sounding them out) and occur in passages that do not allow students to identify them from context. Thus, the teacher finds additional words of this sort to teach in the reading students do. And to prevent students from stumbling over them, the teacher briefly teaches these words just before students read the selection in which they occur.

I turn now to the matter of how to teach words that are already in students' oral vocabularies. These words are, as I mentioned above, the easiest type to teach. The basic task for the student is to associate what is unknown, the written word, to what is already known, the spoken word. To

establish this association, the student needs to see the word at the same time that it is pronounced. The association will be strengthened if a multi-sensory approach is used. Thus, a typical procedure might include the student's hearing the word, seeing it, pronouncing it, and writing it. In this way, the student's auditory, visual, and kinesthetic senses would be involved. Finally, the student needs to rehearse the association, to practice it. This can be done both through direct rehearsal -- studying the words, using them in various exercises, or playing word games -- and through incidental rehearsal -- repeatedly reading the words as one encounters them in texts. Note that students are likely to get a great deal of incidental rehearsal when they are learning very frequent words but very little indirect rehearsal with infrequent words. As an example of this, consider the words which and haunt. The word which occurs about once each 500 words, or once every two pages. The word haunt occurs about once each 1,000,000 words, or once every 4,000 pages. Obviously, students are not going to get much indirect rehearsal with the word haunt. If they are to do much rehearsal with such words, it must be direct.

One further matter to consider with respect to teaching words which are already in students' oral vocabularies is how to group them. These words should be grouped to reflect similarities in letter-sound correspondences rather than to reflect relationships among meanings (although this latter method of grouping is appropriate for teaching words that are not already in students' oral vocabularies). For example, students who have the word throat

in their oral vocabulaties but can't recognize it in print will be aided in learning to read the word if we point out to them that the spelling of the vowel sound in throat is the same as it is in the words boat and coat, two words which they can already read. On the other hand, these students would not be aided in learning to read throat by our pointing out to them that the words throat, mouth, and nose all refer to parts of the body. They already know the meaning of the word.

At this point I want to describe three procedures which are in keeping with the principles discussed above. The first procedure is one that we use to teach the Dale List of 769 Easy Words mentioned above to students who are seriously deficient in reading skills. The 769 words are grouped to reflect similarities in letter-sound correspondences and sequenced so that students are exposed to the most useful correspondences first (see Graves, Patberg, and Serrill,1975 for a complete description of this program). A typical set of words to teach is the following: bread, spread, breakfast, measure, weather, head, lead, dead, heavy, ready. The students are given a sheet which simply lists these words. The teacher reads the words in random order and asks students to check off each word as it is read and to say each word. If some students check the wrong one, the teacher immediately corrects them. Next, students are told to take each word in turn and then to look at it, cover it, and write it. Students then check their spellings of the word and correct them if necessary. Finally, students are again asked to pronounce the word.

This covers the procedures for initially teaching the word. On the day

following the initial teaching, students are given a brief direct rehearsal. First, they pronounce each of the words in an untimed situation. Then, they pronounce each of them as they are briefly flashed on cards. As in the initial teaching, any errors are immediately corrected. Students get additional practice through incidental rehearsal as they read in materials that include frequent repetitions of the words.

The second procedure I'll describe is a game. It's called "Word Checkers." Like most games, this one is inappropriate for initially teaching words because it requires some ability to read the words. However, it is an excellent vehicle for direct rehearsal. I chose "Word Checkers" to describe because it is easy to make and to play and because it is illustrative of how simple games can be and still be enjoyed by kids.

Materials for the game include a checker board covered with acetate, transparent plastic disks in two colors to use as checkers, and a red felt pen.

The words students are to practice are written over the black squares with a felt pen. Each word appears on both sides of the board but faces different directions on each side. Words on the side of the board furthest from the player face him or her. The game is then played like regular checkers except that a player must pronounce the words that face him or her in any square he or she crosses or occupies. Failure to name the word results in loss of the turn. As in regular checkers, the game ends when one of the players captures all of his or her opponent's pieces.

The third procedure I'll describe is extremely brief. It is specifically

designed to illustrate the ease with which a word which is already in students' oral vocabularies might be introduced before they come across it in a selection. For this example, assume that the students in the course are seventh graders who generally read well. Assume also that they are all from upper-middle class families that entertain a lot. As a consequence of being from such a background, the students are thoroughly familiar with the spoken word hors d'oeuvre and with its meaning. They can name several hors d'oeuvres, they know which ones they like, and they would be likely to make and respond to statements such as, "What are you having for hors d'oeuvres tonight?" However, and this is a major point in the present consideration, they do not recognize the word hors d'oeuvre in print. Moreover, the irregular spelling means that phonics skills won't help students arrive at the word's pronunciation.

In such a situation, to avoid the problem of students stumbling over the word, the teacher simply writes the word hors d'oeuvre on the board and says something like, "This is the word hors d'oeuvre. It is in today's reading selection, and since it's spelled unusually, I thought I'd tell you what it is." Most students will be able to recognize the word in the future after this single experience with it. However, to be certain that students have such words permanently in their reading vocabularies, teachers might provide one brief review of words that are introduced in this way.

By way of conclusion, I wish to restate my major points and to make one additional point. The most general point I am trying to make here is that vocabulary can be taught most appropriately if one considers students'

previous knowledge of the words and ideas being taught. The points I have tried to make about teaching words that are in students' oral vocabularies are that readers of various ages and abilities need help with such words, that there are several sources for identifying these words, and that there are some specific and rather straight-forward techniques that can be used to teach these words. The additional point I wish to make is that it would make good sense for schools or districts to make every attempt to insure that all students in the school or district mastered specific minimal sets of words by specific grade levels. For example, it seems reasonable to set acquisition of the 769 Dale words as a minimal list to be acquired by the end of 7th grade and the 3000 Dale words as a minimal list to be acquired by the end of 9th grade. Note that setting such standards would not require much teaching because the vast majority of students of these levels already know these words. Note also that it would be extremely useful for teachers to know the minimal vocabulary they could expect of all students. Setting such standards could, I believe, go a long way toward insuring adequate teaching of words already in students' vocabularies. In the papers that follow, my colleagues discuss matters concerned with insuring adequate teaching of other types of vocabulary.

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A LITTLE MATTER OF SURVIVAL

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One student struggles valiantly to complete a reading assignment;another makes no pretense of even tackling the reading task. Frustration for the first; failure for the second. Concerned teachers ask, "Can't anything be done?" and distressed parents plead, "Do something!" As the academic situation becomes more desperate, it is clear that if anything is to be done, it is the classroom teacher who must do it.

What, then, can one suggest to the classroom teacher who has had no training in the field of reading instruction and who has limited funds with which to develop a program?

The first task is to identify those students who would benefit most from reading instruction. The simplest and least costly procedure is to have the student read. If each student were asked to read orally a passage of material normally assigned to the class, the teacher could easily identify those students who were having difficulty. Obviously, a child who reads word-by-word will be intimidated by a long reading task. A five-minute tape-recorded passage should provide an adequate sample. By using several tape recorders, an entire class can be recorded during a single class period. While listening to the sample, the teacher should do more than record mispronunciations, insertions, and omissions. He should also note the student's lack of phrasing ability, his problems in fluency (hesitations and repetitions),

and his failure to utilize punctuation signals.

How does the teacher organize the class in order to provide time for reading instruction? There are a number of ways. Designate one day a week as reading day. Extend an instructional unit on reading/study skills over several weeks. Schedule fifteen minutes of every class period for a reading skill activity. Any investment of time will have pay-off if the student is being instructed in material that is at his reading level. And to find the appropriate reading level, have the student read selected passages at varying levels of difficulty and note the range of material at which he can function without frustration.

How does the teacher present material designed to sharpen reading skills? One of the most successful methods is to utilize reading kits. Evelyn B. Spache states in Reading Activities for Child Involvement: "In order to meet individual differences in skill development, the teacher must have available materials on many levels and covering a wide variety of skills. The teacher-made kit is a most valuable asset.... Equipped with a skill box, the teacher can begin meeting individual needs immediately."[1] Mrs. Spache suggests that kits be designed to instruct in various skill areas: word attack, comprehension, vocabulary. In each skill area, kits may be constructed to cover many types of reading activities. For example, comprehension kits should include exercises in organizing material sequentially, in noting context clues, in identifying the main idea of a passage, in locating facts and details.

Utilizing kits allows many students to use the material at one time. If

sixty pages of material concerned with a specific skill, such as following directions, remained glued in book form, only one student could do the exercises. However, if the same sixty-page skill book were cut apart and each page mounted separately, many students could use it.

Supplies needed to assemble the kit include two copies of a student skill book, workbook, or text at each instructional level; one copy of a teacher's edition for self-correction; cardboard for mounting the lessons; acetate folders or laminating film for a protective cover; masking tape; wax-base markers or water-soluble markers; and an attractive box to house the materials. Individual lessons should be color coded as to skill activity or as to difficulty level. Adhesive signal dots, magic marker lines drawn on the top of each exercise, mystic tape strips, or different colored backing sheets for the lessons -- any of these can be used to code. Because kits provide much material for many students with a minimal investment for supplies, they are very attractive to teachers who have limited funds available.

Another inexpensive way of acquiring instructional materials is to contact local printers and ask for their card-weight cut-offs. These pieces are usually discarded after a printing order is trimmed to size. The discards make excellent drill cards. Smaller ones can be used for presenting individual words. Larger strips work well for practicing the reading of words in phrases.

Thus far, we have considered how to identify the student, how to schedule time for instruction, and how to provide material for students to use. The

next question is "What material?"

The reading teacher has two basic concerns: Can the child (1) read the words -- decoding, and (2) generate an "understanding" from words presented in phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and longer passages -- comprehending. Comprehension involves both literal and interpretive meaning.

Excellent background material for the teacher is available in publications of the International Reading Association. Request a catalogue from IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware 19711. Browsing in college bookstores can be profitable. Here one can find such texts as Lou E. Burmeister's Reading Strategies for Secondary School Teachers, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1974. This is a good, general text that is especially of value to anyone who is looking for practical classroom activities. Or one might find specific teacher aids, such as Sensible Phonics by Thaddeus M. Trela, Fearon Publishers, Inc., 6 Davis Drive, Belmont, California 94002. This inexpensive little volume is recommended as a practical guide to learning phonics.

An excellent volume found during the writer's bookstore browsing time is one that the English teacher, the reading teacher, or the English/Reading teacher would find very useful. It is Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary, Edgar Dale and Joseph O'Rourke, Field Educational Publications, Inc., 1971. A sampling of chapter headings suggests the scope of the material: "Context Clues;" "Synonyms, Antonyms, Homonyms;" " Word Origins;" "Prefixes, Suffixes, Roots;" "Pronunciation and Spelling;" "Semantics;" "Figures of Speech;" "Literature;" "Using the Dictionary;" "Using Word Games." Selected exercises

are appropriate to junior high school level while others are appropriate to the college level. This text is well worth the cost.

A resource for locating other material is Teaching Efficient Reading Skills by Lyle L. Miller, Burgess Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414. Although this is a 1972 publication, it provides a valuable list of resources available up to that time. It also contains a good list of techniques the teacher might use. A second, more recent publication is the 1974 edition of Good Reading for Poor Readers, George D. Spache, Garrard Publishing Company, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Chapter 7 is a lengthy annotated listing of textbooks, workbooks, and games. Instructional range of materials listed is from pre-primer to college level.

For materials to use with students, the list is endless. Those suggested below are relatively inexpensive and adapt well to kit construction.

SKILLBOOSTER SERIES. Modern Curriculum Press, Cleveland. Examples: Increasing Comprehension, Working with Facts and Details, Organizing Information.

SPECIFIC SKILL SERIES, Richard A. Boning. Barnell Loft, Ltd., Rockville Centre, N.Y. Examples of titles: Using the Context, Locating the Answer, Getting the Main Idea, Drawing Conclusions. For most secondary students, Levels C through Advanced would be appropriate.

STRATEGIES FOR READING SERIES, H. Alan Robinson, et al. Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Rockleigh, N. J. 07647. Published in 1978, this material is available at a single reading level. Individual titles: Strategies for Reading Sentences,

Strategies for Reading Words in Context, Strategies for Reading Paragraphs, Strategies for Reading Long Selections.

READ BETTER-LEARN MORE, Theodore Clymer. Ginn & Co., Box 2649, Columbus, Ohio 43216. The text addresses itself to reading skills in the content areas. Levels are designated as Book A, Book B, and Book C.

GO SERIES. Scholastic Book Services, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 07632. Two levels are available -- Grade 7 and Grade 8. This series is also concerned with reading in the content areas.

McCALL CRABBS STANDARD TEST LESSONS IN READING. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, N. Y., NY 10027. For building kits, order specimen sets (@ $.80) of the levels most beneficial to your students. Book A (very elementary and the material bores most secondary students), Book B (useful for disabled readers who lack confidence), Book C (a good starting point for most students in reading), Book D, and Book E. Answer sheets are provided in the specimen sets. Scores on each lesson convert to G-scores (grade-level scores). Compare the averages of each set of ten lessons to demonstrate growth in reading competence.

PAL PAPERBACK KITS. Xerox Education Publications, 1250 Fairwood Avenue, P.O. Box 444, Columbus, Ohio 43216. Several kits are available. These materials are useful for recreational reading. Students enjoy the stories.

Finally, if the budget for a reading program is a generous one, a very fine full-year individualized program can be designed with materials published by Readers Digest Services, Inc., Educational Division, Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Since one program reinforces another, a purchase plan covering several years would provide a solid basic reading program. If schools go this route, the first component to purchase is POINT 31. As students gain in reading strength, they move into the TOP-PICS component which can be used as a separate entity or in conjunction with the READERS WORKSHOP component. The third component one might wish to examine is the SKILL BUILDERS series. One would be well-advised to examine the publication literature. POINT 31 has consumable activity books; but by using the kit format, only two or three need be purchased. Although the tapes are very fine, it is possible to order several copies of each magazine (there are six) as a beginning. The magazine selections have a high interest value for secondary students.

These, then, are examples of materials the teachers might use to "do something." Whatever one does will be better than doing nothing. For many of our reading disabled students, getting reading help is truly a matter of academic survival. And the teacher who wants to, really can help.

DECIPHERING THE UNKNOWN CODE

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"Leave him alone; he'll grow out of it." "If he tried harder, he could do better." "If he really wants to read, he can; he reads Popular Mechanics and Playboy." "Someday he is going to get it all together and really begin to get motivated." "Sometimes, something just snaps, and all of a sudden they begin to read. He just isn't ready; he just doesn't want to read now."

These statements have been said about every retarded reader. Every parent of a child with reading problems has heard them all several times. Besides all of these descriptions, the student with reading problems has been saddled with labels like "dyslexia," "minimal cerebral disfunction," "learning disabled," "specific learning disability and behavior problem." He was not originally a behavior problem, but after several years of frustration at not being able to read like most of the other students in his class, he indeed may become a behavior problem. Sometimes the student who is unable to achieve in the basic skills of reading, writing and spelling, the main subjects which are taught during the first three years of school, develops a combination of withdrawal, daydreaming and aggression. It is easy to accuse him of inattention, lack of motivation, to call him an "underachiever."

If a student has not mastered the basic skills of reading, writing and spelling by the end of grade three, he often continues through his school

career with little or no progress in those skills. Many graduate from high school with third grade reading and spelling skills, unable to read the newspaper, magazines or job applications. With our policies of passing students through school with sometimes little competency except ability and willingness to fill a chair regularly, this is not surprising.

Many students are appearing in junior and senior high school with a wide range of reading problems from mild to severe. The student may be unable to read anything, or he may have fair decoding ability but very poor comprehension skills. Some of the typical reading errors we may find, when the student reads aloud,are the omission of little words, substitution of words, repeated repetitions, sequencing problems, reading letters in a word or words in a sentence in different order than that in which they are printed, vowel confusions (bid for bed) and reversals (was for saw).

The language is a strange code. If a student has trouble with the basic skills, his native language may be a foreign language. He may have to be taught decoding and encoding as though they were an unknown language, because except for the oral language, it is. There are many different degrees and kinds of reading problems from simple to complex, and solving them is rarely simple.

The teacher who often is called upon to solve these language problems is the English teacher.

In the 1930s phonics as a method of teaching language, reading and spelling was dropped in favor of the whole word, limited vocabulary method. The results of research studies at the time had shown that many students

could learn to read quickly with the whole word, sight method. Since this method was less time consuming to teach, in its initial presentation, most reading programs moved away from phonics to the new sight method. Incidental phonics and a few rules for spelling were still retained and taught. Systematic phonics presentation went out of vogue. Enter the basal reader, sight method of reading. It was faster and was going to speed up the whole educational process.

In fact, over half of the students taught with this method did read at grade level or above by fourth grade. But by the 1960s various studies began to appear that showed that 20% or more of our students were retarded readers, a year or more behind their grade placement level in school. We had a sizable number of reading cripples who by high school were severely retarded in reading. Was the lack of phonics as reading instruction responsible?

Reading programs and curriculums were developed to cure the problem. Most of them were still the whole word, sight method, however. Incidental phonics for spelling was inserted to placate the phonics advocates.

The newer programs were basically simple. The teachers manuals were the guides. In the beginning, present a group of vocabulary words to the class. Teach them to read the words. Drill the class briefly -- not too long; they would get bored. Learn the words in isolation, then present a story containing those words, plus the other words learned in previous lessons. Have the class read the story orally in the lower grades, silently as soon as they have shown reasonable proficiency reading aloud. Answer

some questions at the end of the story for comprehension. If the students did not get the right answers, discuss. Many students were doing well and reading adequately, but there were still a noticeable number who were not reading as one would expect, considering their contributions to other areas of school performance.

Next, the linguistics method of reading presentation began to gain popularity. This is a word pattern program, with more drill and grouping words according to their graphic patterns: day, say, gay, play, gray; cold, bold, mold, fold. This method has merit and is still useful for some aspects of language training, even in a systematic phonics approach. Drill and reinforcement is very necessary for some students. It takes many more repetitions of a new concept for some students than for others. If the necessary reinforcement and review is not employed, mastery is never achieved. Drill is not bad in itself. When more than 90% accuracy is achieved, it should be discontinued, of course.

All during the 1940s and 1950s and into the 1960s the battle raged, not without humor. Some teachers taught their phonics literally behind closed doors and drawn curtains so as not to antagonize administrations who had mandated the "new and better" reading systems.

But many teachers were still aware that in spite of high hopes for some of the new reading methods, there were too many of their students, with average intelligence, who were just not reading very well. English teachers were especially sensitive to this. One of the answers to that was more

lectures, labs and less reading. If it was hard for them to read, don't make them. This is a self fulfilling prophecy of doom. The less a student reads, the less chance he has of improving his reading skills, whatever methods of instruction in reading are used. To improve his reading skills the student must read. In fact, many parents with no skills in teaching reading whatever have helped poor readers improve by just listening to them read aloud and correcting their mistakes.

Studies have been done by all sorts of people -- the psychologists, the administrators, the curriculum developers, the classroom teachers, even parents. Many indicate that phonics must be reintroduced as a staple in every reading program. It must be at least one of the methods employed for those who do not pick up reading quickly.

The reading specialists have long been established in the teaching hierarchy. They take the severe reading problems and now they are getting increasing pressure from mainstream teachers to solve all of the reading problems. But the state and federal guidelines prescribe a limited student load for these specialists, so only the most severe reading problems get attention. There are many minor problem readers who will get nothing unless from the English teacher.

Back to the phonics! If that is what the experts say, let's do it. The only problem with phonics as one of the methods of language instruction and remediation is that many teachers have not learned phonics themselves. The only comprehensive phonics manual is so formidable that it is hardly self

teaching. The text, Remedial Training for Children with Specific Disability in Reading, Spelling, and Penmanship by Anna Gillingham and Bessie W. Stillman is profound in its scope and a bit overwhelming to even the most motivated and intelligent teacher. It is best to use such a text in a practicum course in the multisensory phonics method of language presentation. Demonstrations and supervised practice teaching are almost mandatory.

Gillingham and Stillman did not create a new discipline exactly. They systematized and organized the presentation of language from the simple to the complex. They synthesized language development using phonics. The progress is from the single letter in isolation to the letters synthesized into syllables and words. The units are taught in isolation, put together into syllables or short words and drilled until mastered, in isolation and small units of prefixes, roots and suffixes. Then the parts are put together into more difficult words. Where the authors differ and depart from other phonics approaches is in their multisensory approach and emphasis on multisensory drill from parts to whole, simple to complex.

Learning the structure and rules of the English language requires more than a manual for self teaching. Since phonics has been largely absent from many teacher training courses, even at the elementary level, there are many certified and tenured teachers with little knowledge of it. Colleges and universities involved in training teachers would do well to make sure that their education departments offer at least one course in systematic phonics. It should certainly be included as one of the methods of instruction for

the teaching of reading. Teachers cannot be faulted for not using systematic phonics in their reading, language arts and English classes when it was not part of their education programs during their years of preparation to become a teacher.

One example of the emphasis on multisensory phonics for language remediation, which could be used by the classroom teacher, is more oral reading to insure accuracy of decoding. If decoding is very defective, the student should be referred to the reading specialist, but more of this type of teaching could also be done in English and other subjects. Diagnosis of reading problems could be made by perceptive English teachers and other subject matter teachers, without elaborate testing necessary. Remediation of many of the minor problems can be done in the mainstream with more accurate oral reading by all students. If a student is unable to read orally, this can be very embarrassing; but he can then at least be identified for special help.

Many remedial programs urge the student to follow under the words with his finger or pencil until he becomes an accurate decoder. This employs the kinesthetic modality and helps tracking from left to right, avoids skipping words, inserting words and substituting words. Following with finger or pencil also helps to insure tracking in a smooth fashion without jumping around, which is another typical pattern in poor readers.

Once accuracy of decoding has been achieved, word for word oral reading is not used except occasionally for checking that mastery is still there. The instructor need not fear that following with the finger or pencil will

intrude too long. Studies have shown that students will stop this technique when they no longer need it, but they will be able to use it again on difficult passages in future reading.

Oral reading and following with the finger or pencil combine all of the sensual pathways of learning simultaneously. These are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile. The student sees the print (visual), hears the oral reading (auditory), and uses the muscles and touch (kinestheic-tactile). Multisensory learning is thought to be the most efficient and quickest method of learning by many experts in the field of learning.

It is especially helpful to students with language disabilities to be given the multisensory phonics system of spelling remediation. Many students with minimal learning disabilities have mainly spelling problems. Memorizing lists of spelling words may be impossible because the visual memory of the student may not be good enough to maintain the whole word and write it correctly. Also, longer words cannot be maintained except for short periods. After the test, some students will not be able to spell the word correctly the next day, certainly not the next week. But an English teacher or other mainstream teacher can give the poor speller prefixes and roots to be drilled orally and tested in writing for proficiency. Breaking the spelling into small units and putting them together into words will be very helpful for many of those with spelling problems.

Multisensory spelling could be the oral sounding of the units while simultaneously writing the word. Prefixes, roots and suffixes must be taught

after the sound symbol relationship of the individual letters and sounds has been mastered. Breaking the words into smaller units of roots and affixes is an efficient way of teaching spelling for all students. Everyone does not have to learn to read by the phonetic method; however it does not harm anyone.

It seems a valid conclusion that systematic phonics should be one of the methods used in language presentation and remediation. Reading cannot be left only to reading specialists; it must be taught by all of the mainstream teachers, especially the English teachers. The problem is too vast to be cured by the remedial reading teachers or SLD specialists. It would be helpful for all teacher training courses to offer phonics courses for certification and continuing education. Elementary and secondary certification programs should require the study of several of the methods of teaching reading.

THE CONCORDIA READING CONFERENCE -- PLEASANT REMINISCING

Dorothy R. Johnson
Concordia College
Moorhead, Minnesota

They have come to the Concordia Reading Conference from everywhere -- from all fifty states, even Hawaii and Alaska, from five Canadian Provinces, even up on the Yukon, and from the Panama Canal Zone -- these teachers, counsellors, administrators and librarians concerned about children's reading. They have come, over 6,000 of them, for twenty-three years, and now a twenty-fourth, paying their own expenses most of the time and taking a week or more of their summer vacation, because they have been concerned about children's reading.

What has drawn them to Concordia College at Moorhead, Minnesota, all these years? Most of the credit must go to the cooperation of the world-renowned specialists in reading who have made up the faculty, who have taken time from a busy schedule, and who have come for a modest honorarium because they, too, have been concerned about children's reading. Along with them could be named a hundred or more classroom teachers who have aided the Conference year after year as discussion leaders because of their concern.

It all started back in 1955 when school people were groping for answers to questions about "why Johnny can't read" and pushing those questions beyond the elementary school into the junior-senior high school. Perhaps the time was ripe for a stimulating reading experience beyond regular education courses. The first Conference with its theme Discovering and Helping Poor

Readers was highlighted by Dr. Frances Triggs, Chairman of the Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, Inc. Emphasis was placed on testing of students on all levels from kindergarten to college. Two hundred fifty educators came, convincing Dr. Walther Prausnitz, Conference Chairman as well as English Department Chairman, and me, Director of the Reading Service, that another Conference was a "must." That attendance convinced the Concordia administration, also, and we were on our way.

Dr. Emmett Betts, known throughout the world for his Pennsylvania reading clinic, was our choice for the second Conference. And he came! He was a good choice as he and his entourage drew nearly 400 educators for the meetings, now extended to five days. Headlines on the front page of the Chicago Daily Tribune for Wednesday, June 20, 1956, read "Blames Poor Reading on Faulty Teaching." Dr. Betts attacked the "lack of practical experience on the part of professors who have the job of teaching teachers." Rebuttals came from all over. He was very "practical" for two days of the five in doing psychological testing with a non-reading fourth grader from a Moorhead school and in trying some teaching techniques to get the boy reading. It was a fascinating, tear-bringing educational experience for the audience -- a sort of breakthrough which teachers were seeking. Dr. Betts, of course, was back for a second year with another 300 educators in attendance, with more publicity for him and the college.

The highlight of the week for the fourth year was Dr. Mary Austin, Professor in the Graduate School of Education, co-author of an outstanding

book on educational research, The Torchlighters, and a person so greatly respected in the reading field that she soon was elected president of the International Reading Association.

With the Conference successfully launched, the chairmanship passed from Dr. Prausnitz to me, where it has continued. Dr. Prausnitz became Conference Coordinator. Now the decision was made to organize the program with a different reading authority for each of the five days. Dr. Austin was back along with Minnesota's own Dr. Guy Bond. A banquet was added as a Thursday evening special, with Dr. Matilda Bailey as a speaker for three or four of the ensuing banquets. What beautiful stories we had from her -- what laughter and tears!

Many schools in Minnesota were starting special reading programs around 1960, and several of their supervisors or consultants were invited to head discussion groups which met three times during the five days of sessions. A Monday evening reception for registrants became part of the program. A student panel was added to the closing Friday session. And how those students aroused their audience, for unknowingly they pinpointed what speakers had been suggesting all week!

May Hill Arbuthnot of children's literature fame was with us the next year for all of Thursday and stayed to hear Ed Fulker, a government reading specialist, at the banquet. Suddenly she looked out the window of the banquet room, and there, surprisingly on time, was her train at the depot below. She ran with her coat and ticket and I with her suitcase just fast enough so that

the brakeman grabbed her arm and hoisted her on with the suitcase as the train was pulling out for Chicago where she was to speak the next morning. She was delightful!

Dr. Bill Sheldon, Director of the Reading Center at Syracuse University came -- in fact, five or six times, a real favorite. He was an International Reading Association President, also. He did cause us some excitement, but like all of the speakers he was dependable. He missed a plane connection at ten o'clock in Minneapolis one night when he was to speak at the Conference at nine o'clock the next morning. I was just leaving for the airport to meet him when his call came saying that he had already inquired about getting a private plane. I met him at midnight. I meet every late afternoon or evening plane which brings a speaker. How could I sleep not knowing whether or not the program was set for the next morning?

All of these reading specialists seem to enjoy excellent health. We have had only two last minute cancellations. One came because of a death in the family of a speaker. Fortunately, Dr. Mildred Wittick, who had been a speaker for the previous day, was able to stay over. She had brought extra materials along and by staying up most of the night filled in with the same speech titles as the program had indicated. The other cancellation was really last-minute as Dr. Robert Carlson's five o'clock plane was delayed by a rain and wind storm. The banquet was at six-thirty. Who could we find locally who could get ready in an hour and a half? Dr. Prausnitz knew a librarian who had been giving some entertaining talks, and he obligingly said

"yes." The banquet went on, and we were just eating our dessert when in walked Bob Carlson. Dick Waddington, the librarian, again obligingly -- really relieved -- gave up the speaker's place, and Bob Carlson gave his usual excellent talk. (Needless to say, we gave that obliging librarian a little honorarium, too.)

Another repeater for us was Dr. George Spache of the University of Florida at Gainesville and another International Reading Association President. He was always a stimulating person for the first day of the Conference. He had always felt that his role as a speaker was to be provocative; that provocativeness kept discussion groups intensively discussing all week.

There were many other famous reading authorities and one-time International Reading Association Presidents at the Conferences: Dr. Theodore Clymer, University of Minnesota; Dr. Nila B. Smith, New York University; Dr. Nancy Larrick, author and lecturer; Dr. Morton Botel, University of Pennsylvania; Dr. A. Sterl Artley, University of Missouri; Dr. Helen Huus, University of Missouri; Dr. Leo Fay, University of Indiana; Dr. Constance McCullough, California State University; Dr. William K. Durr, Michigan State University; and Dr. H. Alan Robinson, Hofstra University. There were I.R.A. Board members, also: Dr. Helen K. Smith, University of Miami and Brother Leonard Courtney, St. Mary's College, friends of mine from days at the University of Chicago. Dr. Alton Raygor and Dr. Robert Schreiner from the University of Minnesota should be mentioned, along with Dr. Margaret Early,

Syracuse University, a past president of the National Council of Teachers of English.

As the years passed, one could note changes in the content of the subject matter of the program. Early Conferences seemed to emphasize diagnosis of reading difficulties and causes of failure. There was interest mainly in the gifted child and the slow child or the child especially handicapped in reading. In later Conferences the emphasis seemed to shift to correction of reading difficulties, to Reading as a Continuing Process (one program theme) in the regular classroom, to practical ideas for the classroom teacher. Some of these changes came, of course, with the recognition by the schools of the necessity of bringing reading instruction into the junior-senior high schools.

Attendance at the Conferences has held at about three hundred registrants year after year. Many of the people have been back five or six times. One is pleased to note the increasing number of young teachers in attendance now and the increasing number of junior-senior high school teachers since many of the schools have new programs. About one-third of the registrants are from secondary schools and the other two-thirds from elementary schools.

The Conference is enhanced each year, also, by approximately one-hundred Canadian teachers who attend. They are always so enthusiastic, so dedicated. The American and Canadian teachers in the dormitories have enlightening discussions until the wee hours every night of the week.

Canadian speakers have added to the programs, too: Dr. Marion Jenkinson, University of Alberta; Dr. Edward Summers, University of British Columbia;

Dr. John Downing, University of Victoria; Dr. Frank Smith, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. They have brought with them studies in comparative reading and in psycholinguistics.

Exhibitors of current books and reading materials have added greatly to the value of the Conferences. For the last twenty years there have always been from twenty to thirty representatives in attendance. Exhibits are placed in the large halls of the building where the meetings are held so that registrants may visit them before and after meetings and during coffee breaks. They have liked the second day of the week as How-to-do-it sessions have been included in the program. Three times during that day the representatives who wish to show their books or materials or demonstrate their use are given opportunity to do so in various rooms on campus. Registrants are given free choice to attend where they desire.

School visits have become a part of the program in the last five years, also. They are usually scheduled for the last half of the Friday morning session. Mr. John Jess, a junior high school English teacher who is in charge of the Moorhead Public Schools Summer Session, gives an informative talk explaining the summer organization, and then two bus loads of elementary teachers and administrators go to visit two of the elementary schools where classes are being held. The high school teachers take a bus to Fargo South High where Nancy Jordheim, a reading teacher there and a Conference discussion leader, shows them the reading department and explains the program.

For the past eighteen years, one undergraduate credit in Reading Methods

has been available to teachers upon satisfactory completion of work assigned in conjunction with the Conference. For the past four years, two or three graduate credits have been available through the Department of Education at North Dakota State University. Teachers are required to submit a project in addition to attending the sessions during the week of the Conference. Dr. James Coomber of the Concordia Reading Service is in charge of the graduate work.

Organizing and running a Conference is work, of course, but it is very rewarding work. The speakers and discussion leaders are surely getting the "reading word" out to a lot of people. The registrants are dedicated souls. The workers at the college in the food service, custodial service, and administration have cooperated wonderfully. And then, a Chairman couldn't do it without the assistance of a Conference Coordinator; after Dr. Prausnitz there was Jeanine Moravec in the English Department, and when she left for the library, Sandra Johnson, the English Department secretary and a Concordia English graduate, took over.

The Twenty-Fourth Annual Conference on Reading, June 12-16, 1978, with the theme Reading: How, Why, and What will follow the program format of the past few years with additions as indicated previously. Speakers are emphasizing the areas of vocabulary, comprehension and rate. The Conference Faculty includes Brother Leonard Courtney, Dr. John Downing, Dr. Margaret Early, and Dr. Helen K. Smith, all mentioned previously, and Dr. Walter MacGinitie, Columbia University, Immediate Past President of the International Reading Association.

Hummmm -- twenty-four years? Is it possible? And there will be a twenty-fifth! Maybe we are making a long life record for a Reading Conference.

4:30

Patricia M. Fergus
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

For

Five hours

Thirty minutes

Twenty-two seconds

I

Prodded brains,

Squeezed hearts,

Twisted wills.

Now

Silence floods

The tiny cubicle;

Knotted nerves untied

I

Slip away,

Thoughts burdening,

Spirits burgeoning.

PUT YOURSELF INTO THE POEM

Jeannine Bohlmeyer
Bethel College
St. Paul, Minnesota

That poetry is prose complicated by a lot of fancy decoration tacked on is a notion many students firmly hold. A college freshman course in literary forms beginning with a formalist critical approach convinces some students that a poem is as much form as content and that figurative language is not merely padding but has a basic unity and organization integral to and essential to the poem. But still some students remain skeptics, some loudly and overtly, some quietly playing along with the expected analyses but secretly doubtful.

Adding the sociological approach to criticism sends some scurrying for background materials, believing that anything remotely connected to the author or the topic is legitimate filler for a theme. The concept that background is relevant only as it illumines the form and content of the poem is as difficult to present convincingly as the concept that form is meaningful in the first place.

In the attempt to provide students with some tools for making their critical judgments instead of relying on borrowed critical opinion or resorting to the long-lamed assertion, "I know what I like," one kind of exercise has proved especially useful. Students read "An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum" by Stephen Spender. Class discussion -- using formalist and sociological criticism -- took note of the social conditions in England at

the time Spender wrote, took into account Spender's political views and the actions they led to, and traced major metaphors and their linking to other metaphors. In the first stanza, Spender makes vivid the plight of slum children by comparisons to ruined nature and undesirable animals. He sets up a pattern of alienation from the joy and beauty of nature and from the excitement of world and books. The heredity of the children is not life but death.

> Far far from gusty waves, these children's faces
> Like rootless weeds the torn hair round their paleness.
> The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-
> seeming boy with rat's eyes. The stunted unlucky heir
> Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,
> His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class
> One unnoted, mild and young: his eyes live in a dream
> Of squirrels' game, in tree room, other than this.

Analysis of Spender's poem followed a fairly standard pattern of classroom discussion and provided the basis for the next assignment, the one which made the point about unity of metaphor both with itself and social background. Students were asked to think about what would happen if the poem became "A College Classroom in a Suburb." They spent half an hour in groups of four discussing the differences the changed title would make and paraphrasing the poem to illustrate the changes. Most groups did not finish a complete paraphrase, but they did set up dominant metaphors growing out of suburban rather than slum settings.

Most groups emphasized affluence and materialist, packaged culture.

> Far, far from gutsy waves, these fiction faces
> Like shining silk the herbal-scented hair round their "Cover Girl"
> faces.

> The tall girl with weighed down eyelashes. The slender
> young man with bifocal eyes. The stunted unlucky heir
> Of packaged ideas, reciting his favorite T.V. commercial.
> Amidst the blind classroom,
> One young man, with dreaming eyes
> Watches a playful squirrel romp.
>
> Far, far from gutsy waves, these fiction faces
> Like neon bulbs the pampered hair around their shallowness
> A tall girl with a smeared on smile, a slender
> Young man with bifocal eyes, a T.V. retard
> With a thirteen channel mind and channel unreality
> Is playing all the time. At back of the Bright class,
> Ignored, with touseled hair, and quiet face, and quick eyes
> That cried for dirty city streets and admired a hazel brush flower.

Other groups, also emphasizing privilege, were less cynical and more nostalgic for home.

> Gathered from gutsy waves, suburban streets, and middleclass homes,
> The faces of these youths
> Like polished apples enveloped by the latest hairstyles
> The tall girl with such a studious air.
> The jovial boy with laughing eyes. Gifted heirs
> Of a bright future, they recite with just enough nervousness
> What they have studied the night before. At the front of the class
> One who has come from the other side of the tracks and has
> unbelievably made it
> Listens with clean ears.
>
> Far far from the joy of the hearth, the plastic childless faces
> Like Madison Avenue productions
> The tall girl with the haughtily-held head. The All-
> American boy with dull eyes. The bored unlucky heir
> Of healthy bank accounts, reciting a father's gnarled disease,
> His lesson from his desk. At the back of the class
> One unnoted, sensuous and young, his eyes live in an awareness
> Of creation and progression other than this.

Still another group, apparently tireder than the others, chose weariness for their unified metaphor.

Far, far from reality these students' faces
Like wind beaten saplings and groomed hair round their sleeplessness
The tall girl with her weighed down head. The dictionary
laden boy with lion's eyes.

Groups consistently preserved Spender's contrast of the "One unnoted," finding someone to contrast with the prevailing mold of the group.

While none of the paraphrases resulted in a poem, the exercise did indicate that basic concepts of unified figurative language and relationship of diction to background made at least enough sense to be usable. The socializing effect of group cooperation on a project and the realization of privileged personal backgrounds are harder to assess. The exercise, carried out by college freshmen, might be modified for most age groups, perhaps with teacher-guided discussion for an elementary group, considering the word changes necessary to give a poem a different setting. At any level, it should increase insight into the nature of language and into the particular precision of the words in a poem.

1977 BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Richard Beach
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis

Norine Odland
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis

We want to thank Louisa Smith, doctoral candidate in children's literature, for her reviews of adolescent novels. Readers who would like an annotated list of a large number of 1977 titles, New Books for Young Readers, should send their names and addresses to Norine Odland, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 136 Burton Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

Books for Children

Anno, Mitsumasa. ANNO'S COUNTING BOOK. illus. by author. Crowell, 1977. unpaged. $5.95

Primary age children studied and restudied this one. Primitive, Grandma Moses type illustrations build in detail as the months pass and we count from one to twelve. Trees and flowers grow, clouds form, houses spring up, and a town grows as Anno's intriguing water-colors take us from season to season. Truly a picturebook, capturing the essence of counting. One of the year's best. 4-7.

Andrews, F. Emerson. NOBODY COMES TO DINNER. illus. by Lydia Dabcovich. Little, 1977. 32 pp. $5.95.

This is a must for all elementary collections. Oscar had been having a bad day, and it took nobody to make it better. Cleverly written on two levels; even adults find themselves chuckling as nobody entertains them. 7-11

Branscum, Robbie. THE SAVING OF P.S. illus. by Glen Rounds. Doubleday, 1977. 127 pp. $5.96.

P. S. is short for Priscilla Sue who seems to have been added to the already large family as an afterthought. Her mother died birthing her. P. S. has cared for her father, Preacher Blue, for twelve years and reacts strongly when her father courts and marries the pretty widow Cora Lee. The humorous text and Arkansas dialect are punctuated by Glen Rounds' ink drawings which offer comic relief to a sad but happy ending tale. 10 up.

Bulla, Clyde Robert. THE BEAST OF LOR. illus. by Ruth Sanderson. Crowell, 1977. 54 pp. $6.50.

Clyde Robert Bulla recreates with the magic of his pen another era for us. This time he takes us back to the first Roman invasion of England,

to a boy driven from his home that has been burned by witch-haters and an elephant that has come from Rome. Together, the two abandoned creatures not only survive, but learn that Lud is to be a king. Splendidly told as only Bulla can and deftly illustrated in pen and ink. 7-11.

Cameron, Eleanor. JULIA AND THE HAND OF GOD. E. P. Dutton, 1977. 168 pp. $6.95.
Julia is a spirited young girl who sets out to find answers and reasons. She meets the resistance of adults whose attitudes puzzle her. Set in San Francisco about 1920, the realistic story precedes Room Made of Windows by the same author. Conversations and actions are vivid and believable, some episodes are humorous, and the style is smooth. 10 and up.

dePaola, Tomie. HELGA'S DOWRY. illus. by author. Harcourt, 1977. unpaged.
Humor abounds in a story of the troll who makes her choices wisely. Pictures, imaginative and stylized, add to the funny story. Really works with children from 5 to 10.

Foster, Genevieve. THE YEAR OF THE FLYING MACHINE. 1903. illus. by author. Scribners, 1977. 93 pp. $6.95.
In her usual fascinating fashion, Genevieve Foster depicts the important events around the world at a given period in history. With the Wright Brothers and the development of their airplane as the focus, she covers the first decade of the 20th century. She describes the lives and contributions of Marconi, Lenin, Perry, Theodore Roosevelt, Mao Tse-tung, the Curies. Well written, interesting perspective on history.

Holland, Isabelle. ALAN AND THE ANIMAL KINGDOM. Lippincott, 1977. 191 pp. $6.95.
All ingredients of a good story are here in realism with a touch of magic. Alan tries desperately, even foolishly, to conceal his great aunt's death because he wants to protect his pets. Plot develops to convey feelings to readers without telling how the characters feel. Told from Alan's point of view and does not depart into an adult version of didacticism. Excellent. 10-up.

Livingston, Myra Cohn, ed. O FABJOUS DAY! POETRY FOR HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS. Atheneum, 1977. 205 pp. $6.95.
This fresh and inspiring volume of poetry originally written for special occasions is a marvelous statement on the process of distilling our thoughts and feelings to record and commemorate times to be remembered. Endless possibilities for classroom discussion, readings and projects. Superb addition to school and family libraries. All ages.

Thomas, Jane Resh. ELIZABETH CATCHES A FISH. illus. by Joseph Duffy. Seabury, 1977. 32 pp. $6.95.
All readers can empathize with Elizabeth as she gets her desired fishing gear for her birthday and goes on to catch the memorable first fish -- a four pound bass. Beth Thomas and Duffy are from Minnesota. 6-9.

Books for Adolescents

Bredes, Don. HARD FEELINGS. Atheneum, 1977; Bantam, 1978.
In the tradition of Catcher in the Rye, A Separate Peace, Stop-Time, and others, this novel plays out the theme of a male adolescent's initiation into the world. While it never transcends a chauvinistic perspective, it does pick up culturally where these novels ended in the 50's and shows Bernie, the 16-year-old protagonist, coping with a range of complex and puzzling experiences common to adolescents of the 60's and 70's -- open attitudes towards sex, strains in the family structure, and a general sense of uneasiness about the future. Bernie seems a much more contemporary figure than Holden Caulfield. He is also less mature and cosmopolitan, living in a sheltered, affluent suburb on Long Island. His main concerns are focused on his own wants and needs rather than on larger social problems. He is particularly interested in sex, but has a difficult time maintaining several different relationships at the same time. He is also tortured by a psychotic peer, Richard, who keeps threatening him. His alcoholic parents don't seem very helpful; so, bewildered by a maze of problems, he takes off for Cleveland to stay with relatives. There he is befriended by a black girl and her brother who, in their worldly manner, give him some psychological support. Returning to New York, he works out his problems and seems to have reached some clearer sense of self. The strength and appeal of this novel is Bredes' ear for adolescent dialogue and perceptions. The scenes of Bernie and his friend going out on a late-night, hell-raising binge ring true. The descriptions of Bernie's fumbling sexual encounters are both witty and pathetic. Unfortunately, it is this very asset -- the language, which is often quite explicit about sex -- that may be objectionable to many and prevent the book from being easily available for students.

Houston, James. FROZEN FIRE. Atheneum, 1977.
This novel ought to appeal to both junior and senior high school people for various reasons. It is an adventure story of the first dimension with a triumph for fortitude, brotherhood, and ingenuity with the added ingredient of knowledge of two separate cultures. In a way, Frozen Fire shares the elements of all good journey stories without the unnecessary sacrifice of a loved one to reach manhood. Incorporated into Houston's tight and

exquisite prose are also the contrasts between the Eskimo culture and the superimposed American military culture, which does not understand the value of the Eskimo culture, the contrasts between the dreamer father and the realist son, and the contrasts between the protagonists' views of life, each valuable. I could see this read in conjunction with Julia of the Wolves, another Arctic survival story. The authenticity of the landscape and the Eskimo life is enough to recommend the book. Young people will read it, however, for the plot line.

Katz, Jane B. ed. I AM THE FIRE OF TIME. E. P. Dutton, 1977.
This is the first anthology published of writings by Native American women. It contains a wide range of selections -- songs, prayers, autobiographical recollections, poems, stories, oral history -- that are well edited with clear, concise background notes and a lot of contemporary writing. The strengths, suffering, loves and fears of these women's lives is dramatized through their writing. Here is Donna Whitewing writing about August 24, 1963 -- 1:00 A.M.: Omaha: "Heavy breathing fills all my chamber/ Sinister trucks prowl/ down dim-lit alleyways.../ Here I am!/ A portion of some murky design./ Writing because I cannot sleep,/ because I could die here." Young readers will be particularly interested in the selections referring to life in Minnesota. To quote again, this time, Winifred Jourdain from Minneapolis, talking about the White Earth Reservation: "But they tried to make us white, to give us the white culture, to integrate us. We were never allowed to talk our own language. Very few of the children today speak Ojibwe...."

Knudson, R. R. ZANBANGER. Harper and Row, 1977.
This follow-up novel to Zanballer, (Dell, 1974) dramatizes the issues involved in the question, should female athletes compete against males? Zan Hagen, an excellent basketball player,becomes disgusted with the coach of the girls' basketball team because she receives much more help from the coach of the male team. She rejects the self-imposed inferiority complex of the girls' team and is bounced from the girls' team, so she begins working out with the male team. She learns a lot of fundamentals quickly and wants to become a member of the team. The other team members and school officials object, citing a school regulation barring females from male teams. Zan and her friend, Rinehart, challenge that regulation in court. The ensuing trial brings out most of the arguments of the debate, arguments such as those used in the recent hearing concerning a female Burnsville swimmer who wanted to be on the male swim team: that females are physiologically different, that females could jeopardize the team's opportunity to win, that females should stay on female teams, and, on the other side, that females should not be discriminated against or "restricted" and therefore should at least be given the right to try out

for a team. The judge rules in favor of Zan and orders try-outs; Zan makes the team. A number of opponents forfeit rather than play. The team pulls out of a losing record and begins to win with Zan as an effective sub. She gains the respect of other team members and the team goes on to win the championship. I was a little uncomfortable finding these issues in the context of a traditional sports novel in which the main character always leads the team on to victory in the final championship game, scoring the winning points. This can reinforce the "winning is all" attitude that works against breaking down sex barriers. On the other hand, the focus of the novel is more on Zan's hard work and determination than on "winning the big game." Hopefully, this book will appeal to both female and male readers.

Sisson, Rosemary Ann. WILL IN LOVE. William Morrow, 1977.
This is a re-creation of Shakespeare's courtship of Anne Hathaway, his subsequent rise to fame, and his essential abandonment of his family. The picture is not pleasant, and somehow his genius does not quite exonerate him of his treatment of his wife and children. However, the real sleeper in this book is the utterly charming and witty courtship of Shakespeare's sister Joanne and his best friend Rufus. If the reader can skirt the intrusive reminders of what Shakespeare wrote and what the probable source was, he can enjoy the subplot of an independent and shrewish girl pushing spinsterhood and the good-for-nothing but lovable young man. The audience for this book is probably serious young women who like literature and have read Shakespeare. It's a good source of memorable information about him. It will, however, not attract new readers to his works.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. BLOOD FEUD.. E. P. Dutton, 1977.
Without sacrificing characterization to setting or history, Blood Feud successfully presents realistic and understandable young people in a situation far removed from today's cultural patterns. Thormod, a Viking, vows a blood feud against his two friends for the killing of his father and in the company of his Saxon friend, Jestyn, who tells the story, sets off in pursuit of the killers -- a journey which takes them across Russia, the Baltic Sea to Constantinople to avenge the death. The setting that envelops the narration is worth a king's ransom. It carries a sense of accuracy of detail but at the same time, it is mysterious without being romanticized, like a Bergman movie. This is a book girls will probably not pick out on their own but the sense of myth and timelessness really overcomes the predominantly male theme of quest and revenge.

GETTING "IT" ALL TOGETHER--AGAIN

Delivered at Conference on English Education, Minneapolis, March 17, 1978

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I suppose my qualifications for expressing myself on this topic are twofold: (1) I am more than half way through my 26th year of teaching English, and (2) I am an inveterate seeker after the ideal English curriculum. One of my former students said it succinctly. "Mrs. Ramsell," he pronounced, "the trouble with you is that you believe in Utopia." My talk today may give you a microcosmic glimpse of the ordinary classroom teacher in search of English "its." Incidentally, I am sub-titling my remarks "True Grr It."

Back in 1952, newly arrived in Cambridge, Minnesota High School after shepherding 40 seniors in a small classroom in Onamia, Minnesota, through the trials of the Harcourt Brace Adventures in English Literature and the Essentials in English workbook, I met our new, visionary superintendent. I happened to mention the "cover to cover in the book, cover to cover in the workbook" philosophy. He raised his eyes toward the ceiling murmuring, "What would Dora V. think?" That set me on my search of a better way -- the "it" of "getting it all together." I remember the shock with which Dora V. Smith's question hit me. "When you ask students to 'characterize' have you ever inquired to find out what they think you mean by the term?"

A few years and several courses later, my principal asked me, "When are you going to do something about the English department?" It was a mark of my naivete as a searcher for "its" that I assumed (1) something needed to be

done about the English department, and (2) I was the one to do it.

Armed with what seems to me now an alarming degree of innocence, I embarked on my first effort to "get it all together." We conned the English department members into engaging in an inventory of what we actually were teaching. One year we engaged housewives with degrees to take over classes as study halls for a few hours so that we might work. Another year we worked Saturdays and were paid for our time. In an attempt to find out where there were holes in our teaching, we plastered sheets of newsprint on walls of the workroom marked 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and covered these, like some huge genealogy chart, with literary selections and grammatical usage topics. The only big discovery that I remember we made was that "Stopping by the Woods of a Snowy Evening" was being taught in three different years.

About this time summer sessions were being offered at the University of Minnesota, powered by the shriveling searchlight of Sputnik. Need you ask? An inveterate "it" seeker, I enrolled.

I shall always personally be grateful for the doors which opened to me that summer: linguistics and the fascination of realizing one could study what people were actually doing with their language; anthropology and the insights word usage gives to the study of a culture; the varieties of literary criticism, each one a different way of looking at the same work; rhetoric, the modes of making a message understood. I came back to my school, armed with ideolect forms, speech levels, one hundred different ways of identifying the same object and two sayings my students began to identify with me: "You don't blame a giraffe for

not being an elephant" and "Let's see how it patterns."

Several years and failures later I was told, "Mrs. Ramsell, you're too enthusiastic." I guess I was. Plagued with copywright difficulties, the University of Minnesota's Project English became an embarrassment, and even the University was branding the hanger's-on as "too enthusiastic." Our Cambridge junior high school English teachers never could accept Neil Postman's Discovering Your Language and the whole project folded like a burst bag of salt.

I changed schools, as so many Project English fellows did after finding they could not navigate the educational waters in the boats that they were rocking.

I found White Bear Lake an oasis. There were courses being offered on the graduate level in Human Relations, Teacher Effectiveness Training, Hilda Taba discussion methods, Human Potentials. We were designing electives, afloat on the dream boat of the self motivated student. Teaching teams were carefully chosen to reflect youth and experience, and when well done, displayed a depth of approach that I found truly admirable. One could schedule tutorials, small groups, project time blocks and reach students formerly swallowed in the anonymity of large class size and frantic time schedules. I knew my students' names within the first month and developed lasting relationships. I was feasting at a smorgasboard of "its." True, there were alarming echoes which I ignored. A class I designed for the struggling student writer met with a comment that I wish I had examined more closely. "Let's have everyone take it!" It was the forerunner of the force brigade. "Let's require it."

I had produced an "it"! Frankenstein's cheeks were quivering. About that time I read David Holbrook's English for the Rejected. Old volcanoes rumbled. I saw visions of the English teacher as facilitator rather than an instructor. A new ideal English curriculum or "it" loomed before my eyes.

"Oh," said Jim Squires, Executive Secretary of the NCTE and executive of the Ginn Publishing Company, "if you are interested in that, you should be with Jimmy Britton at the University of London." When James Britton, John Dixon and Les Strata brought a seminar on the "British Approach to Teaching English" to the University of Connecticut in the summer of 1971, I applied and was accepted. There were only 35 of us, so the relationships with the leaders of the seminar became tutorial.

In spite of the grumblings of some members that they had paid their money and expected the great ones to talk, the leaders resolutely refused to do much lecturing. Their goal was our experiencing the theories they espoused. I wrote as I had never written before. We responded to movies, role playing, games, observational tours, acting out cuttings of dramas, and poetry. We discussed in small groups. We kept journals. I found that when I wrote expressively regularly, I did indeed begin zooming back and forth on Jimmy Britton's continuum, from poems to short stories to plays to reports and back again. It was an exciting five weeks for me. Others were responding with an enthusiasm unequalled in my experience of English methods courses. Our latent creativity had been tapped, not as teachers of a new method, but as persons with something unique to say. We liked it. We didn't want to stop. I felt it was the greatest

tribute which could have been given to the British trio. To so excite a group of English teachers is no mean feat. It wasn't hard for us to transfer the excitement we felt to the excitement we wished for the students in our classrooms.

Back at my school, I found myself in the position of a jigsaw puzzle fan with forty pieces of a one hundred piece jigsaw puzzle. I knew what we did in the seminar, but I knew it would take much more study to know why. So last year after the required seven years of teaching experience in our district, I went on sabbatical leave to the University of Toronto where Jimmy Britton would be spending the year as professor emeritus after his retirement from the University of London.

The sixty missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle began fitting in one by one. Michael Polanyi's "passionate intellectual and his desire to know," Cassirer's reflective thinking capacity of man, Vygotski's belief that we internalize speech even as we talk, to supply a later wellspring for our talking and writing, Gusdorf's belief that we focus our understanding of ourselves through speaking, George Kelly's concept of the impermeable construct and our need to open it up and at least reflect upon it.

I found myself "wanting to know" through 600 pages of a personal journal, reflecting upon former perceptions, gaining new insights in talk sessions at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, focussing some badly needed understandings of myself and others and finally, once again traveling the Britton Continuum from poetry to drama through short stories, essays, papers and reports.

Since then I have seen some students experience the same release. There seems to be a direct relationship between the number of pages of a personal journal begun in a real desire to know and the number and variety of public writings the student writer produces.

But things are changing at our school once again.

We are being told, "Students are not mature enough to make wise educational choices." Because students are perceived to be wasting time talking to each other, a perception with which I violently disagree, they are being forced into unwilling choices and are required to be in the classroom a greater number of mods. The Back To Basics banner is being unfurled. The good old days are eulogized with an ardour which makes those of us who had lived through those "good old days" smile in irony. Once again the philosophy, "One student in one desk for one hour five days a week equals education," is becoming favorable currency.

The "it" is changing before our eyes and as Weingartner has so graphically put it, "MacNamara's Band is leading a parade of educational Edsels backward into the future."

Faced with dropping enrollments, and the need for budget cuts, all teachers with under five years' experience are losing jobs, and teachers wander the halls with red rimmed eyes. Gloom is descending as courses are cut and class sizes increased to unmanageable proportions. Supportive teachers find themselves becoming class wardens. Individual student help is becoming a fond memory.

Part of what is happening to us is our own fault. We have behaved as an

elitist group. In our school system it was suggested to a teachers' public relations group that we inform the public of the good things going on in the school system. The suggestion was met with the comment, "The public would never understand it." So we put our faith in sponsoring a beauty queen in the summer parade and taking golden age citizens to dinner at Christmas time to advance teacher-community rapport.

I have always been a proponent of citizens' participation in educational endeavors, but when citizens are clamoring for their children to be taught as they themselves were taught twenty years before by a teacher who was using a model of his own teacher twenty years before that, professional people must voice their objections. If we are asking for informed decisions, then the responsibility for the dispersal of the necessary information rests with us. In this sense, we do need to get it all together again.

We need to present, straight forwardly and without jargon, the facts of the complexity of modern English education, so that community decisions may be made from information, from trust in professionals who are trained in the field, not from belief in mythology and a nostalgic view of a defectively remembered past.

If it seems that I am addressing my remarks to much more than English curriculum per se, this is no accident. English teaching today is much more than substantiating theories learned in the college classroom. The biggest struggle we face is how to survive in the political educational arena and keep those classroom visions and dreams alive.

I guess what I am saying is that I don't believe that English teaching can be subsumed under an "it." It seems to me that English teaching is a combination of human relations and chance as well as the choice and change of curriculum.

I remember in Toronto, where I was conducting a research project in the use of unguided group discussion, the enormity of the task of assessing what was going on in the English classroom came home to me. The students were given the task of writing about a poem, then discussing the poem in small groups in which a teacher was not present. They were to write about the poem again after the discussion. I was attempting to determine changes in writing which might be traced to insights from the discussion. Their ten minute discussion was recorded into a tape recorder. Later I transcribed the discussion and looked for evidence of the kinds of hypothetical language and group discovery advanced by Douglas Barnes in his book, From Communication to Curriculum. I found the evidence. However, I soon discovered that observing and reporting on one ten minute discussion is a little like reporting on the growth of a tree. To really try to observe the process, one would need to cover the tree as it grows, and even when one reached the top, or end of the discussion, the trunk, or beginning of the discussion would have changed in perception. Later I found out that hidden roots also affected the process. One student, who had received a mark of 7 on a 1-9 scale by composite grading of 5 markers, changed his approach entirely on his second writing and dropped four points on the subsequent ranking.

In a later discussion with the teacher, I learned that the student had, the week before, discussed with the teacher his inability to get along with some members of the class. One girl in particular seemed to be giving him trouble. She was a member of the discussion group and had disagreed with his interpretation of the poem during the course of the discussion. He had over reacted and adopted another view which hadn't even convinced him.

These variables became evident in one small ten minute discussion in one classroom of one teacher in the hundreds of thousands of samples going on every day all over the North American continent !

And so I ask you,"What the hell is "it"? How do we define "it" much less get "it" all together -- again?

As a seeker of "its" I think I have a right to ask, in the "What's My Line" style, "Will the true (Grrr) It please stand up?" I dare you!

Before I give you the impression that my perception of the complexity of defining "it" has made me give up in despair, let me state that it is this very inability to define, pinpoint, verbalize and eventually regiment "it" that is keeping me in the teaching of English. "It" refers to a thing. I believe that teaching English is a living, breathing human process which illuminates the human spirit in a way few other disciplines can. The day I can predict all the human outcomes of the written factual curriculum, is the day I will walk into my classroom knowing there will be no chance taking, no surprises. That will be the day I quit.

It is precisely because of the unpredictable human interaction and

surprise that I continue to teach English.

I remember a delightful definition of English teaching given me by a remarkable teacher friend. She helped her students create an atmosphere of excitement in her classes. "I teach with the ends of my fingertips," she said.

But decisions are being made today about what must be taught in English by experts who feel their definition of "it" is the one, true vision to be followed in all English classes. We have several impermeable constructs which consistently reappear in the English profession. One of these, "Teach grammar and you will produce good writers and speakers," has been repeatedly refuted by research. Yet changes are being forced on English teachers in these areas backed by the irrefutable drop in student test scores in English language competency.

At the same time, massive English research data, such as that in ERIC, repeatedly and depressingly affirms that no matter what the program tried, the findings reveal no significant difference over other programs. In light of this fact, it is altogether remarkable that the public seems to believe us solely responsible for the decline in English test scores over the past twenty years! Such a belief in our influence, no matter how negative, is likely to become habit forming !

How,then, are we to gather together all the claims and counter claims, the political pressures, the varying perceptions of the world of English teachers and students? If you expect answers, you are not going to get them from me.

I have found my personal "center that holds" in all the confusion. For me, helping students to sing themselves in writing and speaking as well as to respond to the urgent messages of the human spirit in literature is the core of all my desires in the English classroom. I will use whatever curriculum "it" which proves useful toward that end.

But I do not feel that my perception should dictate yours.

Does this mean I have given up completely on my quest of the ideal English curriculum, on the "it" of getting it all together?

"Well, uh, not exactly. You see, there's this new program out of England -- Nancy Martin, Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum. It's really a philosophy thrust. You get teachers from all the secondary disciplines together. Of course they have to be willing to cooperate -- They do a survey, see, of what their students are actually writing. Then they fit it to the Britton continuum to see where the holes are. Then they try to verbalize their own expectations for these kids as writers and talkers in their own discipline. Then they look for patterns --." A little walking music, please --

Writing with Style, by John R. Trimble (Prentice-Hall, Inc. 143 pages).

Reviewed by Patricia M. Fergus
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In the plethora of books that floods a college English teacher's mail-box each spring, an occasional text demands a second glance. It may be the color, or an intriguing design, or the author's name, but with Writing with Style it is the subtitle: Conversations on the Art of Writing.

Art? Conversations? An informal text with advice on how to write better? Yes indeed -- a text, as the author puts it, for "those writers who've already been through the textbook mill and who now find themselves hungering for helpful tips, inspiration, and a clear, lively synthesis of the essentials."

In the 138 pages Trimble stocks a wealth of information on how skilled writers think and write, building a reservoir not only for the advanced writer, but also for the "less advanced writer in need of a quick overview of the terrain he's painfully traversing."

The text is divided into two sections: "Fundamentals" (with such chapter titles as Getting Launched, Thinking Well, How to Write a Critical Analysis, Openers, Middles, Closers, Diction), and "Odds and Ends" (Punctuation, Conventions Regarding Quotations, Tips on Usage, and Epilog). Although the titles may suggest a resemblance to conventional texts, here the resemblance ends, as it is the immediate practicality of the book, the concrete explanations of how experienced writers think, the professional tips on writing and the brevity, that makes Writing with Style what it is:

"different -- short, fun, genuinely useful."

Quotations from famous writers begin each chapter. What student would not react to John Updike's "Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying," or John Mason Brown's,"It is in the hard, hard rock-pile labor of seeking to win, hold, or deserve a reader's interest that the pleasant agony of writing again comes in," or Ernest Hemingway's, "The indispensable characteristic of a good writer is a style marked by lucidity." Students will immediately identify with "labor" and "agony," and will probably groan about "rewriting," but the point comes through: writing is far less inspiration than they may have suspected.

Trimble's main objective is to develop a "writer's sense," and he achieves it admirably. Step by step he guides the reader through the thinking process of skilled writers: Where they begin, how they develop their ideas without all the trial and error so common with novices, and where they end. Throughout the process are tips framed in questions and answers. Take his discussion on thinking well (Trimble believes the failure to do so causes most writing problems). Writing is more than communication, it is the "art of desired effects," and the essay writer never forgets that persuading (or selling) the readers is the desired effect. To effectively illustrate the procedure Trimble asks, "How do you sell your reader?" answering it crisply with

1 Have something to say that's really worth his attention.

2 Be sold on its validity and importance yourself so that you can sell it with conviction.

3 Furnish strong arguments that are well supported with concrete proof: facts, examples, and quotations from authorities.

4 Use language that sells -- vigorous verbs, strong nouns, and confidently assertive phrasing.

The author does not stop there, however; he continues his succinct enumeration, and with the help of judiciously chosen examples, shows the reader what writing is all about. And what examples: colorful passages by Pauline Kael, John Mason Brown, E. B. White, Robert Frost, Mark Twain and others, plus student writing which he criticizes and follows through with revised copy.

Some readers, Trimble's "literary prudes," may protest the inclusion of Chapter 9, "Superstitions," in which he treats the Seven Nevers of the TOTELarian Creed and Rules like an exorcist releasing holy demons. For each of the inexorable Seven,

1 Never begin a sentence with and or but

2 Never use contractions

3 Never refer to the reader as you

4 Never use the first-person pronoun, I

5 Never end a sentence with a preposition

6 Never split an infinitive

7 Never write a paragraph containing a single sentence,

Trimble appeals through logical reasoning and stylistic usage and preference for its abandonment, citing exemplary passages for support. But he does caution against promiscuity, which should pacify the prudes to some degree.

The premise behind Chapter 11, "Proofreading," is sound: "Proofreading is like the quality-control stage at the end of the assembly line. Think of it in these terms and you'll see why you shouldn't consider a paper finished until you have proofed with finicky thoroughness." But in only one instance does Trimble place a clamp on too much correction: if the insertion is more than one or two sentences, retype the page. It is conceivable that insertions, carets and other conventional proofreaders' marks could so disfigure a paper that the original, with all its sloppy proofreading, would be less irritating to read. His suggestion for students to place, in the margin, circled numbers relating to uncertain uses of punctuation, idioms, and the like, and to ask pertinent questions about such usage at the end of the paper, is excellent. Students need to doubt, ponder, and inquire.

But all the tips in the world could not produce such a text were it not for the author's style and attitude: clear, lean, fresh, graceful, optimistic, and witty. Even the deadest of subjects comes out lively:

> Actually, the dash is so versatile and so eager to work that it occasionally moonlights as a colon, as a trailing-off thought ("If I could only--"), as a censor (Oh, d----!), and other such things. Unfortunately, novice writers instinctively recognize this trait and work it silly, asking it to double as a comma, a semicolon, a parenthesis, a period, ad scandalam. This is why it is tagged as a mark of Easy Virtue by many staid writers, who don't let it near their prose. Such an overreaction is a pity, really, because when the dash errs, it is a victim, not a culprit, and nothing can quite replace it.

Writing with Style is certainly not for students and teachers who demand the conventional: exercises, discussions of grammar, logic, or the research paper. It is for those who need a shift from the usual bill-of-fare, who

need, in Trimble's words, "an informal 3-hour refresher course with the emphasis on refreshment." It has the fundamentals of writing; it has ready-to-use and time-proven tips on writing; it has all the earmarks of good writing. It is a welcome departure from the conventional.

POEMS

Dale S. Olson
St. Cloud, Minnesota

At the Funeral of a Family Friend

I sign the book,
shake hands with sombre faces
and nervous smiles,
then fold my hands to contemplate.

One step in the long journey
that is my family,
my life should be like Duchamp's nude
descending the staircase --
alarmed and alive with movement.
But here is death,
silence without motion;
still, like the man with the blue guitar
we strain to hear the music.

Unfolding, I rise
to breathe the crisp air
of an April morning.

Pilgrimage

Returning to my father's grave,
my mother beside him,
I wonder what brought me to this place
and smile at the obvious answer.
Do I expect another miraculous birth?
I want my father to cleanse me,
understand me. I want to shed
my childhood and my tears.

I think it must be cold
under the Minnesota sod in November.
No tears.
My father could stand the cold
better than my mother --
better than me.
I watch the leaves catch
in the long grass to take the chill.
Nothing swells inside.
I will visit again when the ground warms.

Now I turn to find myself
walking in the shadow
that is my father's.

THE TEACHING OF EXPOSITORY WRITING: A REVIEW ESSAY[1]

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(Last fall the Sloan Foundation announced that it would not be giving any money toward the improvement of the teaching of composition, for a number of reasons. A few weeks later the Foundation sent to many campuses copies of the booklet which contained essays on which this decision was at least partially made. Because most of the essays were by people of some prestige outside of the field of English teaching and because they dealt with some significant points of view about composition, we looked around for some knowledgeable person to review the publication. On the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota we found Professor William A. Gibson, who was doing research for the year at the Center for Advanced Studies in Language, Style and Literary Theory. Editor)

No reviewer's attitudes toward this little volume are apt to be much more consistent than the attitudes of its authors toward their subject. The editor of the volume, James D. Koener, characterizes it as an exploration whose "main purpose is to stimulate discussion, provoke comment and criticism, and help provide the Foundation with the further information and insights it needs if it is to undertake any kind of program on writing skills" (p.iii). Anyone concerned about the written language can appreciate this modest aim and the prospect of foundation support for disciplined work on the teaching of writing; a reader must also welcome the appeal for advice and criticism before the launching of yet another program, study, or experiment. Nevertheless, while offering some useful criticisms of many current attitudes toward English studies, and the teaching of writing, the volume raises some serious questions about the Sloan Foundation's approach to "the problem of student writing." A number of

assumptions and beliefs are much more open to criticism than most of the contributors seem to realize.

The volume is organized in six parts; except for the last selection, each part builds upon its predecessors. It is arranged in what the editor calls a "chronological order" and the volume, it is said, "constitutes a rough history of the evolution of an idea within the Foundation" (p. v). As such it represents a stage in an interrupted process, a process, from my point of view, whose beginnings, rationale, and effects have not been considered carefully enough. What emerges is analogous to the process by which committee reports are usually created. In the functioning of committees opening statements can determine agenda and thus the topics that will be raised for discussion. Persuasive statements can even limit topics and fix attitudes toward them. According to the courtesies and conventions of committee work, no one can readily offer new suggestions without taking into account what has already been said. Radical revisions or even incisive criticisms can be offered only with difficulty, for changes occur by a process of slow accretion and timid qualification rather than through a rigorous review of assumptions, premises, evidence, and methods of inquiry.

The governing attitude behind this book can be summed up by a familiar cliche: The subject is too important to be left to the "experts." Many of the criticisms directed at English teachers, their profession, and the state of their knowledge on the teaching of writing are certainly justified. What the contributors have to say is of considerable interest because they all

derive their authority from significant experiences as administrators, teachers, or writers, and they demonstrate the depth of both professional and public concern for writing skills. On the other hand, few of their specific proposals are novel, and their arguments reflect the prevalence of much conventional wisdom about the creation and teaching of written English. The intentions and limitations of the volume may well be of more importance than what it specifically advocates about curriculum revision, the training and retraining of teachers, or the seeming and real contradictions among the aims and priorities of English programs. The major parts of the volume can be outlined quickly.

The first paper is "Writing Skills and Institutional Articulation" by Albert H. Bowker, currently chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley (pp. 1-10). It is concerned largely with "articulation between high school and work and between high school and college." This leads him to consider also reasons for the decline in writing skills, competency tests, standards for college admission, and some proposals for solving the problems he has identified.

Second is "A Response to Albert H. Bowker" by Stephen White, a vice president of the Sloan Foundation "with a background in journalism" (pp. 11-17). His response to what is explicit or implicit in Bowker's paper focuses on what will become the major issues in the remainder of the volume: confusions about the functions of educational programs (especially those in English), possible analogies between the teaching of writing and the teaching of mathematics or the sciences, suiting programs of study to particular groups,

the apparent antithesis between teaching writing (especially "expository" writing) and teaching "English literature" (by which he probably means literatures in the English language), and teachers' attitudes toward the discipline and their qualifications for teaching it. Also persuasive for the other contributors is White's scheme for the creation of "expository writing" wherein he translates his own practices into a universally applicable generalization: "Anyone who sets out to write expository prose goes through several successive stages." The stages repeat a strategy advocated in at least dozens of text books -- discovering "thoughts," shaping and reshaping an outline, writing a full draft, revising for precision and style (pp. 15-16).

Following this paper is "An Interim Report on What the Foundation Has Learned," again by Stephen White (pp. 18-28). It is characterized as "an internal document" summing up the results of conferences "with some sixty persons representing higher education, pre-college education, and the writing profession itself" (p. 18). Their identity is never indicated. This paper elaborates on the themes already introduced, outlines "four possible courses of action" (creation of new text books, curriculum reform, research to develop "a firm pedagogical base for the teaching of expository writing," and financial support for remediation), and proposes a role for the Sloan Foundation in creating a program on writing skills. By this time the direction of the discussion is fixed, and what remains are efforts to review further implications of the dominant themes and to translate some of them into programs for

reform.

The fourth paper, and the longest in the collection (pp. 29-44), is "How to Improve Writing Skills," written by Norman Macrae, deputy editor of The Economist (London). He reviews causes for the decline in writing skills and public dismay in response to it, costs to the nation and to individuals that result from lacking the "tools" of expression, and the paradox of such a state of affairs in a country where, quoting Gordon Thompson, "half the working population...is now employed in pushing pieces of information about." He proposes a full program of action to include "inventions" in syllabus reform (creating an "American Language" course with "expository" writing at its core), design of new programs for in-service and pre-service training (using White's model for composing), creation of new texts and teaching materials (requiring some changes in attitudes to ensure their adoption and use), and "pedagogical innovation" (leading presumably to "testable class courses in expository writing or American Language, teachable under closed learning systems"). The Foundation could for a limited time, he suggests, support workshops for designing experimental curricula, teacher-training courses, and the production of suitable text books or text series.

A most thoughtful paper is "A Response to Norman Macrae" by Donald L. M. Blackmer, a professor of political science and associate dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at M.I.T. (pp. 45-49). He asks the level of instruction at which Macrae would direct his program, notes that many freshman English courses, because of the need to satisfy remedial functions,

already do devote more attention to writing than to literature, questions how reliable a basis we possess for creating the model text book, supports the emphasis on primary education, and argues for instruction in more than a single mode of discourse. His recognition that series of simple antitheses (literature/composition, reading/writing, expository writing/expressive writing) provide inadequate bases for program design sets him off from most of the other contributors. Although conscious of limitations of our knowledge, he is unable to identify just the kinds of knowledge that are needed.

The final part, "Some Comments from the Field" (pp. 50-66), comprises three responses to the previous five papers by "experienced public school teachers" and a letter discussing another preliminary project on writing skills supported by the Sloan Foundation. Jayne Karsten, head of the English department at Langley High School (McLean, Virginia) is wary about committing American education to "Norman Macrae's American Language courses" as well as the antithesis between "'fine' writing" and "'lucid expository prose'"; she endorses enthusiastically White's attention to "the teaching of writing as process" and identifies some problems calling out for systematic research, including "a vigorous, definitive probe of how language, experience, and thought processes hinge and of what sequential implications are involved in the classroom development of this interaction" (pp. 50-53). Richard W. Hatch, who has both taught in secondary schools and edited books on scholarly subjects, is the most skeptical of all the contributors about the capacity of texts, technology, and curriculum reform to improve the teaching of writing;

he advocates continual practice and the review of each paper in written comments and in conferences (pp. 53-55). Dante Peter Ciochetto, a public school teacher from Westport, Conn., reviews what he considers five "major problems in the teaching of writing": the ill consequences of exposure to television and radio, inept teaching, inadequate time allotted to the teaching of writing, difficulties in evaluating written work, and the lack of sequential programs for the steady development of skills. He recommends intensive training programs for teachers and the creation of an articulated three-stage program aimed at developing skills from the elementary grades through high school.

The final statement is by Theodore R. Sizer, headmaster of Phillips Academy/ Andover and former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (pp. 62-66). He comments upon a report submitted to the Sloan Foundation by the Andover Committee and suggests that previous efforts to improve writing have failed because 1) the "field of writing, and of English generally, lacks both focus and a clear and useful link to modern culture," 2) teachers and scholars in the humanities are impractical, unwilling to compromise and unable to see the difficulties of diffusing "improved teaching methods." Analogies to curriculum developments of the 1960s carried out by the Physical Science Study Group and the School Mathematics Study Group are unproductive, he argues, because "writing is a skill, a craft, a process" and not a substantive field capable of "coverage." What is needed, therefore, is a curriculum for teachers" and recognition that some ways of teaching writing work

better than others. He offers only tentative suggestions about solving the problems of teaching loads in a field where success depends so much upon interactions between student and teacher.

The volume thus reflects many issues and orthodoxies of the last decade or so, and contributes little to a new, coherent view of the problem. Yet it serves both to remind us of some problems and obligations and as a symptom of what inhibits the development of improved syllabi and teacher-training programs. Because so much of the discussion overlaps from paper to paper, I shall concentrate on what seem to me some important points rather than attempt to critique each paper in turn.

Some complaints are obviously overstated -- e.g., that English teachers as a group are enamored of "'fine' writing..., elegant writing, allusive writing" and contemptuous of "lucid expository writing" (White, pp. 14, 15), that the ill effects of large class sizes are exaggerated (Macrae, p. 37), or that teachers are uninterested in books on expository writing (Macrae, p. 35). But other charges are certainly justified. Teachers of English are fully capable of undeserved complacency about their resources for the teaching of writing. What White says about public school teachers (p. 21) is generally applicable to college writing teachers as well: "In general, it seemed a matter of full agreement among the teachers themselves that they know pretty much all they needed to know about how to teach expository writing, and that they possessed in the way of resources all they needed to possess (except time)." The triviality of many books and articles on composition, and the

lack of a clear basis for choosing among the proliferating materials, demonstrate that many writing teachers never question their own knowledge or seek new perspectives on the subject.

Behind this problem is an important question that recurs in various forms in all of the papers. In accounting for the failure of previous experimental programs Sizer identifies it explicitly: "Most important has been the fragmentation in the field of English, or, to put it differently, a high level of disagreement about what should comprise the core of the area" (p. 63). This uncertainty of focus and priorities results in pointless arguments about whether literature or language studies, writing or communication skills, critical reading or appreciation should be considered as central to the discipline. But the problem has been recognized longer in the profession than the contributors to the volume seem to realize, and it is receiving increasing attention.[2] Two effects of it are especially serious: 1) the essential components of the discipline cannot be accounted for completely, and 2) those that are identified tend to be ranked according to a dogmatically-held hierarchy of value (e.g., literary interpretation is assumed to be superior to linguistic or stylistic analysis). Relationships among the components cannot be perceived, and changes that do occur in the discipline often take the form of substituting one priority for another. This volume unfortunately encourages just such another substitution of one unexamined conception for another.

Most papers in the volume, it seems to me, lack a full and clear con-

ception of what is involved when using written language. Consider what White says in his report on "What the Foundation Has Learned." He complains, with some justification, that text books are "remorsely analytic"; some of them begin and end with "a close analysis of grammar, syntax, and rhetoric." He offers an already familiar alternative: "But writing itself is synthetic and not analytic. It begins with the process of deciding exactly what it is one wants to say and what might be the most effective structure of its most lucid statement. That statement itself, if it is to be maximally lucid, must conform to the rules of grammar, syntax, and rhetoric, but those are subsequent considerations" (pp. 21-22). How choices are to be made, or criteria for effectiveness and lucidity determined, he does not suggest. And again in outlining "courses of action" he suggests that perhaps "television must be converted as an ally. The elements that go into successful expository writing are exactly those that go into successful expository television: logical process and orderly structure. The syntax, grammar and rhetoric [italics mine] are quite different but it remains our conviction that such matters are truly secondary; they do not create lucidity, they support it" (p. 25). His reification of "lucidity" and his notions about the grammar and rhetoric of discourse are indeed astounding, and could be passed by in embarrassed silence if they were not so prevalent.

It is impossible to conceive of any discourse, lucid or obscure, independent of its "syntax, grammar, and rhetoric." Syntax is but one component of grammar as it is analyzed in modern linguistics (phonology, syntax,

semantics, and pragmatics). But this particular opposition may represent nothing more than an inexact use of technical terms to mean something like graphemics and sentence style; "grammar" may also be used to denote matters of agreement. The inclusion of "rhetoric" in the phrase suggests that he considers rhetoric as extrinsic to discourse rather than as essential to its creation. But the notion of rhetoric as extrinsic "flowers of ornamentation" has been too long discredited to merit much attention.

His account of how people write implies that he would accept Sizer's belief "that the craft of writing is wholly a process -- never in any important sense a body of particular facts" (p. 63). Yet the "process" cannot function without grammar and rhetoric, for without language, disciplined thought is not possible; "orderly structure" is the product of rhetoric and cannot exist prior to the operation of the skills and knowledge that create it.[3] White's tacit knowledge is greater than what he professes, for he introduces rhetorical concepts without being conscious of doing so.

The reduction of the act of writing to a set of discrete operations like White's can give the illusion of identifying what is fundamental to the process. However there is nothing intrinsic in the mental operations themselves or in the acts of outlining or enumerating that determines an appropriate style, the choice of subtopics for a given piece of discourse or their most effective disposition. Part of the problem may be inherent in the metaphor itself, for the analogy to the "processes" of invention or manufacturing has some unfortunate implications. Consider, for example, the

process of turning a shaft on an engine lathe. The lathe operator in a large machine shop will work from a methods plan that specifies the number of revolutions per minute at which the stock is to turn, the material and configuration of the cutting bit, the depth at which the cutter is to be set on a given pass, the distance it is to advance with each revolution of the lathe, the lubricant to be used, etc. If the principles implicit in the methods plan were articulated they would take into account such things as the purpose for which the shaft is being turned, the material properties of the stock, cutter, and lubricants, the lathe bed's resistance to distortion, etc. The analogy implies that processes are capable of precise description, and that the description must take into account their purposes, what takes place in them, what means they depend upon, what materials they operate upon, and how their steps are segmented and sequenced.

The analogy regrettably appears to be more elegant and useful than it is. A machinist operates upon materials extrinsic to his own consciousness, and relies upon procedures which if followed precisely will result in the production of a perfectly predictable artifact. The number of variables to be considered are finite and largely independent of the machinist's manual and mental habits. On the other hand, neither outlining nor classifying, association games nor pre-writing exercises, fixed sequences nor prescribed modes of discourse can assure the production of effective written artifacts. And the variables of the writing process have not as yet been adequately described. Simply to shift attention from the written product to the

processes of its creation will not correct the deficiencies in our methods of teaching writing. And to do so may have the effect of distracting our attention from the question of what we need to know to do the job.

In spite of a great deal of work during the past decade, basic research on the rhetoric and pragmatics has not advanced very significantly. Martin Steinmann's call in 1966 for "basic research" is echoed again in E. D. Hirsch's recently published book The Philosophy of Composition.[4] Susan Karsten, who recognizes many of the variables of the composing process, suggests what some of the aims of such research might be: "What we need out of research is a vigorous, definitive probe of how language, experience, and thought hinge and of what sequential implications are involved in the classroom development of that interaction. I would urge, also, that any university research be soundly underpinned with counsel from the real world of the elementary and secondary schools" (p. 52). Research proposals suggested in this volume are not apt to produce valid results, and possibly not useful ones either.

The research proposed would depend upon experiments with model programs and studies of existing practices in the teaching of writing, but the proposals lack a framework for drawing inferences or for deriving from them an explanatory theory. Bowker, for example, proposes a "national project that would tell us with some authority what is really [a favorite word in this volume] happening in high school English programs" (p. 9). The project would show if writing requirements have been decreased, what text books are used, what

work loads the teachers carry, and how well prepared they are. He suggests that the project would show if more emphasis should be given to the preparation of writing teachers, and perhaps even what kinds of training would be "most promising." In the next paragraph he discusses the widely publicized Bay Area Writing Project, whose teachers use "some of the hard-won tricks of their trade." Of its approach he says, "It is not professor to teacher, but teacher to teacher, and it seems to work." He seems to imagine that gathering data will produce useful research. What is needed is not an enumeration of strategies that "seem to work," but evidence that they do and a set of principles explaining why. White recognizes that a "firm pedagogical base for the teaching of expository English" must include knowledge about "the fundamental cognitive processes that accompany the development of skills in the use of the mother tongue" (p. 26). Such a base is not to be discovered in current teaching practices. Nor can experimental data or hypothetical explanations be evaluated merely by referring them to Karsten's "real world of the elementary and secondary schools." A useful theory must be able to describe the principles essential to the creation and interpretation of written English.

Not every teacher of writing needs to possess a full and conscious knowledge of the principles of rhetoric and philosophy of language implicit in the exercises and teaching strategies that they make use of. Their materials, methods, and "hard-won tricks of the trade" must, however, be based upon a demonstrably valid theory of discourse. And special care must be taken to

ensure that such a theory informs whatever improved training and retraining programs are to be developed.

The contents of such a theory are not to be found in experiments with one model program after another. Karsten, Ciochetti, and White are right to suggest that a theory of composition should include attention to the social and psychological processes of language acquisition. Yet the consideration of the components and sequences of operations in encoding and decoding written discourse must not be limited to those of White's model, endorsed so enthusiastically by Macrae and Karsten. A more comprehensive structure for developing a valid theory of pedagogy is suggested in Steinmann's outline of grammatical, speech-act, genre, and rhetorical competences.[5] Research aimed in these directions could explain how written discourse is created, how it achieves its effects upon readers, and how choices may be made among a multiplicity of competing approaches to the teaching of writing. In this volume we are instead offered such things as Macrae's provisions for the contracts governing the conduct of those who will produce the model text book. "Laws" are indeed at stake, but they are of a very different kind from those outlined in legal codes. This volume can help us recognize what we must try to accomplish even if it cannot suggest how to go about the task.

Notes

[1]Review of The Teaching of Expository Writing: an Occasional Paper from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, ed. James D. Koener (New York: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, 1977), v +66 pp. Parenthetical references to the volume appear in the text of this paper.

[2]See, for example, James L. Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), Ch. 1; John C. Gerber, "A Glimpse of English as a Profession," Profession 77 (New York: MLA, 1977), pp. 26-33; Richard Lloyd-Jones, "Mr. Sleary's Circus, or English Under the Big Top," ADE Bulletin, 52 (1977), 10-14.

[3]Cf. Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," Central States Speech Journal, 18 (1967), 9-17.

[4]Martin Steinmann, Jr., "Rhetoric Research," College English, 27 (1966), 278-85; E. P. Hirsch, Jr., The Philosophy of Composition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 3-6.

[5]Martin Steinmann, Jr., "Rule Competences and Rhetorical Competences," Papers from the Twelfth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistics Society, ed. Salikoko S. Mufwene, et al. (Chicago: Chicago Ling. Soc., 1976), pp. 610-17.