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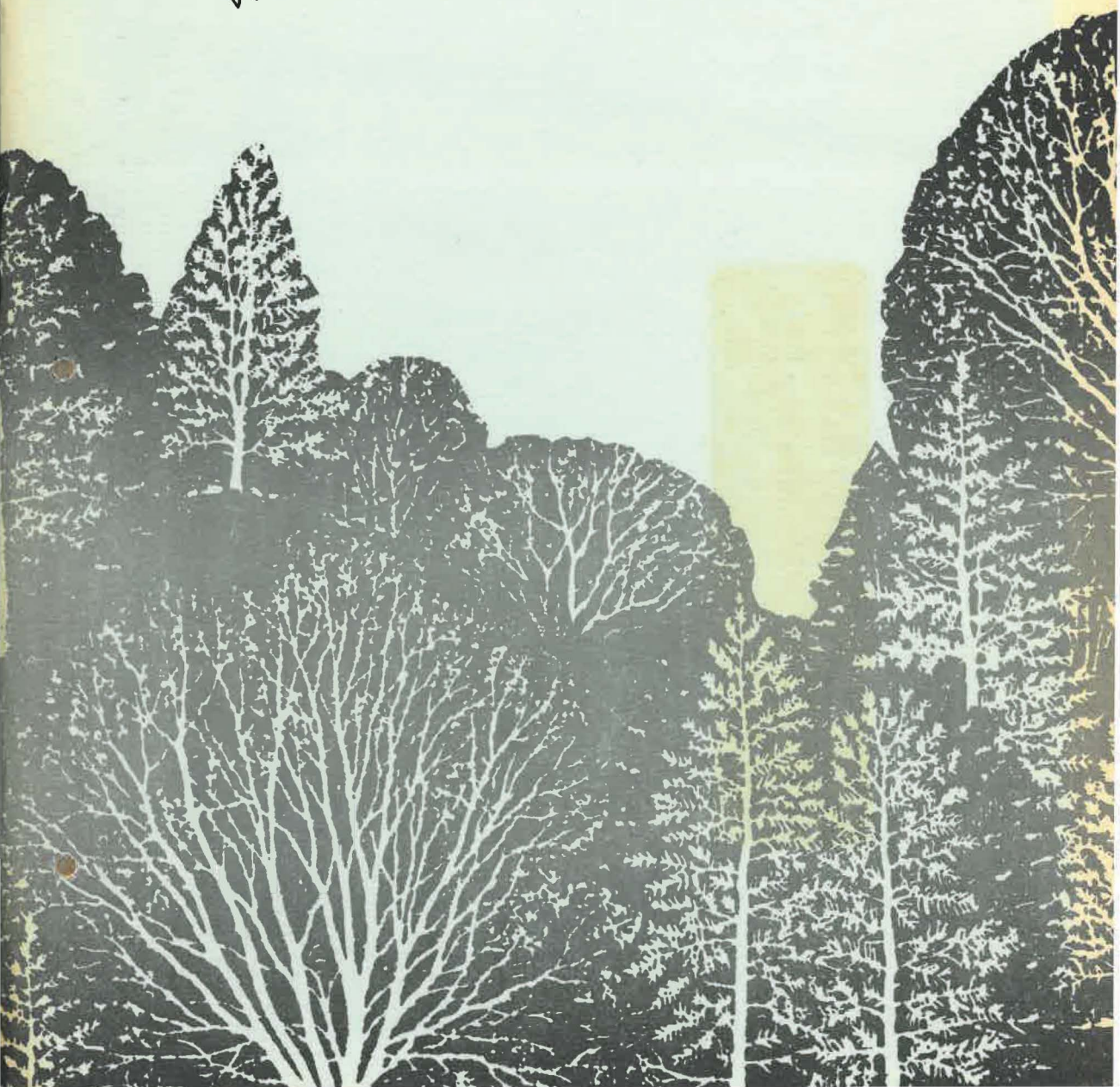

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MINNESOTA ENGLISH JOURNAL

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EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY

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A story is told of a friend of Thomas Carlyle who was struck with admiration on visiting the Victorian sage in his tower study in Chelsea. When he wanted to study and write, Carlyle retired to his isolated tower accessible only by a very narrow staircase. There he could speculate on man and society in the growing industrialism of the nineteenth century. His visitor marveled: "Why you could write up here for a year and the world would never be one whit the wiser." In the late twentieth century, visitors would be less impressed by the writer's splendid isolation and would feel that the world's not being "one whit the wiser" was a censorious comment rather than a compliment.

The situation with Thomas Carlyle allegorizes the problems facing the modern scholar. How can the values and beauties of man's inherited wisdom be preserved in a world of the computer? More immediately, how does the scholar justify his existence in a world increasingly committed to the marshalling of details and data, a world which wants to see an almost immediate application of thoughts and discoveries to the problems of the world today? More directly, how can the scholar and student committed to the preservation of the values of western civilization, the traditional care of liberal education, justify his existence to parents, school boards, and administrators of higher education? More than ever, those paying for the education of young people want to see a measurable result of their contribution. The question of the future is whether the world can any longer afford the luxury of a form of education which cannot

justify its existence in the pecuniary terms seemingly so much in the minds of its providers. At the moment, the adverse attitudes make the future of education in a free society seem hopeless. Still, no thoughtful person will concede defeat. Enthusiasts for the traditional intellectual and spiritual values must somehow convince the money makers in the land that the pursuit of integrity and truth are not alien to the attainment of a successful life.

The question then is how the humanist can prove his worth in an ever more utilitarian and technological society. Is there still a place for the pursuits of a liberal type of education in an age of computerization?

If one goes back to the early years of the American republic, he finds that the founders of the new nation were themselves products of a classical education that, in the twentieth century would seem almost hopelessly impractical. Still out of their studies of the ancient civilization, Madison, Jefferson, and their colleagues came forth with the most practical form of government ever created by the minds of men. It was not their practical skills in establishing bureaucratic functionaries that made their work permanent, but their knowledge of what had been thought and experienced by mankind in the past. The writings of Madison, in particular, reveal his thoughtful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the governments of classical Greece and Rome. Behind the minutiae of daily governing, he discovered the fundamental forces of human existence. It was his insight into the humane values of the ancients that gave solidity to much of the constitutional thinking of the members of the Convention of 1787. Can the modern world risk losing contact with the long history of mankind and turn to endless printouts of statistical data on which to formulate its policies

and directives for public life? The dangers of rootlessness are nowhere more evident than in the growing commitment to immediacy and practicality which tarnishes so much of what is said about the purposes of modern education. Unless some committed students are able to maintain allegiance to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual heritage of the past, the future of western civilization is dark indeed.

Nor need the pursuit of such knowledge be confined to the ivory tower of Carlyle or anyone else. To revert again to the early history of the United States, no individual said and did more to establish education in high regard than did Thomas Jefferson. His plans for schools in the colony of Virginia were a practical expedience for giving to the new country political and moral foundations that would assure an ever present thoughtful electorate. In particular his ideas of providing public aid for all talented students, no matter what their family economic or social status, aimed at assuring that America would always seek out and advance its most talented citizens. In that way, he hoped that the new nation would be continuously blessed with the leadership of the finest minds its people possessed. The striking aspect of his system is that it brought the most promising individuals to an education that would challenge and develop their highest potential. Rather than compromise on intellectual standards to accommodate the less fortunate, Jefferson's plan would prepare individuals to profit by rigorous intellectual and moral training. He would raise the poorest up to the level of the best, rather than reduce the best to a mediocrity reachable by almost anyone. His thinking is almost diametrically opposed to the move which dominated higher education during the past decade and a half. Rather than reduce standards so

that everyone could make a pretense of succeeding, he would educate individuals of ability so that they could express their deepest thoughts and aspirations in keeping with the highest standards of achievement attainable. At the risk of being charged with elitism, modern students must insist on having the opportunity to pursue intellectual and scientific knowledge at its most speculative levels without having to make any justification for their efforts in terms of immediately applicable vocational skills. A free society needs the brilliant coals dragged from the slag pits of Jefferson's somewhat derogatory analogy. A free society will prosper only so long as the educational system continues to renew the supply of young minds able to think creatively and react critically. American society needs a steady supply of deeply educated persons whose knowledge of the human past will give them the tools to face the problems of the present and the future. The philosophic mind habituated to critical thinking is a more practical contribution to human welfare than is any mechanical technician commanding the services of the most sophisticated computer.

Recently the popular news magazines have raised objections to the values of education in terms of the diminishing lifetime earning margins of college graduates. The nation, according to such sources, has reached the saturation point in the numbers of highly educated persons it can assimilate. The argument often made is that vocational-technical training will put its graduates into higher paying employment than will the conventional academic degree. If one can accept annual income as a criterion for successful living, there is little to be said in refutation. However, for those who believe that there is more to life than earning a living, the fiscal arguments are unconvincing. Still it is

often difficult for a typical undergraduate not to wonder if his/her concern for the study of history, literature, philosophy, and the arts is not a misguided idealism. The difficulty is compounded when academic leaders themselves echo ideas which seem to compromise their public commitment to the values of liberal education. Not too long ago, a placement officer in one self-proclaimed liberal arts college told a meeting of history majors that they should smarten up and take as many courses in business as they could squeeze in before graduation. Otherwise, they were doomed to be a drag on the labor market. His statements impugned all the official proclamations of educational philosophy which his institution issues for public edification. It would be no surprise if serious students would not wonder if their own aspirations have been misdirected. In such situations, the weakening plea of the dedicated humanist is often lost in the thunder of pecuniary myopia. One of the missions of the educator in contemporary society is to keep alive faith in the values of human living no matter how strongly the voices of philistinism echo through the world. Once that small voice is eradicated, the whole concept of education in a free society will have met its doom.

In the face of growing immediacy for the practical, the student given to liberal education must discover his own justifications but express them in terms which will mollify, if not convince, the technicians of efficiency. One may concede that the student with a degree in literature, history, or other humanistic area is probably not prepared with the "entry skills" needed in the world of business. However, anyone convinced that education should prepare for living a full and long life, not just for finding immediate employment, will hold that

in the long run the educated individual, the person who can think, and feel, and reflect, will make a greater contribution to society than will the highly trained technician prepared almost entirely to meet a specific skill need. Even the news magazine reports on employment opportunities for college graduates concede that after an original advantage for the specifically trained, the balance tips toward the individual who can see beyond the limited task to the bigger aspects of the employment situation. It is the individual educated to think and to develop his/her inner resources who eventually will emerge as the greater contributor to society, even to the business society. It is difficult to collate the facts and statistics to verify this conclusion in a way to convince people whose view of the world is limited to quantifiable data, but, the conviction holds good that the educated person is as big, or bigger, an asset to society than the merely trained individual.

Really, though, it is not right to over emphasize the conflict between career training and education. As argued in the preceding paragraph, the individual with a well educated mind and heart can make a substantial contribution to life, both personal and societal. The emphasis must still be on the wakening of the individual to his/her potential. Such self-realization can best be attained by study of the history and literature through which mankind has expressed its highest achievements and ideals. The person with a sense of the past will not easily be misled by the transient calls of the marketplace. Colleges and universities must not surrender their commitment to the preservation and dissemination of the cultural achievements of mankind. In America, the rich heritage of freedom and liberty must not succumb to the pleaders for an im-

mediate relevancy. Those who most fully understand the philosophic and historic bases of American democracy will be the best defenders of its preservation. One who not only knows what Jefferson said and did, but also how he felt; one who can empethize with Lincoln in his agonizing over military disasters of incompetent generals; one who can enter into the minds and hearts of the lowly as well as the great builders of this nation, such a person has the education needed for the preservation of free society.

The challenge is there. It is up to individuals with the talents and opportunities to pursue the rich avenues of mankind's past and present to assert their influence on the world around them. Young people can commit themselves to the study of the richness of the humanistic past; older people can encourage the young by proclaiming in their lives and studies their faith in the values which have long been the distinguishing characteristics of liberal education. While they can never expect to be a popular majority, well educated individuals can realize that it is their commitment to the richest thoughts and aspirations of mankind that makes them most important contributors to the preservation of the values and ideals of the free society. It is the small amount of yeast that gives fullness to the loaf; so, too, it is the leaven of the educated minority which gives vitality to American society.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

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The term "environmental awareness" is a concept that has many generalized implications. Certainly in the realm of the elementary school, "environmental awareness" is a concept that falls into the so-called affective realm. It is an affective concept in the sense that environmental awareness is a positive attitude that individuals develop towards the environment. In the school situation, environmental awareness is a subjective concept which teachers find very difficult to statistically measure. As a result, some teachers feel uncomfortable teaching a concept that will not establish a percentage of grade norm. This somewhat statistical, almost mechanical approach towards teaching is unfortunately becoming popular among schools which feel that accountability is the essence of their curriculum. Yet it is the teacher who realizes that an awareness of one's environment is a significant as well as necessary goal, which although in the end cannot be measured, but still needs to be strived for. Children's literature is one means of effectively reaching the goal of environmental awareness.

Before a discussion of environmental literature can be attempted, a definition of environment must be established. The term "environment", as related to the elementary school child, is simply everything with which the child comes into contact. Environment is then an all-encompassing term, yet it can be divided into that which is nature (natural environment), and that which is made by man (cultural environment). It is necessary for the child to make a distinction between the natural and cultural environment, for it is the interaction of the two

environments which in effect creates the balance or imbalance of the natural environment. There is definitely an interdependency between the two. All too often, teachers approach environmental studies strictly from the aspect of the natural environment. They fail to enable the child to see how the cultural environment relates to, and interacts with, the natural environment. The impact of the cultural environment on the natural environment is all too often ignored. In the same manner, some children's books deal with environmental awareness strictly from the natural point of view. These books certainly have a place in environmental literature, yet ideally, environmental literature should attempt to establish a relationship between the natural and cultural themes. Only through witnessing man's interaction with the natural environment can a sense of awareness be realized by the reader. If the book does not establish or make clear the responsibility which the reader has in developing a positive relationship with the natural world, then the environmental meaning of "awareness" is lost. A relationship between the cultural and natural environments also connotes a sense of responsibility on the part of man. Man's freedom can be a deadly gift if it is not tied in some way with a sense of responsibility to all living things. Books that promote artistically the theme of man's relationship and responsibility to the natural environment can be considered "environmental books."

Robert Lawson's Rabbit Hill and Tough Winter are excellent examples of books which establish a clear insight into the relationship between man and nature. The animals which occupy "the hill" are for the most part dependent on "the folks" who care for them. Immediately, Lawson has established a fundamental relationship between man and nature, a relationship which depicts the essence of environmental awareness: man's responsibility to the animal world. This responsibility may take the form of providing for animals who are indirectly dependent upon man.

> Every evening for the past year and a half, they (the folks) had set out a bountiful meal for the Little Animals. The fields and lawns were lush with rich grains and grass, free for all. Around all the property boundaries were No Hunting signs. Even invading dogs were promptly driven off, chiefly by Mr. Muldoon, the Folk's ancient cat.[1]

Indeed the relationship which existed between the Folks and the animals on the Hill was one of positive and sound environmental practice. The Folks provide for the reader an example of "environmentally aware" man. However, of more significance is the contrast which Lawson makes between the "aware Folks" and the "unaware caretaker." By employing this contrast, Lawson enables the reader to realize the profound impact that man has upon the natural environment. Guns, steel traps, poisons, and a total apathy for the animal are all characteristics of the "unaware man." By enabling the reader to witness both the positive and negative relationships between man and animal, Lawson has allowed a distinction to be made between the "aware" and the "unaware" man. It is in the awareness of the Folks that we see a balance in the relationship between man and animal. The "aware" man understands and aids this balance while the "unaware" man ignores it. In the end, however, one cannot help but gain a sense of optimism from the balance that is eventually created at Rabbit Hill.

> Because on this Hill there was kindness, respect for the rights of others, and no fear, there was also happiness and peace.[2]

> But peace and happiness do not always flow on endlessly, without interruption, and folks are not trees, to stay forever rooted in one spot.[3]

Although this last statement was taken from Lawson's The Tough Winter, it serves as an appropriate introduction into the theme of negative environmental relationships which exist between the cultural and natural elements. While it is important to view the relationship between man and animal as a balance, it is also equally important at times to view the upsetting of this balance. In dealing with environmental awareness, children's literature must at times illustrate the negative impact that man has on the natural world. While Rabbit Hill serves to reaffirm the working relationship between man and animal, A Stranger at Green Knowe succeeds in effecting a dissolution of this positive relationship and in doing so,unleashes a wave of pessimism which is unfortunately painfully real. In order to become environmentally aware, one must see the ugly side of man's relationship with nature, a relationship which perhaps can be better described as "the peculiar institution." It is indeed a type of slavery when man makes it his duty to demoralize that which is wild. L. M. Boston enables the reader to view, as would a patron at the public zoo, the deanimalization of one of the jungle's most majestic and powerful creatures, the gorilla.

> Certainly it had never occurred to him that an animal could be stripped of everything that went with it, of which its instincts were an inseparable part, and that you could have just its little body in a space of nothingness. As if looking at that told you anything of the nature of sorrow, which you knew anyway. Here in their ugly, empty cages the monkeys were no more tropical than a collection of London rats or dirty, dark pigeons. They were degraded as in a slum.

The gorilla who falls victim to man is a reflection of all that has failed in our relationship with the environment. Ping serves as an example of what the relationship ought to be, yet, in the end, even Ping falls victim to an unaware

society. With the crack of rifle fire, the relationship which for a moment bound man and animal is ended. Boston creates a sense of social injustice at what has taken place at Green Knowe, and as a result, we come to know what injustice is in the eyes of an animal. We in effect become "aware" of injustice. It is significant that an author such as Boston enables the reader to witness that which is environmental injustice, for indeed, man's injustice toward the natural world is at the very root of our environmental problems. It is perhaps the revelation of such injustices by the author which enables the reader to begin to formulate a sense of responsibility towards the other world. Furthermore, the unveiling of the injustice done to Hanno, the gorilla, may prompt one to take positive steps toward eradicating such injustices. This then allows a higher level of awareness to evolve. Ping, in his own way, possessed such an awareness. He attempted to re-establish the relationship between man and animal. It was Ping who succeeded for a short period of time in rebalancing the scales which have for so long been tilted in man's favor. Ping succeeds in gaining that "simple" concept of awareness while society fails miserably.

Indeed, Boston's unraveling of injustices and the overwhelming sense of destruction apparent in A Stranger at Green Knowe serves to make us more aware of the environmental apathy which has befallen our society. Lawson's sense of optimism also serves to increase our environmental awareness. Both qualities are needed when attempting to identify good environmental literature. However, where does one seek solutions to these problems? Surely, one must include in this repertoire a book which offers solutions to all that is wrong with the environment. How does an individual eradicate environmental injustice? How does he

maintain a semblence of optimism? Robert C. O'Brien's Mrs. Frisby and the Bats of NIMH provides some insight into environmental problems as well as offering some solutions.

> "I don't believe that," Jenner said, "You've got this idea stuck in your head. We've got to start from nothing, to work hard and build a rat civilization. I say, why start from nothing if you can start with everything? We've already got a civilization." "No, we haven't. We're just living on the edge of somebody else's, like fleas on a dog's back. If the dog drowns, the fleas drown too."[5]

In the end, Jenner's mechanized dog causes a short circuit and Jenner and his comrades fall prey to their own mechanization.

If O'Brien makes us aware of anything, it is the fact that man must begin to re-evaluate that which he calls civilization. Nicodemus, the leader of the rats of NIMH, had enough foresight to realize that his mechanized civilization would in the end, destroy the very nature of that which is rat. The technology that the rats had created was beginning to destroy the relationship between themselves, as well as the relationship they had established with other living things. The rats in the end gained a sense of awareness which in reality saved them from their own destruction. Man, on the other hand, was not aware of the ill-fated relationship which existed between himself and technology. O'Brien leaves man shuffling through the garbage and dirt which so neatly conceals the instruments of destruction left behind by the rats.

O'Brien offers a very simple solution to the problems posed in Boston's and Lawson's books. Ping embodies it as do the "Folks," and the Rats of NIMH. They all discover it in their own personal way. It is somewhat of a cliche, yet its meaning is so clear: a return to nature. Ping as well as "The Folks"

possessed throughout their stories qualities which made them environmentally aware. This awareness was woven into the fabric of their character. Yet O'Brien's rats had to discover for themselves the threads which make up the fabric of awareness. They had to discover the concept just as man must do if he is to retain that which makes him human. O'Brien enables us to discover this key to awareness and in doing so he offers us a choice: do we trudge blindly on towards destruction as did Jenner, or do we look back and return to Thorn Valley as did Nicodemus.

> Mrs. Frisby watched them as they loped away swiftly in single file and disappeared from her view, back into the deep forest and up the mountainside. The rear guard was gone, bound for Thorn Valley.[6]

Other characters have heard the call to return to nature, but nature beckons only to a chosen few. Buck, from Jack London's The Call of the Wild, finally returns to that world which was intimately known by his ancestors, and has since been lost through the interferences of man.

> Night came on, and full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land till it lay bathed in ghostly day. And with the coming of night, brooding and mourning by the pool, Buck became alive to the stirring of the new life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made. He stood up listening and scenting. From far away drifted a faint, sharp yelp, followed by a chorus of similar sharp yelps. As the moments passed, the yelps grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the center of open space and listened. It was the call, the many noted call, sounding more luringly and compellingly than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey.[7]

Greta, in Fog Magic, returns periodically to a world which was made magic by nature's mist. The foggy enchantment of Blue Cove calls Greta as it calls all of us who are aware of the power of nature.

> It is the things you were born to that give you satisfaction in this world, Greta. Leastwise, that's what I think. And maybe the fog's one of them. Not happiness, mind! Satisfaction isn't always happiness by a long sight; then again, it isn't sorrow either. But the rocks and spruces and the fogs of your own land are things that nourish you.[8]

Chibi, the character in Crow Boy, has captured a keen awareness of the natural world. The reader cannot help sensing the peace which Chibi experiences as a result of his simple understanding of nature.

> On the playground, if he closed his eyes and listened, Chibi could hear many different sounds near and far. And Chibi could hold and watch insects and grubs that most of us wouldn't touch or look at. Chibi knew all the places where the wild grapes grew. And when his work was done he would buy a few things for his family. Then he would set off for his home on the far side of the mountain, stretching his growing shoulders proudly like a grown-up man. And from around the turn of the mountain would come a crow call -- the happy one.[9]

So as the Rats of NIMH carry themselves away to Thorn Valley, the "aware" man is left with the overpowering feeling that somehow he too must go along. Disrobed of all that is man-made, he must enter the valley in his own natural state. Only then will it become possible for a reconciliation between man and nature. The books which Lawson, Boston, and O'Brien have written serve to make children as well as grownups aware of the great task which is ahead of us. Their themes echo the thought that man has been careless in his treatment of the environment.

> The most priceless possession of the human race is the wonder of the world. Yet, latterly, the utmost endeavors of mankind have been directed towards the dissipation of that wonder .... Science analyzes everything to its component parts and neglects to put them together again.[10]

It is man's responsibility to see that the natural and cultural elements of our world are not set at odds with each other. It is man's responsibility to make children aware of this responsibility. Lawson, Boston, and O'Brien have not shirked this responsibility. They have in effect, "put our world back

together again." They give us the following advice: As the "Folks," we must become aware of our responsibility to nature, for indeed, at this point in time, certain elements of nature are dependent on man for their survival. As Ping, we must develop that compassion which is deserved by all living things. As the rats of NIMH, we must have the foresight to see what technology is doing to our relationship with all living things. If we do not, the result is most evident. When we have captured or have enabled our children to capture the spirits possessed by such literary characters as "The Folks", Ping, and the Rats of NIMH, then we may consider ourselves environmentally aware.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert Lawson, The Tough Winter (New York, 1954), p. 17.

[2]Ibid., p. 10.

[3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Lucy Maria Boston, A Stranger at Green Knowe (New York, 1961), p. 38.

[5]Robert C. O'Brien, Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH (New York, 1971), p. 175.

[6]Ibid., p. 222.

[7]Jack London, The Call of the Wild (New York, 1968), p. 110.

[8]Julia L. Sauer, Fog Music (New York, 1943), p. 24

[9]Taro Yashima, Crow Boy (New York, 1955), pp. 20,21, and 22.

[10]Kenneth Grahame, The Wind and the Willows (Cleveland, 1966), p. 9 of forward.

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THE NEED FOR A NEW VISIBILITY: THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC

MCTE Conference -- May 4-5, 1979

St. Cloud, Minnesota

A RADIO JOURNALISM MINI-PROJECT

Betty Ohman
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Half way into those fifty-odd teaching days that stretch between Christmas vacation and Easter break, I felt myself going down for the third time. The survival kit that kept me afloat right then was a radio journalism mini-project.

I worked with four classes of eighth graders divided into eight small groups, arbitrarily assigning 13 or 14 students to each. The K-I-D-S Radio Station — call letters voted by the members of one particular group -- chose its managing director, an engineer, three announcers, one weather person, and three each for the news, sports, and advertising departments. These choices were made by the students themselves with the consent of the student director, according to the strengths and interests of each.

Before we arrived at this point, however, we had listened to radio newscasts and commercials. We studied the difference between news and editorials. We analyzed commercials and decided which kind appealed to teenagers. We auditioned announcers on a cassette tape. Everyone tried out. We listed every possible source of news within the school plus a few impossibles. We practised interviewing to get the facts right the first time. We made a field trip to our local radio station to watch the Noon News and talk to the professionals.

I led the classes through these discoveries by using a contract-type study guide that had plenty of space to write notes, to staple examples of writing,to copy lists of whatever the student thought he might need to produce a five-minute

news program. After that, all we needed was a small recorder and a cassette tape for each group. K-F-U-N and K-I-D-S and all the other broadcast companies used the school's conference room as a studio. It served well because it was not too large, and it was in a prestigious location. It was quiet when we closed the doors. The deadlines for each company were scheduled so that a five-minute newscast aired each day just prior to the regular morning and afternoon announcements. When the groups were ready to go to work, I promoted myself to Chairman of the Board and spoke only to the managing directors. I also wrote hall passes for the roving reporters.

Results of the project pleased me. Each group taped a five minute news, weather, and sports program complete with three commercials. Everyone in school listened to the programs. All the students involved felt good about the final product. This much I had hoped for, but I was delighted with the bonuses. The writers edited each others' work. If a story ran too long, the writer honed it. If a reporter left out an important fact, a friend noticed. The advertising departments prepared imaginitive and often clever spot announcements like the one offering for rent to any seventh grader a locker in his own area, clean, with a lock that worked and the quality that made it such a rare value, absolutely empty. One reporter became so involved in his story he could not trust anyone else to read it aloud, and so for one broadcast, we had an extra announcer.

The two weeks flew by. Everyone learned by doing. At times, ordinary eighth grade problems popped out at us. We solved them as best we could and kept going. There was a deadline to meet. Some learned to write concise,

factual sentences. Some learned to read faster out loud, and to respect time limits and deadlines. Others learned to plan ahead so the school bell wouldn't destroy an entire taping session. Most learned to listen with a more critical ear, and to admire an original way of saying something.

And they were admired in return. One middle scholar expressed it this way, "Hey. You're lucky. When I get up to eighth grade, can we do that?"

TEACHING NEW WORDS FOR WHICH STUDENTS ALREADY HAVE A CONCEPT

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(This is the third in the series of articles on the work in teaching vocabulary being done by Professor Michael Graves of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, and his graduate students. The fourth article will appear in the fall MEJ.)

This paper, the third in the present series of papers on types of vocabulary to teach, discusses the teaching of words which are in neither students' oral vocabulary nor in their reading vocabulary but for which they have an available concept.[1] Say, for instance, that students come across the word lackadaisical, one which they have neither spoken nor written before. Though they may be able to sound out the word and break it into its various parts correctly, coming up with something like "lak a day zi kal," this alone is not enough to provide the meaning. From sounding out lackadaisical, students are likely to come up with meanings for words that sound like parts of it. Does lackadaisical have to do with a missing daisy? Or a missing day? Is it anything like dazed or a day's cycle? No. The problem with understanding lackadaisical doesn't lie with discovering its sound; the problem is to discover its meaning. However, if students already have concepts similar to the meaning of a new word, establishing a link won't be so difficult a task. In this case, if students understand inactive and unexcited, they are likely to be able to understand lackadaisical quite easily.

[1] A paper by M.F. Graves, MEJ Spring 1978, discusses words which are in students' oral vocabulary but which they cannot read; a paper by R. J. Ryder, MEJ Fall 1978, discusses new meanings for words which are already in the students' reading vocabulary but have more than one meaning.

A closer look at words for which students already have a concept, but for which they lack an appropriate meaning follows in the sections ahead. Among the topics to be discussed are the importance of learning these words, examples of such words, the extent to which these words need to be taught, the importance of these words for various ages and grades, the importance of these words for different ability levels, how to identify words of this sort, and teaching these words.

The Importance of Learning These Words

Is it important for students to understand new words like lackadaisical, illuminate, or scrutinize? Is it worthwhile spending precious class time on these sorts of new words when students already have other words which mean much the same as the new ones? Much evidence exists which shows that a varied vocabulary can pay off. Most important to students is the fact that knowing more words can lead to success in school and on the job. Scores on intelligence tests, college entrance exams, and other standardized tests correlate highly with vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, a broader vocabulary has been shown to have links to job promotions. According to Thomas and Robinson (1976) in their book on improving reading:

> Did you know that big vocabularies and big paychecks seem to go right along together — and the same goes for small ones? More than any other factor studied, vocabulary appears to be related to money making success.... Foremen had better vocabularies than the men who worked under them. Section managers had better vocabularies than foremen. And so on up the ladder. (pp.14-15)

Perhaps less enticing to students, but equally enticing to teachers, is the fact that bigger vocabularies mean students will comprehend material easier and faster and will generally succeed at reading tasks. Reading is most enjoyable to students if they are successful at it. And trying to read something, even if

they are greatly interested in it, becomes cumbersome if too many unknown words block the message. So, though this may overstate the case, spending time learning words like lackadaisical, illuminate, and scrutinize in the present can help shape one's success in the future.

Examples of Such Words

Examples of words for which students have the concept but do not know are found in magazines, newspapers, and books. There are long ones: antidisestablishmentarianism, mulligatawny, mosstrooper; there are short ones: sans, curt, mulct; there are new ones: robotics, futurist, space shuttle; and there are old ones: exuberant, grandiose, obsolete. And they are all hard initially simply because neither the written word nor its spoken equivalent carries any meaning for students.

Extent to Which These Words Need to be Taught

Luckily, readers are often able to assign sensible meaning to words on their own through the use of context clues, dictionaries, past experiences, or the "ask thy neighbor" approach. Suppose students don't know what illuminated means. But from looking at the context they find:

> The thoughts of Confucius have illuminated the minds of the Chinese people for centuries.

Context here lets students know that the word is a past tense verb or action word describing what effect Confucius' thoughts had on the Chinese people. Students do not do this consciously, of course, but as native speakers they do understand the type of word that "fits" the sentence. Students will probably fit in words like "helped" or "changed" in the place of illuminated.

By using a dictionary the student finds:

illuminated: to give light; enlighten.

From past experience and knowledge students may recall hearing someone talk about Confucius' many wise sayings and this knowledge combined with the definition of the word will provide an adequate meaning.

Or, finally, they may use the "ask thy neighbor" approach,

"Hey, Ralph, what's this word mean?"

"It means lit up, dummy."

Though informal methods of vocabulary instruction like the ones above are often helpful and eliminate the need to teach some words, formal systematic classroom instruction is very often the most effective way of insuring that students assign a correct, meaningful label to an important new word.

Importance of These Words for Various Ages and Grades

Some teaching of words of this sort is probably done at all grades, but teaching the connections between the old concepts and the new words becomes increasingly important as students advance through the grades. Whereas in the primary grades the vocabulary of reading materials were closely controlled, it no longer is for students in the higher grades. And this is rightly so. Until students become fluent in reading, having words in the material be ones which they already know simplifies the beginning reading task; once students decode the word they have the meaning. But expanding vocabulary beyond what one already knows is an important learning goal, as we have already seen. New words for which students lack a meaning but have a similar concept are often the key to understanding a classroom assignment or a world situation. Students in the junior or senior high who come across the words "in tandem" (meaning "together with" or

"along with") will need the meaning to understand the present reading as well as future readings.

Importance of these Words for Different Ability Levels

As the number of new words increases with age, so too do the differences between age-mates. That is, the number of new words used in texts starts increasing dramatically in the middle and secondary grades and so too do the differences in the vocabularies of individual students in these grades. The teaching task begins to be distinctly more complicated. Some readers possess a broader word background than others and hence don't need to be taught certain words. Other readers are under a severe handicap because of their lack of word power and must be taught a good many more words. Unfortunately, this means that not only do better readers know more to begin with, but they can handle more difficult words in a given lesson because of the additional background they have to call upon. For the poorer students it's a Catch-22 situation: There's more for them to learn, and they are less capable of learning it.

Poorer readers, moreover, will be able to handle fewer words and will need more teaching and reinforcement in order to establish strong associations between the new words and their meanings. Poorer readers also need to be taught to make full use of any available contextual and structural clues. Most good readers, of course, already make use of these clues, which together with their wide reading habits has led them to acquire their expansive vocabularies in the first place.

Briefly then, time spent teaching new vocabulary for which students already have a concept is extremely worthwhile for all students but becomes most important as students reach the middle and upper grades. In the higher grades,

the number of such words used in texts increases, and students' individual knowledge of such words becomes very different. Good readers need to be taught fewer words, but can probably be taught much more difficult ones. Poorer readers can handle fewer new words and will need more instruction and reinforcement. But all students will benefit from vocabulary instruction with this sort of words.

How to Identify Words of This Sort

There are a number of possible sources for finding words of this sort to teach. Among them are teachers' intuitions, students' queries, word lists, and the material you will be using. Almost certainly, the vast majority of the words to be taught should be culled from the content you're going to cover, for there are so many of these words that might be taught that if teachers don't restrict themselves to those in the content that is to be covered, the teaching task will be impossible. A brief preview of upcoming reading material will immediately limit your sample of words to teach. But even choosing words from your materials alone leaves too much. Consequently, you will have to use other sources as a way to limit the words to teach. Most likely, the teacher can, from past experience, determine which words will be most important to the subject matter and important to the text. Teachers are also likely to have some ideas of what their students do and do not know and hence can make some choices based on that information. Or the teacher can test students from time to time to discern what they know. Testing should be done occasionally to sharpen teachers' intuitions, since students' knowledge is not stable from one class to another or one year to the next. The teacher can also ask students what they do and do not know, but again,

students should be checked from time to time to be certain that students actually know what they say they know.

Another important factor to consider when choosing words is frequency. Usually, words which are important to the text and the subject matter will be more important to the student if they are more frequent rather than less frequent. The learning of words that appear more frequently in the language is more likely to be reinforced, and thus such words are more likely to be retained and used.

To help teachers determine frequency, the Carroll Word Frequency Book (Carroll, Davies, and Richman, 1971) is useful. In constructing this resource, Carroll and his associates sampled from a total of five million running words in reading materials used in grades three through nine. The final list contains 86,000 words. The Carroll list ranks each of the 86,000 words from most to least frequent and gives the frequency with which the words appear in the written language. For example, the frequency book indicates that the word whooping ranks 10,000th out of 86,000 words and occurs once every 77,000 words on the average. One problem with the Carroll text is that it does not distinguish between different meanings of a word. So though there are different meanings for whooping (as in whooping cough versus whooping crane) the word is listed only once, with no distinction made for meaning.

Another resource useful in selecting words to teach is The Living Word Vocabulary (Dale & O'Rourke, 1976). This text lists 43,000 words for grades 4 through 6, their meanings, and the grade level at which 67 to 84 percent of the students tested knew each word and its accompanying meaning. For the word

whoop or whooping, for instance, there are four meanings, so the word is listed four times as shown below.

Grade	Score	Word or Phrase	Meaning
6	73%	whoop	a loud gasping noise
6	78%	whoop	yell
4	90%	whooping cough	a children's disease
8	73%	whooping crane	a large white & black bird

Thus we can assume that approximately 73% of the students in an average sixth grade would know the meaning of "a loud gasping noise." While the book doesn't indicate the percentage of students in other grades who know the word with that meaning, commonsense suggests that a smaller percentage of the students below sixth grade would know the word and a larger percentage of the students above sixth grade would know it.

Both the Living Word Vocabulary and The Carroll Word Frequency Book can be useful in helping to decide which words to teach. One caution, though. One shouldn't teach an entire list. Instead pick words out of texts, and pick ones important to the text. Then teach them before students read the text. It is simply easier for students to "learn words if they live them" (Thomas and Robinson, 1976).

Teaching These Words

Drill and repetition usually are not enough to insure that students really learn a word before they come across it in their reading. According to Spache and Spache (1973),

> Words are not learned as of a certain date because of a certain number of repetitions. Rather, words are thoroughly understood only as a group of associations is built around each word, associations which include multiple meaning, and visual, auditory, and perhaps kinesthetic imagery. (p. 511)

There may be times when you simply want to supply students with a meaning though.

If a word is a particularly infrequent one, such as poltroon, meaning "a coward," it may not be worth the time it takes to help students thoroughly learn it. Or if there are too many new words in a piece, such as in Hamlet or Macbeth, spending time on all of them is too tedious and boring and probably would result in teaching too many for students to retain anyway. Finally, we sometimes want students to read for enjoyment, and time spent teaching vocabulary may be deflating; all the student needs is a definition (exuberant means "very happy") to be able to go on. And certainly a good deal of the time when reading for enjoyment, the student need not be taught all of the words to understand what is read.

Most of the time, though, we do want to preteach words which we want students to retain. Then they will not only understand the word the first time they see it in context but they will remember it in subsequent sightings. Various theories of memory show the need for the human mind to immediately organize and classify incoming information, to put it into a proper slot so to speak if the new information is to be remembered. (Norman, 1976; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; Kintsch, 1977) As an instructional method it is effective to present new words in some sort of organizational group, such as words pertaining to Australia — outback, down under, boomerang, aborigine. More difficult words can be presented in a group with members of an old category students already understand. You can surround the new word neophyte with words which mean something similar — new, young, beginner, and novice.

Presenting the words in a context similar to or the same as one students will encounter when they read is another aid and helps arouse associations.

Also, to test the learning of new words, it helps to test them in context.

In general, there is a three step procedure for preteaching vocabulary for which students lack a meaning but have a concept. First, provide the word in an appropriate context. Next, relate the word to student's past knowledge. And finally get students to invoke some sort of concrete images related to the word. These steps are easy to follow and only require that a few minutes be spent on each word that will be taught. As an example, the words lackadaisical and outback will be taken through all three steps below.

Lackadaisical

Step one. Provide the word in an appropriate context. Suppose that it appears in the following context:

> Dr. Andrews assigned Monica to stuff the envelopes with anti-smoking literature. Unfortunately, Monica had assumed that she would be answering phones and greeting people at the Club's Cancer Society Booth. Not getting the job she wanted made Monica rather lackadaisical about stuffing the envelopes.

This passage provides certain contextual clues which can aid in pinning down meaning. Helping students to spot contextual clues is important, since they can use such clues outside the classroom to assign meaning. The syntax of the context in this passage indicates that lackadaisical is an adjective. Again, this is not to say that students will identify it with the word "adjective," but they will know from its position in the sentence that it denotes an adjectival sort of meaning, a trait of Monica's. From the meaning of the context, students could guess such adjectival synonyms as angry, sloppy, disenchanted, and uncaring and go on reading. But if students are to really retain the word, and if the teacher is to ensure that students have an accurate meaning, the word will have to be taught.

Step Two. Relate the word to students' past knowledge.

Here the teacher can provide the meaning, in this case "unexcited" or "inactive." Students already understand these words and have used them before. They can substitute what they already know in the place of the new word and make sense of the passage.

Step Three. Invoke concrete images about the word.

To make lackadaisical more concrete, the students can think of how they might use the word. Have they ever been lackadaisical? Have they ever wanted to go to a movie with friends, but instead had to mow the lawn or clean up their room? Were they then perhaps lackadaisical about completing the chore? What other situations can students think of where someone might be lackadaisical? The more concrete images that the teacher can arouse in students the more solid the learning will be.

Outback.

Step One. Provide the word in an appropriate context. Assume that outback appears in the following sentence:

> The outback in Australia is very barren and peopled with uncivilized tribesmen.

To teach the word, you could ask students to guess the possible meaning of the underlined word or leave the word out of the sentence and ask them to guess what word is missing. (Likely guesses are words like "desert" or "wilderness.")

Step Two. Relate the word to students' past knowledge.

In this case, the teacher can tell students that the new vocabulary word has to do with Australia and get them to discuss what they know about Australia. As a further measure, the teacher can get students onto a more familiar, but related topic; they could talk about things like the boondocks, the sticks, and the wild

here in the United States.

Step Three. Invoke concrete images about the word.

The most graphic way to imprint the word outback in students' minds is to bring in a film about Australia or have books and pictures available. Use these as supplements to teach the word.

These then are some methods of teaching these words. After being exposed to these methods and encountering the words in their reading several times, students will have cemented the words in their memory.

Conclusion

In summary, words for which students already have a concept but lack a meaning are abundant in the reading material of middle and upper grade students. Since there are too many possible words to teach, teachers need to restrict themselves to those words found in material they will be using and important to the text and the subject matter. In addition, teachers can use their own intuitions, students' questions, and word lists to pare down the number of words to teach. Once the words have been chosen, a few minutes of classroom time needs to be taken for preteaching the words. Each word should be first set in context, then related to students' past experiences, and finally given concrete interpretation.

Words for which students already have a concept but lack a meaning can certainly be learned. But learning the associations between a new word and an old concept will take more than one exposure to the word and will require more than simply giving students the meaning of the word. Of course, this takes time. But the few minutes of classroom time spent on preteaching and reinforcing these

words can lead to a lifetime of knowing and using them. It certainly seems worth the effort.

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FOR WRITING STANDARDS: IT IS BEST TO ASK FOR EVERYTHING

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In the mid 1950's, in my first years of teaching writing, before becoming confused about standards and expectations, I regularly told my college classes that the norm for acceptable writing was a paper free of errors in spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation; a paper limited to a manageable idea, developed with illustrations and evidence; a paper reasonably organized with connecting links joining the various parts. A paper that satisfied these essential criteria was worth at least a "C." It was worth an even better grade if the idea or the experience related in it were especially distinctive, instructive, or interesting. I think this was a common pattern among teachers at that time. The major change I would make now is to reverse the sequence in reciting criteria. It is doubtful, however, whether I or anyone else consistently maintained this standard. But uncertainty about standards is less damaging than insistence upon an inadequate standard.

It is easy to remember many students, in those days mostly girls, intimating that error-free writing should be worth an "A." Other students, mostly boys, argued more openly that making a fuss over spelling and punctuation errors was a waste of time. When they graduate, they will hire low-salaried secretaries with sufficient competence to solve such petty mechanical problems for them. Instead of encircling and underlining a couple of dozen minor typographical errors, the teacher should be admiring the quality of their ideas, even though these ideas too often seem painfully commonplace. I didn't always have the

presence of mind to respond properly to such challenges.

Then and now, most students enrolled in courses requiring writing have had little previous understanding of what is involved in meaningful or persuasive writing. Saying something in writing that hasn't been said before, or that is designed to cause a change in people's minds or actions, and for which one cannot count upon a predictably favorable response from readers, is not only very hard work requiring a variety of skills: it is also risky. It requires a moral attitude that patiently accepts the possibility of thankless striving; and it requires a habit of mind willing to struggle with the unpredictable and the momentarily unmanageable. These are requirements for which students receive too little preparation either in or out of school. Students need to experience both the practical techniques and the emotional uncertainties that accompany creative activity. Practically speaking, insisting upon originality as a consistent virtue in all papers above the "C" level would mean that writing classes would be limited to far lower grade averages than most classes in a college because originality is hard to produce regularly and it is rarely insisted upon anywhere else. But one doesn't always have to penalize the writer for failing to succeed; the crucial point is to teach students to strive for meaningful expression. It is better to compromise on grades than to falsify the purpose in teaching writing. There are many teaching methods that could increase the frequency of original writing especially if the methods are used widely enough. But first we must review some common problems in teaching writing.

The relatively small number of composition teachers working on the frontier

of new developments probably change their major points of emphasis as often as productive scholars in other areas. During this past decade, invention has enjoyed a long-delayed revival of interest. One might guess, however, on the basis of patterns in popular textbooks and in typical conversations about writing that exercises in such mechanical conventions as spelling, punctuation, and usage, and practice in basic elements of style continue to dominate the thinking of too many teachers when they try to identify good writing. The recently publicized trend to go back to the basics, in my mind seems aimed more at avoiding that rather limited type of bad writing than encouraging a more useful kind of good writing.

The emphasis on mechanics ties in with a broader tendency in the teaching of writing, the tendency to emphasize most strongly that which can be demonstrated most confidently. Consistency is rewarded more generously than distinctive achievement. Thus mechanics, style, and the easier principles of arrangement, useful for such modes of expression as narration, comparison and contrast, analysis, or argument, are taught widely and frequently with what seems like momentary success. These aspects of writing are the easiest to teach. It has been noticed that a lot of students do well with what they are asked to do in a writing class, but seem to have trouble later on in their academic or professional careers. One might infer that neither in their writing classes nor anywhere else have they been taught to think for themselves; their skills are more passive, primarily for recognizing that which is correct or desirable.

The most difficult aspects of writing in teaching and in evaluation are discovery, originality, problem solving, or advocacy of change. All of these

can be subsumed in the rhetorical term — invention. These aspects provide the motivation for most significant writing in the practical world. One would hope they provide motivation for academic writing as well. It is safe to guess that most teachers and most students favor originality over triteness and problem solving over mere recitation; but these more desirable goals probably cannot be reached consistently. A consequence is that the desire for consistency, in too many cases, works against originality.

Our academic traditions, to a considerable extent, encourage the writing of commonplace materials as exercises in mechanics and style. Good spelling, choice of words, punctuation, sentence structure, and transitions are all important to master, and continue to be expected of an educated person. But mechanical exercises with trivial substance are unlikely to motivate a person to take pride in his writing. I like to think that a chance to communicate an original discovery, however small or tenuous, would generate the pride to motivate improvement in the more mechanical skills as well. Mechanical exercises, even of a mundane type, may eventually contribute to greater accuracy, but should always be identified as subordinate in the larger scheme of writing objectives. Everyone should avoid distracting the reader's attention from the substance of what is being said. But concern for substance should precede attention to mechanics.

Similarly, the written recitation of material just learned from reading or discussion, though a worthwhile and necessary classroom activity, does not tax the student's ability to use the more strenuous writing skills. For the right audience, recitation isn't necessarily commonplace or obvious. Much of

what most teachers include in their lectures may in fact be recitation, with very little attempt at original interpretation, critical analysis, or evaluation. But both the good teacher and the good student should do more than just recite, whether in speaking or writing. Almost any kind of original writing involves some use of standardized materials to start with; but a questioning process or critical analysis opens the possibilities for distinctive change. One person may learn how to present an idea more fully, with fresh details; or another may look more deeply into it to show how the basic principles tie in with other, seemingly far removed areas of experience. It is also worthwhile to work with a basic idea because one sees a problem in it, something that needs correcting or redefining, to make it more exact, more true, more in accord with observable data, in effect, more honest. There are modest types of discovery like these that all teachers present in their classes every year and also present, though less frequently, in writing for professional journals.

There are potential parallels for all of this in student experiences. Even some seemingly below-average students are capable of seeing a minor flaw or inconsistency in ideas that the teacher has never noticed. I cannot measure this next point for its reliability, but suspect that if a group of students feels that correcting or exposing a problem in class is both appropriate and rewarding, if a critical, questioning attitude toward study materials is encouraged, those students will show us more original thinking and writing. Not only tolerance but appreciation for dissent is necessary for a dynamic intellectual atmosphere. But it is not easy for a teacher to maintain a magnanimous attitude toward those regularly challenging or correcting him.

We should try to develop such an attitude both for ourselves and our students.

There is a need for a spirit of cooperation among most faculty in most disciplines to put into practice the philosophy of teaching alluded to in these previous pages; but no one needs to make sacrifices. This is not the place to say much more right now about rhetorical invention. Most teachers would do well enough just to describe for students the techniques they use in gathering data and solving problems in the reports and essays they write themselves. I continue to be skeptical about the increasing use of extrinsic rewards to encourage high academic achievement, and thus do not advocate changes in grading systems or extra credit for outstanding writing. There are some rather easy contributions, however, that all teachers can make to the cause of encouraging better writing. First, they can give more assignments that require students to dig up, select, interpret, and organize information on their own, for which there is no predetermined formula or pattern that assures their success. Second, even when asking for a more limited writing assignment, like a recitation in a quiz or in an essay test, teachers can describe in general terms what they think of as a desirable standard of good writing to remind students of the difference between a limited academic exercise and a more productive writing assignment. Third, teachers in all fields of study should talk to their classes more about their own writing experiences. Especially in preparation for reports and research papers, teachers should give students a clear picture, not only of standards and of research and writing techniques, but also of writing problems that everyone experiences,the need for constant

questioning and rechecking, the uncertainties, the roadblocks, the false starts, and the frustrations in productive scholarship. The myth that good writing is an easy, natural skill that one either inherits or might develop through good training, should be destroyed. Fourth, more attention should be given to unusually admirable writing achievements. Students should see copies of outstanding papers from previous years. It wouldn't hurt to praise our students who excel on occasional assignments as glowingly as those who maintain a high average. In letters of recommendation, I think it helps to cite a particular paper a student has prepared that is much superior to what is normally thought of as an "A" paper. And lastly, the teaching of writing, whether presented by an English professor, a historian, or a biologist, should emphasize that learning to write is a life-long activity that needs continuous review, practice, adjustments, and wholesome critical reaction.

It is unfortunate that courses in writing are often thought of as elementary, as preparatory for more specialized work. In reality, students need to know that good writing is as difficult and unpredictable as any other outstanding achievement, and that the degree of difficulty increases in proportion to the sophistication of material written about. All of this complicates the question of what is a "good enough" standard in writing. It may frighten students, but we should continue to tell them that they have to write better than they imagine themselves capable of writing.

RESEARCH ON COMPOSING: POINTS OF DEPARTURE, edited by Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell. National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

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The skillful editing of Charles Cooper and Lee Odell has produced a compilation of essays determined to upset traditional views of writing in Research on Composing: Points of Departure. True to title, the aim is redirection of research into written composition. Each essay raises questions and suggests new directions.

Essays in Research on Composing: Points of Departure are chosen to prod educators and researchers into unexplored areas. The introductory essay, "Discourse Theory: Implications for Research," by Odell, Cooper and Cynthia Courts begins the close scrutiny of basic concepts in the field. Ways are suggested to test existing theories and challenge status quo.

Richard E. Young's "Paradigms and Problems" emphasizes the difficulties inherent in invention. Discovering a subject/topic is an area largely ignored by researchers. Young places most of the blame on text materials. Uniformly rigid, texts concentrate on exterior form. Explore the classical influence, suggests Young, for answers to the inner composition.

Similar in point is Walter Petty's essay, "The Writing of Young Children." Petty advocates a study of the processes young children use. Teachers can observe the act of writing, the effects of environment on writing and the choice of topics, thus adding to the body of available material.

Of value to teachers is "Story Workshop: Writing from Start to Finish." John Schultz, like Richard Young, is concerned with invention. Schultz offers

a set of procedures illustrated with workshop sessions in composing: Because "Story Workshop" assumes the creative process can be enhanced by a director, Schultz underlines the element of assignment in composing.

These few, of the ten essays in Research on Composing: Points of Departure, are highlights. Two are summarized more fully because of the possibility for immediate classroom application.

"The Composing Process and the Function of Writing" is James Britton's exploration of current trends and their limitations. Britton sees writing as two separate abilities rather than the one single ability tradition sees.

The audience category is identified as one determiner of the approach the writer will take. Britton lists ten categories of audience-writer relationships. How a writer perceives this relationship will differ according to task.

The second of Britton's identified abilities is that of function. This is related to what is intended and how it affects the reader. The function of writer as participant, as creator and as spectator control how the writer will approach the material. Britton asks what factors control this decision, what happens in the composing to move the writer from one role to another.

Donald M. Murray's "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery" is a call for research. Rewriting, accuses Murray, is the least researched, least understood and -- usually -- least taught skill. Writing is the "process of using language to discover meaning in experience and to communicate it." This process must include revision.

Revision is the understanding and communication of what has appeared in the first draft. The internal revision deals with questions of subject, adequate

information, form and language. Editing and proofreading are handled in the external revision. Obviously, states Murray, the most important point of discovery occurs during internal revision. Here is where the writer comes to terms with what he has written.

Research in Composing: Points of Departure can be an important resource for educators. It reminds us that there are no set methods of teaching composition, no hard and fast rules that will lead all students to excel. It is, in a sense, a call to explore, redefine and experiment with the composing process. It is a beginning.

CHOICES: A VARIETY OF COMPOSITION COURSE READINGS

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Not least among the many problems we teachers of composition face is that of content in student themes. We are quite used to emphasizing the obviously and easily corrigible errors in spelling, punctuation, usage, sentence structure, paragraph coherence, and strategies of rhetorical development, but what can we make of a theme that is free of bleeding red marks, is structured so tightly that the outline bones protrude, but yet is replete with banal and superficial assertions about tired topics? Do we give A's to that kind of paper? The student is, after all, writing correct and structured prose. Or, recognizing that verbal expression is the outward dress of the inner idea, do we also demand of our students stimulating thought about significant subjects? I believe that this choice between mechanical correctness and interesting content (though they are not mutually exclusive) presents a common dilemma in theme evaluation.

But if this is an accurate assessment, we should ask why the intellectual vacuum. I think that the reasons are several: Our community college students are typically young (preponderantly in their late teens) and therefore lack much in simple living experience. Further, they bring to college a background poor in information and concepts, for college is, after all, the place where one acquires both, a process of acquisition that freshmen are only just beginning. Finally (and obviously) our students are part of a culture whose dominant disease is creeping illiteracy, of which television is both symptom and partial cause. Given these conditions, where then are our students to find the stuff of A essays?

Traditionally, theme topics assigned to freshman students in the first composition course have been based on essays in readers. These readers typically include essays grouped according to various subjects: war and peace, community and individuality, love and hate, men and women, youth and age, blacks and whites, and whatever other issue is being currently bruited. For the second and third composition courses, readings have been in literature anthologies. Here instructors have played on their own turf, happily defining and characterizing genres as well as themes and, not coincidentally, exposing students to the most artful uses of language.

But, like many traditions in the last decade, these freshman composition readings have been subjected to pressures for change, pressures composed of many elements: the cry for "relevance" and for courses that will "sell"; a loosening of the strictures of a lock-step curriculum; changes in freshman English requirements at the transfer institutions; a recognition of the varying interests of both vocational and liberal arts students in a comprehensive community college; and, quite possibly too, instructors' desires to explore and present different subjects and newer writings. In response to these influences, the English Discipline of Normandale Community College several years ago began to offer courses in the transfer freshman English sequence that have worked to the advantage of both students and instructors.

This revision of the freshman composition program represents less a radical overhaul than an expansion of the traditional sequence. The first course, English 101, has been left unchanged and remains a brief review of the principles of paragraphing and a presentation of techniques for building longer papers. THE

FIVE-HUNDRED-WORD-THEME or a similar textbook or a rhetoric-handbook combination is one of the basic texts of the course. Combined with an essay reader, often focused on language, such rhetorics offer students the techniques of theme-writing, show them how to fashion the matrix. The filler or the content may then come from class discussion or private ruminations on the essays read or, just as frequently, from subjects common to the students' experience and interests.

The second- and third-quarter courses, however, have been expanded to include more than the conventional study and reading of the literary genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. For now the student may choose from an array of specialized readings of subjects ranging from alienation to archetypes, from Shakespeare to science fiction, from terror to the twenties' literature, and including as well traditional literary genres. Not all the courses are offered each quarter or even each year, but typically seven or eight choices are listed and described in the class schedule for any given quarter.

Incidentally, one small technical problem arose about how to record these courses on student transcripts. They are all titled "Freshman English," but each has a different number so as to preclude any duplication of courses. More important, however, is the fact that all these courses, numbered 104 to 130, share a common objective of correct, coherent, clear theme-writing, so that they remain primarily writing courses, merely having different reading emphases.

The "vertical" concentrated readings in these courses inspire thought-provoking theme topics that will be apparent in some examples of course titles and writing assignments which follow. As you will observe, these writing topics also suggest to the student ways of structuring a paper, thus showing how rhetoric

and content interweave and reinforce each other.

For example, a course titled "Poetry: An Introduction," includes a writing assignment in which the student is to "discuss and defend the meter and rhythm of the poem as a complement to the poet's meaning." In another course, "Myth and Archetype in Literature," the student may be asked to discuss the analogy between the character or event in a story or poem and the ritual archetype. The course which has as its reading emphasis science fiction may have as a writing assignment a theme comparing the values implicit in SF stories written in the 40's or 50's with those of the late 60's or 70's. "Terror," a course in which the distinction is made between Gothic horror and existential angst, may suggest a writing assignment that contrasts two stories which demonstrate each kind of terror. Still another course emphasizes the images of women in literature. Here a theme topic might be a discussion of women characters as submissive wives or as sex objects or as "old maids" in plays or stories. The instructor of a course titled "Satire" may assign a theme of definition of satire, "...its five or six essential characteristics. Tie each to specific satiric works." One final example is a course with the title "The Detective Story." Here the student may be asked to "Discuss the use of violence -- and its effect on the reader -- in Doyle, Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald."

This variety of choices (a list of all the titles is appended) has, we feel, resulted in several benefits to students. For one, the very possibility of choice has given them a greater degree of control over their academic careers and perhaps lessened some of the distaste with which students approach the required courses in composition. Further, within such a selection, they are

sure to find one or more courses that appeal to their special interests or backgrounds or that have particular relevance to their other course work, whether occupational or academic. As obvious examples, the student in law enforcement will surely find the detective story of special interest, just as the pre-engineering or nursing student will be a "natural" for science fiction. Similarly, second-generation descendants of immigrants would be enlightened by and have much to contribute to the course in ethnic literature, just as black students bring to black literature a unique understanding, and as both young and mature women profit by and enliven discussions of readings of women in literature.

But of most importance for courses in composition is the benefit of giving students something to say. As they read with a narrowed focus in one particular genre or topic, students may become minor "experts" with informed opinions that they are able to support by references to a number of texts. Whether they become specialists in a literary genre or in a literary theme, they have something of substance to write about. For instance, those who write of the post-holocaust theme in science fiction can use numerous novels and stories as theme content (Earth Abides, A Canticle for Leibowitz, "To the Chicago Abyss," "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," among others). Likewise, the readings of women in literature, whether as characters or as authors, surely furnish a galaxy of people whom students can analyze, classify, compare, and define. Students interested in their particular Scandinavian heritage, for example, will see parallels in the immigrant experiences of other national groups through the novels read in the course in ethnic literature (The Rise of David Levinsky,

Christ in Concrete, and Down These Mean Streets). Thus, rather than having a superficial and cursory acquaintance with unrelated literary works, students in these focused courses read pointedly and deeply, and thus have more to think and write about.

For these reasons — and incidentally because of instructor satisfaction — the English Discipline at Normandale Community College is on the whole pleased with this structuring of the freshman composition courses and has no immediate plans for change.

List of Course Titles -- English 104-127

104 Black Literature
106 Science Fiction
107 Satire
108 Introduction to Literature
109 Myth and Archetype in Literature
110 "Bitch" in Literature
111 Introduction to American Folklore
113 Terror
114 Women in Literature
115 Poetry in Three Dimensions
116 Shakespeare: In His Time and Ours
117 Writing as Self-Expression
118 Philosophy in Literature
119 Greek Tragedy
120 Alienation in American Life
121 American Literature of the 1920's and 1930's
122 Detective Story
123 Women as Writers
125 Theme in Literature
126 Irish Literature: an Introduction
127 Ethnic Literature in America

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NEW BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Norine Odland
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Freeman, Don. A POCKET FOR CORDUROY. illus. by the author. Viking, 1978 unpaged. $6.95.
A first grade child saw this one on the teacher's desk, took one look and said, "I love Corduroy -- can we read this right now?" After that it was always at some child's desk being looked at and read. Corduroy's misadventures as he decided he needed a pocket and wound up in a bag of wet laundry had just the right touch of everything to make it as popular as the earlier Corduroy story. 4-7

Glubok, Shirley and Alfred Tamarin. THE MUMMY OF RAMOSE. Harper, 1978. 82 pp. $6.79.
Ramose is a ruler in Egypt shortly before the time of King Tut. The story relates details about his life and death, especially procedures for mumifying. Illustrations are photos from Egyptian art. 10 up

Godden, Rumer. THE ROCKING HORSE SECRET. illus. by Juliet Stanwell Smith. Viking, 1978. 88 pp. $6.95.
Like a piece of taffy, chewy and sweet, the story leaves a good taste in your mouth. The mystery is well concealed and the conflict is definitely between good and bad. Beautifully smooth for reading either orally or silently. 7-10

Hoban, Lillian. ARTHUR'S PRIZE READER. Harper, 1978. 64 pp. $5.79.
Arthur and Violet are back again in another Hoban book children will read and enjoy again and again. The account of how children feel about learning to read reflects the real reading world. Situations and illustrations are humorous. 4-7

Hurd, Edith Thacher. DINOSAUR MY DARLING. illus. by Don Freeman. Harper, 1978. 32 pp. $6.79.
The combination of Hurd's story and Freeman's illustrations make this story of Joe and his backhoe who dig up a 2 million year old THING too good to miss. Young children read and reread the pictures and one six-year-old set her two-year-old sister down on the floor to tell the story to her.

L'Engle, Madeleine. SWIFTLY TILTING PLANET. Farrar, Straus, 1978. $7.95.
The third in the series of search for meaning of love, this one widens the concerns to the international scene. Legends and bygone times are vividly described. Meg, married to Calvin and pregnant, kythes with Charles Wallace and in the messages tells of the possible destruction of the world. Calvin's mother and the Murry twins are important characters in this book. Involved and symbolic so that the fantasy is incredible. 12 up

Marzollo, Jean. CLOSE YOUR EYES. illus. by Susan Jeffers. Dial, 1978. $7.95.
A lullaby with few words on each page but with stunning illustrations. Images will be vivid for children who have the privilege of seeing the book with time to study it slowly. 2-6

Paterson, Katherine. THE GREAT GILLY HOPKINS. Crowell, 1978. 150 pp. $6.79.
Third person narrative except for letters which insert some first person telling. Tone is upbeat and brisk even though the story revolves around Gilly's being a foster child, dreaming that her mother will come for her, handling disappointments, and facing the future with a power to make choices. Vivid portrayal through language as much as through action. 11 up

Prelutsky, Jack. THE QUEEN OF EENE. illus. by Victoria Chase. Greenwillow, 1978. 32 pp. $6.95.
A sure success from 5 to 10, probably before and beyond too. Mostly nonsense in the verses but a tinge of true humor appears in a few. Demands to be read aloud. 5-10

Preston, Edna Mitchell. WHERE DID MY MOTHER GO? illus. by Chris Conover. Four Winds, 1978. $7.95.
The pictures make this one attractive but it is the twist in the story that children appreciate. One child explained it: It's about leaving home without telling anyone but instead of putting the child in the wrong place the story puts the parent in that place. Cats are personified. 4-8

Raskin, Ellen. THE WESTING GAME. Dutton, 1978. 185 pp. $7.95.
Readers are intrigued with the mystery in a novel that offers much more if the reader wants it. The satire is done with a light touch, the philosophy is a challenge and not a preachment. Set in a glass apartment building on Lake Michigan, the characters invite readers to help them solve the puzzle of the mansion, the wealthy man, and the will he has left. 11 up

Rounds, Glen. MR. YOWDER AND THE GIANT BULL SNAKE. illus. by the author. Holiday House, 1978. unpaged. $5.95
The language is good for story telling; the accent, the rhythms, the dialect come through with no effort or phoniness. The tall tale is as good as its Mr. Yowder, "The World's Bestest and Fastest Sign Painter." Genuine humor and a bit of satire in this one. 8 up

Sarnoff, Jane and Ruffins, Reynold. TAKE WARNING — A Book of Superstitions. illus. by the authors. Scribners, 1978. 159 pp. $8.95
Organization is alphabetical with more listings for some letters than for others. For some there is a short explanation of origin. Black and white drawings add humor. High interest in this one. 8 up