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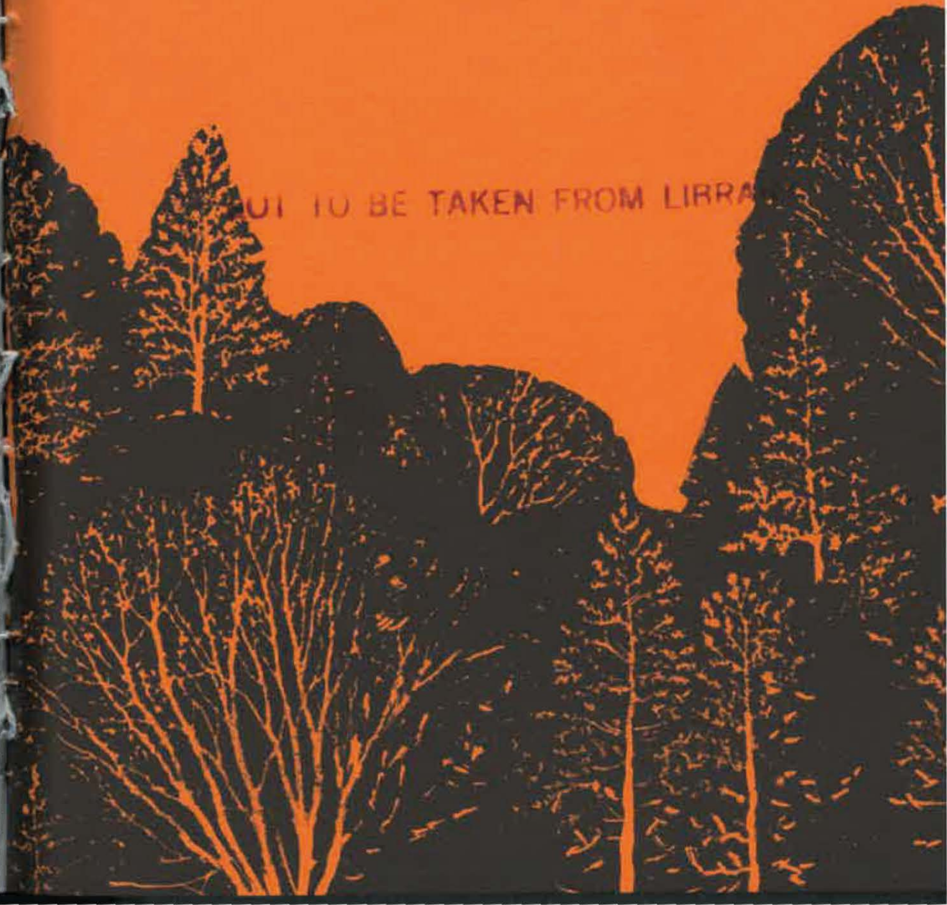

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THE MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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Dear fellow M.C.T.E. members,

It is with pleasure and a sense of anticipation that I write this letter to you as we approach our 25th anniversary as an organization. Our Minnesota Council is strong due to the many, unselfish efforts and energies given by YOU! I hope that those of you who are involved will continue to be active, and those of you who indicated interest in selected committees at our May conference will respond positively when contacted by section chairpersons. If you have a special language arts concern, interest, or willingness to serve on one of our committees or for the upcoming 1984 conference in Mankato, please write to me at 1601 Colorado Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55416.

This past spring the N.C.T.E. Executive Committee approved a plan by which the Council will undertake to co-sponsor a variety of inservice meetings. I proposed two such meetings to help fulfill professional growth needs of elementary and secondary English/language arts teachers. The members of the Executive and Advisory Boards were consulted and enthusiastically support these proposals.

The first workshop opportunity will focus on composition and research skills. Thea Holtan, M.C.T.E. member, former English teacher, and presently Media Specialist in Bloomington, will present her process which leads students through the various steps of putting together written or oral reports. The following dates have been set at the Ambassador Motel in Minneapolis: Saturday, February 4th for elementary teachers and Saturday, February 11th for secondary teachers.

The second proposal involves two 1/2 day Vocabulary Enrichment-Awareness workshops presented by Marlene Glaus, elementary teacher, M.C.T.E. member, and author of FROM THOUGHTS TO WORDS, a popular publication of N.C.T.E. These workshops are for elementary teachers and will be held at Centennial Elementary School in Richfield on Saturday, March 24th. More details about these workshops will follow in the winter and spring issues of our M.C.T.E. Newsletter. For now, just mark the dates down.

Another way to meet our professional needs is to be aware of other workshops, seminars, and conferences sponsored by related organizations. I've contacted leaders in the Minnesota Reading Association and Twin Cities Reading Association and asked that workshop dates not conflict as we do our planning and that ALL workshops be publicized to the members of our three organizations through our newsletters. This will maximize our reach and effectiveness, minimize postage costs and assure a variety of inservices.

Stay happy; enjoy your students; and be good to yourself,

Mary Jane Hanson

LITERATURE: CHANGING THE BALANCE OF PASSION AND MILD INTEREST

by Carol Bly

Whenever a speaker addresses a group of professionals, and the speaker is not in the same profession, you should be wary as a hawk! No one would venture into your lair (if we can call a meeting of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English a lair) unless he or she meant to ask you to do something more--or something less--than you are now doing. Outside speakers never come to tell you "you are perfect--just carry on!" If they are not teachers of English themselves, and I am only occasionally, not professionally, a teacher of English, you have to assume that they will be hoping to change your Job Description for you. Coming from the outside as they do, they will call it "bringing you a new perspective;" listening to their inexperience and their arrogance, you might call it meddling--and both would be right.

If someone wants you to see your job as less than it is, watch out: they want you less powerful or less visible in the public eye, so that their ideas, not yours, will have the critical mass in forming public opinion. Watch out against people who congratulate you for the technical achievements of your field: they are like a man with his back to Ali Baba's cave, smiling hard at you and talking fast, but always edging away from the cave and very forcefully telling you, "How wonderful you are, never to be shouting 'Open, Sesame!' around here! Congratulations on never using that word 'sesame!' How wonderful you all are about not using that word!" Certainly they are flattering you so as to distract you from investigating the veritable treasure of that particular forest. Arch-conservatives often do that with teachers: they generously praise you for going back to basics, teaching grammar (which needs doing) and teaching authors' skills as if they were mechanics (which doesn't need doing). If teachers can be seduced into teaching a holy subject--literature--as if it were a question of mechanical manipulation, then there will always be elements of society that are pleased: how useful it is to have a large cadre of the younger generation leaving values to their betters--to have a large cadre who do not recognize moral challenge, because they've been taught to see everything from third-grade English to English III in high school as nothing but a series of mechanical problems to solve--such as how such and such an author uses symbol to entice the reader or how such and such an author uses tone or mood further to suspend our initial disbelief. Students grown mechanically insightful can answer such questions as "How does Chekhov use symbol to move us?" There is nothing wrong with giving some time to Chekhov's symbolism--but there is a good deal wrong with it if it means we do not show students that his plea for the moral view, for our joining the human race in caring, as given straight out in the short story, "Gooseberries," is our major business.

If any individual person or group asks you to choose less than the great moral overview as your major business, then I suggest they are asking you to do much less than your job. And whenever anyone asks someone else, in another field, to do less--to have less scope--to be more technical, to be less holy, for goodness' sake watch out. They are wanting to fill whatever moral vacuum you teachers create with their own idea. If someone says how skillfully we avoid entering the cave, we had better assume that someone wants the cave's treasure for himself or herself.

I have come to ask you to rewrite your Job Description differently. For various reasons, high school English is generally taught as if the reading of literature would provide students with a mild lifelong interest. The textbooks suggest as much. (If you assess the Notes and Questions for study at the ends of the unit divisions, you see the sensible tone of mild interest.) There is nothing evil about teaching high school English as if it were a source of lifelong mild interest. One could do worse with young people. But it is very much the same as if clergypeople steered clear of all the major issues of the day. It is much the same as if clergypeople never spoke to the ravages visited on us all by corporations and governments--but simply settled for making mildly interesting remarks about the good old values of private life--courtesy in the home and patience with the neighbors. Those are the tiny considerations of religion, in the way that authors' methods are the tiny considerations in literature. We know that such religious teaching is nostalgic, reassuring and traditional in America, like stuffed socks on Christmas morning--and like stuffed socks it is of mild interest. It is as likely, as Christmas toys, to make our world a fairer place. We've all watched innumerable comfortable clergy abdicate from the world's gravest considerations. Sometimes English teachers do it, too.

The high-school English teacher is in the perfect position to change the moral tenor of public life because he or she has so much access to eighteen-year-olds. The other professions which proffer values, and talk about what is just or unjust and about what human beings in large groups do to one another, are social workers and psycho-therapists. Their access isn't half so impressive as English teachers'. The social workers generally are working with people who have been all their lives leeward of the hull when the fair winds filled sail--the unlucky or unfairly conditioned, and comparatively few of their clients arrive at leadership in the United States. Psychotherapists, generally speaking, reach only the very few: they reach the rich who have acquired a taste for human development through process. That is very few people. But nearly every child in the United States has at least four or five years' exposure to English teachers. So why are we using those precious hours teaching things such as techniques which grown writers use to make the artifices we call poem and story? Such subjects are appropriate to grown writers, not to kids.

Low self-esteem drives people to bury themselves in technological approaches. There is a prevalent, uneven, but nonetheless prevalent, low self-esteem among English teachers. Of all the professions based on good will, teaching English seems to carry along the least arrogance or even ordinary confidence. As I have had a look at this low self-esteem, I found myself saying over and over: yet this is the group of all groups which should have more--much more--moral influence on young people. That is because literature is by its very nature crusading: it is forever offering us an image of life and saying, "Given this, fellow-species-member, don't you see what we ought to do? Given this, fellow-creature, shouldn't we rejoice more? Shouldn't we reform more? Such phrases as "ignorant armies clashing in the night" (Arnold) and "rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born" (Yeats) are the remarks of the reforming heart. So I think that a measure of the low self-esteem felt by so many English teachers is that they are in a crusading field, but they treat it like a hobby. They take up an interest in the sub-skills (language usage, for example) in the way that retired intellectuals take up an interest in compost-pile techniques. They are tricked, by the textbook writers and by one another and simply by American habit, into avoiding the major task of the profession in favor of small successes with the smaller, technical tasks. It takes one to know one. I am a writer and I know every single piece of moral sloth--I have exercised every single kind of moral sloth there is--in my field I have written literary letters on a Monday morning instead of attending to the serious work I have in progress--story or essay. That is winning the little ones, as they say, and not going to the big battle, where all the meaning is. Housewives do it, too. I know, since I have been one for twenty-three years or so. They are cross with the kids and then they shine all the brass, especially the candlesticks never used. You can tell in two ways when you have settled for winning the little ones and avoiding the major crusade: first, you tell by the look of exquisite boredom on the faces of your clients. Let us say the class have just read or told Lawrence's "The Rockinghorse Winner" or Orwell's "The Road to Wigan Pier" or Tim O'Brien's "Civil Defense;" now the instructor asks, following the usual kind of thinking in high-school English unit discussion paragraphs: "How did D.H. Lawrence use the supernatural in the story for foreshadowing?" As soon as such a technical question is heard, all the lively, mortally-touched faces in the room go slack and whey--as indeed they should. It is precisely the same as when the children come home to the housewife or house-husband, ready to make the huge switch from their schoolday adventures to their loved-home adventures, and the homemaker says, "Get your hands off that candlestick: I have just finished doing off all the brass." We can tell by our clients' boredom, then. A second way to tell that we are winning the little ones and failing to grapple with the major battles is by our own cynicism. If the Department of English jokes are more than 50% cynical, then the Department is showing unconscious frustrations in its work. Half-consciously perhaps, we suspect we are despoiling, not enhancing our area. We are to study, Shakespeare tells us, "what we most affect." If we recall carefully enough, we surely will remember that what made us "affect" literature was not the pyrotechnics of Brooks and Warren but our boyhood and girlhood love of reading.

A second cause of low self-esteem in English teachers is probably that teachers tend to be surrounded, just as outnumbered pilgrims are, by people who don't share the same dream at all.

As Eliot reminds us in "The Journey of the Magi," the wise men were probably accompanied for days and days and weeks and weeks only by cursing camel-drivers. There must have been weeks of the lonely journey for every half-hour of the spiritual birth. Teachers go through something the same. If they love a work like _Hamlet_ and are teaching it, they listen to one hundred petulant remarks such as "Well, I didn't get _that_ out of it at all!" for every single word of enthusiasm. It is a natural depressant of the trade--not worth getting burnt out about, but undeniably there, like a small haze over the city's windows.

The third cause of low self-esteem in English teachers is loss of funding and with it, of public respect., We are not in style. English and American literature, never much in style in a commercially-bent culture, are less in style now that all levels of cultivation are sinking. No matter how we tell ourselves, "But all these who look down on us are simply products of the mass culture: Ortegay Gasset would have been on _our_ side, not theirs!", we nonetheless absorb the disrespect accorded us by thousands of students, thousands of their parents, and thousands of middle-level business people across the United States. I remember being surprised to read in Bruno Bettelheim's _The Informed Heart_ that although the Jewish prisoners at Dachau knew the SS guards were wrong-thinkers, they nonetheless absorbed the hatred and contempt of the guards--and to Bettleheim's horror and probably their own horror, translated it into self-contempt. In other words, contempt--when we are not able to swat back at it--is catching. We take it _inside_. Social workers report this phenomenon over and over again in cases of battered children and battered women. I have noticed a valiant effort to fight the contempt of technocrats: in myself and others I have heard a contempt in return. It takes the form of snobbery, victimizing anyone who works at carburetion or in wiriñg potentiameters and so.on. Unfortunately or fortunately, contempt-in-return doesn't do any good, psychologically. English Departments in which the cocktail conversation is sneering at the same university's or college's technology departments are not more confident in their bearing than English departments which simply coexist or even cooperate with their technical colleagues.

The only thing to do, I think, when we work in a field involving values, is to ignore the contempt of the world outside, ignore the pressure to look at our field as just one more area where technical aptitude is the only real consideration, and to plug away at our work as though we might change the world. If teaching literature is to be a passionate endeavor, then let's say there are two psychological steps to take before looking at actual curricula.

The first psychological step to take is not to feel apologetic for the past or present failures of English teachers. Every field is full of dreadful practitioners, and nearly every really good practitioner has been, at some time, a bad one, so let's eschew any time-wasting apology. Social scientists, who ought to be ever widening the enclave of caring, moral citizenry, have spent nearly a century now, imitating the physical sciences at their worst--stalling around collecting data--just like the cold-hearted middle-level lab people in E.T. Just for the record: of all the social scientists receiving significant federal funding, two-thirds work for the Department of Defense. Early psychologists, who should have seen all the wonderful chances they have for freeing people from blocks and habits and repressions so people can be more of themselves than our culture encourages, in fact have been devoted, by the hundreds, to manipulation--helping management break unions, helping people adjust to situations which perhaps they should not adjust to, and helping people control other people's behaviors when perhaps they should not be controlling those others' behaviors. Writers, who should have been using their love of image and metaphor to free young people's moral imagination, have spent their time in large numbers hacking or writing "for" a market. All the professionals have appalling histories and appalling present practitioners--so it is important to ignore all that. Let's never start change by "starting where we are." A useful first step is to make friends with people outside our professions and to stay in serious relationship with them.

I wonder if all of you or any of you know the great story called The Lemming Condition by Alan Arkin. The story takes place on the day when all the lemmings on the plain are going to go west and jump into the sea. None of them has questioned the wisdom of this every-seven-years' activity--racial suicide. But one lemming named Bubber has a friend who is outside the lemmings: it is Crow. Crow says something like, "What are you guys doing down there? You look as if you were moving!" "We're going today," Lemming said. "Going west." "West!" Crow exclaimed. "West! That's the sea!" Gradually he gets the particulars of the plan out of Bubber, and wants to know if they can swim because it's "a lot of water out there." When Bubber returned to his parents and said Crow had asked if they could swim, both parent lemmings sneered. They said remarks like "O that's the very sort of thing you could expect from someone like Crow!" and "Consider the source!" Crow offered to drop Bubber into a very shallow, safe puddle he knew of, to see how he liked it. He promised to fish him out instantly, if the swimming didn't go too well. Thus, because of having an outside friend with a specific, ad hoc suggestion (which he followed), Bubber was saved. He did not go to his death with the rest.

The next psychological step to making any change is to make a list of everything that is wrong. It is twice as important first to make a list of what is wrong than to start off positively, as the expression is, and make lists of what is right. We are going to leave anything that is right alone, anyway, so we don't need a list at this point. Some of the things that appear to be wrong are natural to our species. Literature is some sort of an attempt of culture to overcome natural characteristics, so it isn't difficult to get up a list. For example, here are seven characteristics of human life which are simply givens for our species:

First: we are given by nature a good deal of intensity of feeling, but only for growing to maturity, for mating, for young males' war-making. After we have grown big and strong and have proliferated, nature doesn't care two cents about us, apparently: our intensity is followed, unless we are cultivated people, by years and years of placid, low-key emotional life, pain avoidance whenever possible, and resistance to any holy project that lessens the comfort level. That's natural middle-aged life for you!

Second: we are given by nature a love of natural beauty--but nature gives it only to children and young people. After that, you have to cultivate it in some way. Most farmers love nature, because they cultivate that particular emotion. Most literary people love nature, because all their poetry-reading and fiction-reading keeps reminding them of its beauty.

Third: we are given by nature a love of technical prowess. When two people are not getting along very well, usually the less cultivated one can be seduced into at least good manners by having some technical ability of his or hers referred to and asked about. Say that a peaceworker gets into a conversation with an F-15 pilot. If the peaceworker says, "I bet you pull a lot of G's in that aircraft. It must be awful learning to adjust to it!" Chances are the F-15 pilot can be made to drop his or her sneering at spineless pinkos and leftwing softheads long enough to warm to the subject of that demanding airplane. Boasting of skills is part of the species.

Fourth: we are given by nature a love of power, which, for our purposes, means most usually a love of class system.

Fifth: we are given by nature a love of peer esteem.

Sixth: we are given by nature a love of abdicating moral decision-making, in favor of a chosen or self-appointed leader, whom we are then willing to adore. It is less painful to love a leader than to be morally responsible--and nature avoids pain.

Seventh: and finally, we are given by nature a love of establishing a few ethical values--but regarding them as valid only within our sovereign borders. That is, perhaps everyone has a right to equal economic opportunity, but that is (to the merely natural man or woman) only in the continental United States. Outside that, everyone look out. A more civilized way in which this sovereign-limits morality works is the fact that small liberal-arts colleges seldom band together for joint application for funds. Departments within a college may cooperate on askings for Budget, but individual private colleges are loath to cooperate in funding askings from outside groups. They are willing to federate loosely, for incidental professional sharing of one sort or another--but not for money. The invisible, natural reason behind this is that beyond one's sovereign borders all is fair in the money scramble--and therefore, one keeps one's borders sovereign so one can keep a free hand! It isn't immoral: it is simply natural.

The last psychological step needed for change, now that some sort of a list of natural limitations has been made, is simply to make the decision that we, our group, in our case, teachers of English, will take on some moral leadership and try to effect the change. It is a deliberate assumption of power--a very strong mindset indeed. Why English teachers? Why should they be the ones to decide on moral directions for Americans or for anyone?

The answer lies in making a list of what not nature, but culture, has to offer. Right away, as soon as we've identified what culture really means, we see that it is a series of non-natural emotions and activities. Nature and culture do not move hand-in-hand. Yeats is not the only one who felt that once out of nature it would be ridiculous ever again to take the shape of any natural thing! Here is a rough list of what culture concerns itself with:

First: When we are cultivated, we take all our impressions of nature inside ourselves and then represent it for others as it moves us. We have done it for centuries and centuries. In the cave paintings at Lascaux there are wonderful animals drawn from the side, showing the pike-orange shades of flank and withers, with whiteness in contrast--and then the head is shown straight on, enabling the artist to show us the antlers more beautifully. It is not magic or an attempt at magic: it is the artist drawing all the things that touched him or her most - not realism. Literature also is not realism. No art is.

Second: When we are cultivated, we have a hatred for injustice and a love of friendship which extends everywhere: there are no sovereign bounds to our values. If we dislike violence in one place, we think it is just as abhorrent somewhere else. For example, after repeated efforts, nineteenth century liberals were able to get across to people the idea that kids doing seventeen-hour days in coal mines was wrong not just for upperclass Englishmen but for working class Englishmen. If enough of us read Michael Harrington and other broad-ethic writers about economics, we will begin to be cultivated about economic manipulation: we will begin to see that what is right for the First World is right for the Third World. The notion that ideas are real and that they know no sovereign limits is a cultured idea.

Third: When we are cultivated, we hear out and believe the story of those who are powerless. We can hear their voices. They carry weight with us. The *natural* thing is to take cognizance only of powerful people's opinions. Twentieth century psychology has succeeded where a good many religions have previously failed: it has demonstrated to thousands and thousands of people that the wounded are the ones who can do the healing, that the little people at the table are important, and so on. Cultivated people despise the natural pecking order of leghorns, or of Sandhurst graduates, or of social-class bullying.

Fourth: This last item on the list is the most vital one. When we are cultivated, we do not believe what our leaders say unless it has no variance with our experience. Further, we do not listen to leaders unless they have something new to say. We do not love accepted ideas and stale language. We would rather risk disapproval from peers than be bored. The natural man or woman loves dead ideas. The very ease with which dead ideas come slick off the tongue is dear to the natural person. "That's the way it goes!" is the cry at funerals, for example. "You never know when it is going to be your turn!" and "Sometimes we don't really know the value of a thing until it is taken away from us!" "Human nature doesn't change--that's one sure

thing!"--and so on. When the lack of cultivation is low enough so that boredom isn't an issue, such platitudes, true or untrue, have tremendous value: they are safe and they are sociable, too.

The marvelous fact is that English teachers bring *otherness* into millions of students' lives. Literature is nothing if not a hodgepodge of examples of lives quite different from our own. When a midwesterner, for example, reads literature, the midwesterner suddenly has a mind's eye full of not just soybean fields and Nicollet Avenue but the lagoons of Malaysia and the icepack north of Franz Josefs Land. Any glance at anything other than ourselves is delightful to our species. We love it. If we get no cultivation--no books--we will take interest at least in natural creatures and perhaps in machinery. But once we get books, we get a taste for "How are the others living? What is it like somewhere else? What is like and what is unlike my life in the life these characters are living?" I won't labor the point, but simply go on to say that *otherness*, ironically, is also the basis of any decent ethic. *What is good for me* is not moral evaluation but what Lawrence Kohlberg in Harvard's Center for Moral Development calls "pre-moral stage" or "pre-morality." As soon as *another* enters the picture and must be considered when decisions are made, the *moral* interest has entered. If we go back and look over the seven attributes of natural, uncultivated life, we see that the *other*, as such, doesn't enter in as anything for which sacrifices will be made. If we look at the list of four attributes of cultivated people, we see that all four depend upon our having seen, in our feelings as well as with our eyes, things and people other than ourselves--and having been touched by them.

Whoever tells children their first stories is the one with moral influence. Now most families are de-cultivated: that is, most families do not read aloud to their children even when the parents came from families in which reading aloud was important. This means that the English teacher may well be the only person in a young person's experience who puts stories into his or her mind's eye. Television doesn't count, because the eye simply picks it up. It is the translation of written or heard *words*--symbol--into story--a job done *by the human mind*, which makes otherness into reality for any human being. Churchmen used to perform the storytelling function for people who hadn't much access to books: now they have much less contact with most Americans. That leaves the English teacher.

If we agree that English classes can make a difference in ethical development, then what actual curriculum changes can we make? I would like to offer a few suggestions, but they must be fairly approximate and weak compared to the suggestions professional teachers can offer. Earlier in this talk I said it was an advantage to have friends outside one's normal sphere. Bubber the Lemming's life was saved because he finally listened to Crow. But the best help we get from outside our profession is likely to be a different perspective on values--not specific steps. Crow suggested the lemming rethink how good or bad an idea it was to jump into the ocean when you couldn't swim--but he didn't lay out a week-by-week program for Bubber's life afterwards. My specific ideas for teaching high school English are very limited because my experience is limited. Nonetheless, here they are:

The title and unit headings for literature textbooks for the last three years of high school and the first year of college should be related to *humanity*, not to literary forms. For example, the heading shouldn't be *The Short Story Before and After 1920* or *Tone and Symbol* but rather something like *Natural Aspects of our Species vs Cultural Aspects of our Species*. Then the fiction and drama and poem selections would be thought of as content, not as technical challenges. There is another value to using words like *nature versus culture*. When people know there is a contest, they can take sides. They have to know the names of the two sides, though. We absolutely cannot exert willpower and make sacrifices of any kind if we do not know the words for the issues. To give an example: if children do not know the whole issue of cheating versus honor, they will cheat unconsciously because it is practical. Honor, never having been discussed, won't even be an option. If, on the other hand, the word *honor* itself is familiar

and frequently mentioned in class, and better--stories about it and stories about its absence--are told and discussed in class, then honor--as a deliberate willful stance--is one possibility for the students in any given situation. If one is familiar with the idea that just naturally one will act in some ways, and that one must act *against* nature in some ways, one may choose to act against nature in some ways. Most people in our time have never once heard the idea that something contrary to nature could be desirable.

The second notion for curriculum I would suggest is that English teachers never use fill-in workbooks. An odd psychological and moral fact is that people who write down history--keep records--tell their story in one form or another--feel free to change history and act on free will. Treatment centers for disturbed children operate on this principle almost without exception. The child must keep records. Oddly, any human being who keeps records suddenly realizes that history could have gone the other way--and perhaps tomorrow, I will *make* it go the other way. For some reason, writing whole sentences, explaining the past or the present, gives power over the future. A drunk who can write how many ounces of alcohol he or she has drunk in the past week, day by day, is much more capable of cutting down the ounces tomorrow. It is a very odd, heartening fact. Therefore, I suggest that English students always be provided with empty notebooks. Workbooks, to be filled in, produce drones. People who have filled in other people's workbooks will tend always to accept other people's scenarios. Taking orders without evaluating them, after all, is simply--inside oneself--the process of filling the mind with the mental image someone else has written or described rather than with any counter--image of your own.

The third suggestion I would like to make applies to adult, continuing education as much or more than to high school and undergraduate literature coursework. It is that when students take notes on scholarly or even fictional books, they divide their notepaper vertically in half. In the lefthand half, they write the notes they need to make about the work at hand. But on the righthand side, which they can leave unused if need be, they write down their own spin-off thoughts--which came to them during the course of reading. If a person had such notebooks kept from the age of sixteen until the age of twenty-two, that person would have a book, an original book, written in outline form. Soon the mind, knowing that notes would be taken on its activities, would think of more and more observations it wanted to make. It would feel honor being accorded its own ideas, not just some other author's ideas.

The fourth suggestion is that we emphasize perfect grammar and good sentence rhythm. I feel most confident of this suggestion because I have tried it a great deal. I have also, with adults, tried totally ignoring grammar and the physical construction of sentences and so on--to see what good that might do. Over and over, I have come back to the fact that spit and polish--pride in language--is very important indeed. The inner, symbolic events don't happen for student-takers-of-notes or writers-of-papers unless there is all sorts of outward pride. In another sphere of life, I have noticed with fascination how interest in litanies, in church, has paled since the so-called where-it's-at litanies have been in use. People love and crave beauty: perfectly ordinary people want to get beautiful letters, not repetitive ones full of clumsy constructions. People want to write expressively, too. Episcopalians, it turns out, for example, want to feel slightly unsure about the meaning of "and the darkness comprehendeth it not" rather than listen to "and God fixed it real comfortable for everyone there."

Language is related to emotional expectations. If students are told they must get right the difference between the verb "to lie" and the verb "to lay" and that they must never again use "real" as an intensifying adverb (and it would be a relief if teachers of English would stop using it that way, as well!), then the students think they are being groomed for some task in life. If everything they do is OK, as is, they know they aren't being got into shape for any wonderful expectations in life. They unconsciously grasp that they belong to some class that can talk any way it likes; it isn't going anywhere anyway. Let's take an example from the world of falling in love: when a man and woman use nothing but crude expressions with one another during the first six or seven weeks of their relationship, they begin to repress their very intense, nearly holy, feelings for one another. Their relationship has developed a crude lifestyle: that crude lifestyle feels like reality--and sadly, a thousand times sadly, they continue in it, unable to get away into their deeper regard for one another. All their lives, then, they may be stuck saying such things as "you turn me on, baby" instead of "I have never before felt such desire and such marvelous interest in anyone--not in my whole life!" There is a huge difference. It is the same in studying literature. If we can encourage people to use the language of strong feelings, we can encourage people to live in the world of strong feelings. And when people live in the world of strong feelings, it is amazing the number of brutal public acts they do not take. It is amazing the number of brutal large organizations they refuse to join, or having joined in a moment of poor judgment, how quickly they will try to change them or to resign! Beautiful language needs to be heard from ghetto to farmyard, somehow--however we can manage it.

None of these ideas for English teachers is new. Some schools have already redone their high school curricula in such a way that the humanities--how human beings regard themselves and behave themselves--are prevalent in special courses. St. Paul Academy and Summit School, in St. Paul, are even teaching Kohlberg's moral-development-stage theory to high school upperclassmen. The odd fact, however, is that the two subjects taught in high school that should have to do with values are most frequently taught merely as technologies--psychology and English. I am loudly, desperately, asking for us to pull all technical literary criticism down from first consideration to about third consideration in our high school English and college freshman courses.

We should not waste much time getting at this change of priority. Anyone who has experienced the ethical vacuum in

American high school class discussions knows are pathetic it is that we work so little at making people conscious of goodness and badness. Millions of us must simply wander through life as creatures of nature, following aimlessly this fairly primitive drive or that fairly primitive drive--having this primitive response to what the President said or what the Russians did, or having that primitive suggestion about what America ought to do to this country or that country--and all of it accompanied with a cynicism and hopelessness that slaves must have felt.

After all, there are seven things we want to do if we are educated people: it is best simply to list them! Good lists can be changed and improved; bad lists can be thrown out in fury or contempt--but having no list means having no clear idea--and having no clear idea is abdicating from our philosophical interests

Here are the seven I see:

1. We want to learn about life much, much faster than by merely living through it! Why arrive at age 93 and say, "Ah--I have the picture! Now I am ready to take those actions a human being should take!"

2. We want the ability to make moral decisions not by recourse to peer opinion or by slavish adherence to doctrines of any kind--but by making a mental image of all the people or creatures in the scene and then, based on the image, deciding what would be fairest and loveliest for all.

3. We want to feel enough curiosity to overcome the fear we naturally experience when old ideas of ours and our parents come into conflict with new data or new, better ideas.

4. We want to develop enough bravery, just like a psychic muscle, really, to consider very grim likelihoods, very bad outcomes, without denying. That is, we want enough bravery to sacrifice the comfort of denying bad news, when it is true news.

5. We want the ability to act at the key moment--with as little lag between the crisis's appearing and our doing something appropriate and brisk as possible.

6 We want enough spine to live for sustained periods of time without peer support. No human being can be really fully grown until he or she has had the experience of standing absolutely alone in command, in a policy, or in a values fight.

7. And finally, we want to have lively enough hearts so that we care for the res publica--not just our own families and the families of our children, but for thousands of people whom we'll never see--and for corners of this universe, flora and animals--which we may never personally visit.

There is no particular reason to be wonderfully educated unless we mean to change what's bad and fall in love with what's good in the world. English is a marvelous natural course of study for world-changers. It is also a pleasant hobby, goodness knows. But hobbyists, interestingly enough, don't live so happily as the world-changers, so let us use our wonderful field--all the incredible poems of it, all the incredible stories and novels and essays of it--to show people how to leave mild hobbies forever, and join the world-changers. It means showing people how to leave behind mere nature, and cynicism, and relaxation, and to fill their kit instead with culture and nervous excitement, and the great companion of both culture and nervous excitement--which is humor.

Carol Bly - Luncheon Speaker (MCTE 1983)

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TEACHING, TESTING, AND TECHNOLOGY:
ENGLISH IN THE EIGHTIES

By Edmund J. Farrell

Upon agreeing to speak today to the triple T's of teaching, testing, and technology, I was reminded of an exercise in paragraphing that an erstwhile colleague at the University of California at Berkeley periodically imposed upon students. He would first present a class with three sentences disparate in content: for example, "Alexander Haig resigned as U.S. Secretary of State on June 25, 1982"; "The annual rainfall in Boise, Idaho, is 14 inches"; "Children from ages four to eight prefer fudge over any other confectionery." He would then invite the students to incorporate the three sentences into a single paragraph without using any of the three as the topic sentence. To complete the assignment, neophyte writers were forced to scramble, sometimes frantically, up ladders of abstraction in pursuit of a generalizing principle, a sentence that could relate, however fragilely, the seemingly unrelated.

Like those students, I was initially sent scurrying for a thesis by my assignment, a statement that might unite in partnership teaching, testing, and technology. But I soon despaired, realizing that any attempt to wed the three under a unifying rubric would result at best in a shotgun ceremony, an unholy and unwholesome union. There can be no joining of equals, for testing and technology are and must remain subordinate to teaching, the sine qua non of education.

Despite its educational centrality, however, teaching can not be as positive and effective a force in the lives of students as it might and should be unless a number of conditions pertain that are wanting at present.

Foremost is that teachers must be given greater voice in curricular decisions. For the past fifteen years, teachers have wasted thousands of hours in responding to one curricular movement or another over which they have had little or no control--they have been forced to trivialize learning through specification of behavioral objectives, to tailor their teaching

to others' notions of what is basic to education, to prepare their students for legislatively mandated programs of competency testing.

After wryly observing that "in the profession of teaching, the greater one's distance from a classroom, the greater one's pay and authority and the easier one's job," Miles Myers comments in "The Politics of Minimum Competency" (The Nature and Measurement of Competency in English, ed. Charles R. Cooper, NCTE, 1981):

> Organizations like NCTE need to insist that districts begin to use practicing teachers as curriculum consultants, that NIE (National Institute of Education) set aside part of its budget for research on teaching by classroom teachers, that the history of K-12 teachers be researched and honored--in summary, that the authority of teachers be developed and recognized. Teachers cannot afford to develop mechanisms for power (for example, the creation of unions) and ignore mechanisms for authority. If they do, they will end up organizing teachers and find that they have been turned into the watchdogs of trivia, the monitors of kits and packaged programs, the paper pushers and form fillers for other people.

If teaching is to have the authority Mr. Myers desires for it, it must be able to attract and to hold academically competent teachers. For that condition to exist, it must receive from the public stronger financial support and greater respect than it presently receives. Education is no longer the sole professional refuge for intelligent women, who now have access to schools of medicine, law, and business, fields offering far greater prestige and pay than does education. The low regard with which teaching is held, coupled with the inadequate and uncompetitive salaries it proffers to beginners, has resulted nationally in schools of education being now populated with students who have scored in the bottom quintile of those taking the Scholastic Achievement Test, with students whose high-school grades are much lower than are those of students admitted into other fields, with what appears to be the least academically qualified group of candidates in fifty years. While I would concede immediately that no perfect correlation exists between either grade-point average or high performance on aptitude tests and ability to teach, though I would grant that empathy and compassion are requisite to pedagogical competence, I would rather have my two sons, ages thirteen and fifteen, taught by humane and knowledgeable teachers than by humane and uninformed ones.

My intuitions tell me that if we are to attract and to hold highly qualified teachers, we must first alter the current industrial model of education, a model that demeans teachers while simultaneously failing to accommodate either individual differences among learners or the continuing revolution in telecommunications, a revolution that has been likened in cultural importance to the developments of speech, of writing, and of print.

In Education and the Cult of Efficiency, (University of Chicago Press, 1962), Raymond Callaghan observes that until the approximate turn of this century, an educational administrator was essentially an educational philosopher, a person who articulated the curriculum to the community on philosophical grounds. But with the growth of industry in the first decades of the century, with the tax monies for the schools being derived largely from taxes upon industry, and with the time-motion studies in industry being carried on by Frederick Taylor, Frank Gilbreth, and others, administrators were increasingly called upon to defend what was going on in the schools not on the grounds of its philosophical worth but on the grounds of its efficiency. The result was that administrators allied themselves with industrial leaders, and instead of interpreting the will of educators to the business community, they were soon interpreting, and enforcing upon educators, the will of businessmen. Within a short time the school was viewed as being analogous to an industrial plant ("school-plant planning"); administrators, rather than being at the service of teachers, perceived themselves as employers, and, as befits those in power, they surrounded themselves with the secretarial help, telephones, and office machines that one finds in the quarters of most professionals. Teachers, though assured they belonged to a noble profession, were treated as workers on an assembly line, responsible for processing so many students ("work load") through so many courses over so many years (Carnegie units), following which students were labeled as products of the institution.

As teachers, we know that each student is unique, but the model does not. Forced to try to teach far too many students at a time, we reluctantly compose assignments for groups when we would prefer tailoring them for individuals. As teachers, we know that humans learn in sporadic ways, but the model does not. Compelled to parcel out subjects in forty-to-fifty minute segments, we are dictated to by bells rather than by the curiosity of learners. As teachers, we know that we are surrounded by an electronically transmitted aural/visual environment, but the model does not. Our classes lack the very equipment which provides contemporary students with most of their information if not the majority of their values--television sets, AM/FM radios, stereophonic record and tape players.

Until education frees itself from the constraints of an inappropriate industrial model, until as teachers we have at our command videotape recorders and TV sets, radios, records, stereo players, cassettes, and books and magazines galore; until we have the paraprofessional help and the flexibility in programming that would permit us, depending upon the appropriateness of the occasion, to tutor individuals, to lead discussions with small groups, to lecture, or to supervise individual and group projects; until we have the professional status accorded administrators, including the human and mechanical aids that assist other professionals, we will be able neither to attract and hold able teachers nor to help each student bring to full fruition whatever dormant or budding excellence lies within.

Rather than freeing education from unnecessary inhibitory constraints, the Back-to-Basics movement and its handmaiden, Minimum Competency Testing, have further shackled it. They have reduced English in the eyes of the public from a rich and complex subject concerned principally with transmission of humanistic values through language and literature to one concerned with promoting low-level skills of reading and editing. Reductive in their effects, and one more example of how curriculum becomes shaped by what is fiscally efficient rather than academically sound, the tests ignore the importance of literature to the cultivation of the imagination and to the spiritual life of a democracy; they ignore speaking effectiveness and listening comprehension, for these primary communicative processes do not readily lend themselves to paper-and-pencil quantification; and in place of composing for oneself, most often they substitute editing the words of anonymous others.

In those few states that have mandated actual tests of writing, students have been given only twenty to thirty minutes in which to produce a coherent piece of discourse, scarcely sufficient time for prewriting, for the tentative exploration of a topic. Such under-the-gun assignments belie what we say about the composing process, about the recursive and often belabored acts of prewriting, writing, and revising. As Lee Odell notes in "Defining and Assessing Competence in Writing" (*The Nature and Measurement of Competence in English*), "Unless we have given students reasonable opportunity to make their best showing as writers, our judgments about their competency as writers will almost certainly be limited and misleading." Furthermore, as Mr. Odell makes clear, because different rhetorical aims and modes evoke different rhetorical skills from an author, and because the competence of even skilled writers varies from day to day, "If we want to assess a student's ability to perform more than one kind of writing task, we must have at least two samples of the student's writing for *each kind of writing*."

No one would argue that testing should be eliminated from American education. In *Common Sense and Testing in English* (NCTE, 1975), the Task Force on Measurement and Evaluation in the Study of English cites how results of measurement can legitimately be used in identifying needs, evaluating individual

and group progress, making decisions about teaching, and guiding students into appropriate programs. But one must use tests with caution and with full awareness of their restrictive qualifications. This awareness the public seems not to possess, mainly because test makers have been reluctant to trumpet the limitations of their wares. How many lay people realize, for example, how low the validity of the SAT is in predicting the academic performance of students in their first year of college? Information about validity is contained in a single paragraph on page 9 of *On Further Examination: A Report of the Advisory Panel on the Scholastic Aptitude Test Score Decline* (College Entrance Examination Board, 1977):

> The predictive validity of both the Verbal and Mathematical parts of the SAT increased between 1970 and 1974 in the colleges that had validity studies made during that period, while the predictive ability of high school grade records was staying about level. High school grades are still the best single predictors of college performance, but when these grades are combined with SAT scores, more accurate prediction proves possible. It illuminates this picture only for those experts in the field to note that, as of 1971, the median validity coefficients for the combined six samples used in the ETS study were .39 for the SAT-Mathematical score, .42 for the SAT-Verbal score, .50 for the high school grade records, and .58 for the three predictors combined. The comparable median validity coefficients in 1970 were .29 for the SAT-Mathematical, .37 for SAT-Verbal, .49 for high school grade records.

More recent studies show the average predictive validity of the SAT to be .427, while that for the high school record has declined to .465, perhaps the consequence of grade inflation. ("The SAT Debate: Do Trusheim and Crouse Add Useful Information?" Warren Willingham and Leonard Ramist, *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1982). Yet, despite the comparatively lower predictive validity of SAT scores, the public continues to voice more concern about, and to invest more faith in, those scores than in the cumulative record of four years of high school education, itself not a highly dependable predictor.

As I noted earlier, test makers will measure what is convenient to rapid and efficient scoring, not necessarily what is most educationally sound. For five years, from 1974-79, I chaired the English Advisory Committee of the College Board, a committee responsible for monitoring tests of English sponsored by the Board. Despite repeated protests from the Committee, the Board continues to administer what it calls The Test of Standard Written English, not a test of writing at all but rather a multiple-choice test of editing; and it continues to call for only one twenty-minute sample of writing in only one of six administrations of the English Composition Test, again, more a test of the ability to edit others' prose then of the ability to generate for oneself a short coherent composition.

Reasons for selecting a so-called objective format for testing--objective only in the scoring process, never in the selection of items--may make sound economic sense, but the long-term consequences can be debilitating to education. After analyzing results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature, the authors of Reading, Thinking, and Writing (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981), concluded that short-answer tests were in good part responsible for students' superficial interpretations of literature:

> The results summarized in this report suggest that American schools have been successful at teaching students to formulate quick and short interpretations, but have not yet developed in students the skills they need to explain and defend the judgments they make. The end result is an emphasis on shallow and superficial opinions at the expense of reasoned and disciplined thought...Tests are a direct reflection of what is valued by the school.

> If teacher-made tests, as well as standardized examinations, rely exclusively on short-answer formats, the message will be clear to teachers and students alike. Essay questions that require students to explain their points of view should be a regular part of any testing program. (pg. 4)

I was one of a number of consultants asked to interpret data from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature. One memorable finding was that students who on self-assessment questionnaires reported themselves to be either very good readers or very poor readers were, according to evidence of their performance on items of comprehension and interpretation. In short, students knew in advance how well they would do on the assessment. My guess is that teachers also know whether students are good readers or poor readers. If my guess is correct, we need to ask whether minimal competency tests are providing us with any new information, information that would enhance students' education. If not, we ought to be using for the improvement of classroom instruction the money now being allocated for testing programs.

An article by Thomas Toch appearing in the June 16, 1982, edition of Education Week ("Tests Don't Help Teachers Teach, Officials Argue") indicates that those who design and administer state-wide competency tests are themselves becoming disillusioned about the value of the tests:

> Standardized tests, which have become a primary preoccupation of states and school systems eager to prove the effectiveness of their educational activities to a skeptical public, are the focus of growing criticism even by the people who design and administer them.
>
> The tests often fail to provide teachers with information they can use to improve the schoolwork of the students who are tested. And the pervasive use of so-called "minimum basic-skills" tests in particular has tended to depress the quality and vitality of the educational process itself.

> These and other criticisms of testing were aired last week by some of the 225 people gathered here (Boulder, Colorado) for the twelfth Annual Conference on Large-Scale Assessment, a meeting co-sponsored by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Curiously, as the Task Force on Measurement and Evaluation in the Study of English noted in 1975, neither production in media nor understanding and appreciation of media are currently assessed by standardized tests of English, despite the pervasive influence of non-print media on students' tastes and values. We live in an environment that McLuhan referred to as the Electronic Surround, an environment in which verbal and nonverbal messages are being electronically transmitted to us in micro-seconds from distant reaches not only of the globe but of space. The environment is one in which telephones, computers, calculators, transistor radios, cable and broadcast television, stereo sets with records and tapes, video tape and disc recordings have become the stuff of our daily lives.

To appreciate how a given medium is a message, how it transforms a society by reorganizing its activities, one needs to ask how the society would change if the medium were eliminated. How, for example, would behavior in the United States differ if, tomorrow, all TV sets were permanently shut off? Would post thirty-five year olds again become movie attenders? Would contract bridge regain its popularity? Would radio dramas be resurrected? Would people return to visiting each other on Sunday afternoons? Would gasoline consumption rise? Would youngsters study harder and sleep more? Would SAT scores go up? In like vein, one can ask, what difference it would make if computers were eliminated from the society. Radios. Telephones. Jet aircraft. Automobiles. Electric lights.

As a people, we clearly have become reliant upon the mechanical and electronic artifacts of our culture. A critical issue is whether we have become slavishly dependent upon these creations or whether we can still exercise judicious discrimination and, with it, control.

To date, evidence suggests that we have done little in English classes to help students exert dominion over nonprint media. As Herb Karl points out in "What It Means to Be Media Competent" (The Nature and Measurement of Competency in English), skills for comprehending the verbal content of electronic media do not differ appreciably from the skills of interpretation and critical judgment expected of a literate person. According to Mr. Karl, a competent person is one able to do the following with the verbal content of media:

> ....distinguish between claims and appeals in advertising; recognize bias (social, economic, political, technical) in news and entertainment programming, fictional or documentary films and broadcasts, and advertising; distinguish between reports, inferences, and judgments in news programming, and determine the effects of context on "the news."

As little as we have done in teaching students how to analyze the verbal content of TV and film, we have done even less to help them to assess how shot composition, sound editing, motion, color, and lighting affect their emotions and judgments. Ironically, because we English teachers are, by tradition and education, print bound, we may first have to develop tests of minimal competencies in media--as expensive as these might be to create and administrate--before we begin to take seriously our responsibility to this dimension of the curriculum. If so, the process would not be the first by which tests dictated curricula.

Besides teaching analysis of the verbal content and the nonverbal composition of TV and film, what additional obligation has the teacher of English to the computer? "Computer literacy," a phrase in vogue, is not a phrase clear in definition: Does it imply that students should be able to demonstrate competency in using computers? Does it imply that they should know binary theory and the inner workings of computers? Does it imply that they should be able to understand and assess present and potential effects of computers upon their lives? Does it perhaps imply all of these, and more besides?

Though the definition of computer literacy may be moot, the intrusion of computers into education is not. Evidence is ubiquitous that computers are going to play an increasingly prominent role in the classroom. With the support of IBM, Dr. John Henry Martin is using the computer to teach writing and reading to 10,000 five-and six-year-olds in Florida, North Carolina, Minnesota, Texas, and Washington, D.C. (Education Week, December 22, 1982); at the Air Force Academy, Hugh Burns has developed computer programs that stimulate invention in composition according to the heuristics of Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, and Young, Becker, and Pike (College English, Feb. 1982); by the end of the decade, every student at Carnegie-Mellon University will be furnished a computer for personal and academic use, (Chronicle of Higher Education, March 30, 1983); beginning last September, kindergarten students in three school districts in New York City--districts 2 and 3 in Manhattan and 9 in the Bronx--commenced learning all subjects through a combination of traditional and computerized methods, a program that will continue through grade six (Education Week, March 24, 1981); according to a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of microcomputers accessible to students in public schools tripled between spring 1980 and spring 1982, from 31,000 to 96,000, with about three-fifths of all secondary schools and one-fifth of all elementary schools having at least one microcomputer or computer terminal available for instructional use. ("Fast Response Survey System," National Center for Education Statistics, September 7, 1982), it is estimated that by 1990 one of every four children will have access to a microcomputer in school (Education Week, November 16, 1981); a program to enlist the aid of national, state, and local governments and private businesses in coordinating information about computer programs in the nation's schools was launched in

June, 1982, under the title Basic Education Skills Through Technology (Austin American-Statesman, June 25, 1982); Teletext and Videotext in the United States, a report sponsored by the National Science Foundation and prepared by the Institute for the Future, forecasts that by 1998 family life and schooling will be more closely linked through a variety of informational services, including a two-way, or interactive wedding of computer and television (Education Week, June 6, 1982).

I could parade additional citations of present or future uses of the computer in education, including the commitment that Minnesota, through its Educational Computing Consortium, has made to students' understanding of, and familiarity with, computer technology. But it is time to ask, "What is the general significance of the computer to American education, and what is its particular significance to the teaching of English?"

Although a number of major publishers--Houghton Mifflin, McGraw Hill, Milliken, SRA, Random House, Scholastic, Scott/Foresman--are developing and distributing computer software, most current programs are found wanting, according to "Evaluating Instructional Software for the Microcomputer," a study co-sponsored by Education Products Information Exchange (EPIE) and the Microcomputer Resource Center at Teachers College. Vicki L. Blum, who conducted the study, reports that few existing programs teach concepts; most objectives for the programs fail to include "higher-order skills," such as comprehension, application, synthesis, and evaluation; the great majority of large programs are in mathematics; most programs emphasize "drill-and-practice" techniques; most programs are for use in elementary schools. The study calls for the development of programs, for both secondary and elementary schools, that teach critical-thinking skills, problem-solving techniques, and application and synthesis of concepts (Education Week, March 31, 1982).

Certainly, the potential for better programs exists. P. Kenneth Komoski, executive director of EPIE Institute and an outspoken critic of present electronic courseware, which he terms "mental chewing gum," opined as follows in Education

Week, April 21, 1982:

> The marvelous thing about the microcomputer is not that it can be used to teach kids long division or multiplication. Children don't really need microcomputers to learn that type of software. The marvelous thing about the microcomputer is the kind of software it could contain, if educators were willing to demand that it be designed for learners. If educators demanded it, schools could have software that would meet individual learners where they are and enable them to go as far as they can go individually, by thinking their way through whatever they need to learn. The software that learners need is software that will exploit fully the microcomputer's educational potential. Clearly, that potential is enormous. But it will not be fulfilled automatically.

Even if high quality programs were available, no present assurance exists that schools would have equal access to them. Microcomputers and their attendant software are expensive, and though some districts have surmounted funding shortages through the contributions of parents, industries, university faculties, and concerned citizens with an interest in computers, poorer districts often lack the human and financial resources that might enable them to compete with wealthy districts. A survey by Market Data Retrieval Inc. found that 80% of the nation's 2,000 largest and wealthiest public high schools now have at least one microcomputer, while 60% of the 2,000 poorest schools have none. Herbert Lobsenz, president of Market Data, comments, "If computers are a wave of the future, a lot of America is being washed out." (Time, November 15, 1982). At "The Future of Electronic Learning," a conference sponsored in April 1982 by Teachers College, Columbia University, speakers warned that distribution of classroom computers could split the nation's students into classes of "haves" and "have-nots." Sam Gibbon, executive director of a project in science and mathematics education, Bank Street College of Education, Manhattan, asserted, "We must find ways of enabling children in poorer districts to have access to the electronic learning environment in addition to students in well-to-do areas." However, cautioned Joyce Hakansson, former coordinator of computer education at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley, California, equal access to technology for all students does not guarantee varied use of it. She noted that studies have shown that non-affluent schools tend to control students' learning environment by limiting use of the computer to remedial instruction, particularly to drill exercises. (New York Times, April 21, 1982).

If problems related to the quality and equitable distribution of computer programs were both resolved, there would still exist the problem of how best to educate teachers to operate microcomputers and to use them effectively in the classroom. Most experienced and most beginning teachers lack such education, and evidence suggests they will not quickly acquire it. An unpublished survey of approximately 500 teacher-education programs conducted in summer 1981 by Vernon S. Gerlach, professor of education at Arizona State University, Tempe, revealed that only 160 schools (32 percent of those surveyed) offered one or more computer-education courses at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Of the schools surveyed, only about 10 offered a master's degree in computer education, and no state required computer courses for teacher education. Many schools of education, financially pinched by declining enrollments and a weak economy, find the purchase of microcomputers prohibitively expensive. Even if they had more money, these schools would find it difficult to compete with industry for qualified instructors. Efforts to eliminate the need for additional faculty by re-educating established professors in the educational uses of computers have met with resistance: professors have been reluctant to learn a new field and, like colleagues in the public schools, are afraid of exposing their ignorance. (Education Week, May 5, 1982).

Nevertheless, none of the problems I have cited is irresolvable. The "computer revolution" is still in its infancy. When Alvin Toffler wrote Future Shock, he failed to mention the microcomputer, for it had yet to make its first appearance. I harbor no doubts that the computer in decades ahead will play a critical role in the teaching of English, a role that could free teachers from the tedium of lockstep instruction in the skills of reading, spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar, etc., a role that could permit students to engage not alone in low-level exercises of drill and practice but in intellectually provocative simulations and tutorials; a role that, through self-pacing, could ultimately free students to participate in many of the humanistic courses they can not presently take, overprogrammed as they are with "requirements." I have in mind such courses as speech and drama, art and art appreciation, music and music appreciation, dance, and creative writing.

Rather than replacing teachers, the computer, used wisely, could liberate them to do what they alone can do. In "The Computer: Myths and Promises" (Curriculum Review, February 1982), Edward Finkel makes the following observation:

> Good teaching involves an incredibly complex set of behaviors and attitudes. The essential point of teaching is that one human being assumes some measure of responsibility for another one's learning. Teaching is much more than "telling," and even good telling is hard to find. Authors who approach the description of teaching behavioristically often develop meaningless statements. They cannot code enthusiasm, hope, energy, or the intuitive ability to find the right words to communicate with a given student. These are the most important aspects of teaching, and they lie in a domain which the computer cannot enter.

Computers cannot replace such shared human experiences as participating in family outings, telling stories, being read to, discussing the significance of a character's behavior, or hitting a baseball. They should not become the most pervasive

experience in a student's life. But even with careful guidance, they will exert a powerful influence on each of us. On that note, Mr. Finkel concludes his insightful observations with words that make a fit end to this speech:

> At this point in history certain trends have already become irreversible, but others may still be altered. The only thing which is certain is that computers will continue to extend their influence further into our lives, and will continue to change themselves and us. The potential is theirs: the hope is ours.

Edmund J Farrell - Keynote Speaker (MCTE 1983)

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JON HASSLER: A WRITER'S TESTAMENT

By Katy Dayton

> Any hack can give you truth. It takes a writer
> of talent to give you style. The genius gives
> you both.
>
> Simon Shea
> Simon's Night

John Hassler laughed with pleasure when he heard that line for the first time in three years. He leaned back into the slice of window light and wrapped his hands around the styrofoam cup.

"Gee, that was pretty good. That was quite stylish." His cheeks flushed a bit and there was a tinge of irony in his voice before his eyes became more intense.

"I believe it, though. I forgot about that passage. I believe that passage. Even if I wrote it, I believe it."

Hassler's style reflects that buffer of gentle humor on a base of sincere commitment. He uses that combination to recreate Northern Minnesota culture in his five novels: Four Miles to Pine Cone, Staggerford, Jemmy, Simon's Night and Love Hunter.

Born in Minneapolis, Hassler has lived in small towns in Minnesota since the age of one. Ten years of high school teaching in Melrose, Fosston, and Park Rapids and fifteen years of college teaching in Brainerd, Bemidji, and Collegeville have provided him with an abundance of material for his novels.

When he talks of his writing, his humor and commitment are apparent. His anecdotes show a willingness to laugh at his own foibles. The chuckle starts before the story. One such story puts the writer's popularity in perspective.

"I walked into a B. Dalton to browse and saw a stack of remaindered copies of Staggerford. I decided to buy them up because I needed the extra copies. At the check-out counter, the clerk eyed the books and then me. As I wrote out the check, she leafed through a copy, pausing to compare the photograph on the book jacket to my face. She smiled, 'Are you the author?' I nodded as she took my check. 'Excuse me, I have to get the manager,' she said. I saw images of myself shaking the bookseller's hand but the clerk returned alone and explained, 'Sorry for the wait, but I have to have checks over $50 approved.'"

Hassler tells that story with ease, his mouth gliding in and out of the quiet smile. "Let me assure you that the real joy of writing is almost entirely on this side of publication."

When he talks of his writing habits, though, his humor recedes. He believes that the "best pleasure of writing is handling the language." A compulsive reviser, he is always uncomfortable with a first draft, anxious to get to the polishing. "I keep thinking of style instead of content," he says. I'm intrigued by the sound of what I write."

This careful attention to the language has won Hassler broad critical acclaim. "Already a better stylist than either Sherwood Anderson or Sinclair Lewis..." comments the Minneapolis Tribune's review. "Jon Hassler is one of America's most completely satisfying novelists. His prose is flawless, his characters are decent, believable people about whom you care immensely..." says a reviewer for the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

In addition to acclaim, he has won numerous awards including a Minnesota State Arts Board Grant in 1975; the Friends of American Writer's Novel of the year Award for Staggerford in 1978; a Fellowship in Writing from the Minnesota State Arts Board in 1979; and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980.

Hassler told students in a fiction writing seminar at Mankato State University that he had begun writing serious fiction at the age of 37 after taking himself "seriously as a poet for four years." He believes that his training in poetry helped his fiction. To begin his apprenticeship in fiction, he wrote a short story every two weeks. After 28 weeks, he had written 14 short stories. "The 14th short story was the first one published. There seemed to be a justice in that," he confided as he swept his eyes around the circle of aspiring writers, subdued caution in his tone.

Although Hassler believes the short story is a good place to begin fiction writing, he compares the short story to a watch and insists, "I'm not a watchmaker." Instead, he's convinced that his "talent belongs to the longer works," and he weaves his early stories into his novels. In fact, his first published short story, "Small Eye's Last Hunt," is a subplot interlaced with Simon's premature acquiescence to old age in Simon's Night.

Many of Hassler's story ideas come from his journal, where he has jotted down thoughts, feelings, and experiences for years. In fact, the germ of his novel, Love Hunter, was recorded in November, 1978. "A novel based on my visits to Bob who sickened and took 17 years to die of sclerosis: my progress through life as measured by his decline."

All five of his novels draw on his experiences, especially his 25 years as a teacher. "When I write, I have the feeling I'm researching my memory and then, using that as the germ, I just invent around it." Memory is a vital tool for Hassler and loss of memory is of primary concern. In fact, Hassler worries, "I don't remember as well as I used to and I depend on memory so much." He uses the journal as a "way of remembering" life experiences that can be transformed into fiction.

For Hassler, memories are embellished to create the greater truth of fiction. In fact, that's the purpose he sees in fiction writing. "You're trying to give your vision which is the best truth you have to give." At the same time, he insists that his vision "...can't be summarized. It's all those people and all those anecdotes and all those settings taken together."

Elements of a Catholic background also emerge in Hassler's work. Priests, devout spinsters, fallen-away teachers and prayerful old men people his fiction. About this influence, the author says, "I was raised a Catholic and I'm still a Catholic. Yeah, that's an influence. I've never thought of it as causing things in my writing. It just causes things in me which eventually just seeped into my writing." The answer is matter-of-fact.

Although he has a vision to share, Hassler insists, "I never write to convey a message. I write to tell a story."

Consequently, he begins each novel with a "clear sense of an unstable situation and then embroiders the truth and fiction with only a vague sense of the climactic event." Once the book is in progress, the characters take over. Although they are based on real people, their creator fashions them to suit the story.

"I do disguise them and it isn't really hard work because if I start with somebody in real life, I have to change them to make them fit the story. They end up doing things and saying things that the real life person never would. That's especially true with major characters."

He creates the characters and the plot day by day and revises daily also. In the process of discovering the characters and the plot, he grows in self-knowledge. "One of the fascinating things about writing is the discoveries you make about yourself."

Self-discoveries are often made by "going down the side streets," which is Hassler's metaphor for using the ideas and images of the unconscious mind. In fact, "those side streets might be our subconscious memory sort of boiling under the surface there, forcing us to research it and look into it and we don't know what we're going to find. Writing will do that. I don't know of any other way you could do it." Hassler has learned to use the spontaneous flow rather than insist on control; it's the words he must shape. "I don't want to sound like I know what I'm writing. I really don't think the writer's job is to understand his work. It's the reader's job." Hassler, the teacher of writing, leans the elbows of his gray cardigan on the table and encourages his students to "Go down the side streets."

Hassler shared his gifts in teaching long before he started writing. In an autobiographical preface to his short story, "Ross's Dream," published in 25 Minnesota Writers, Hassler commented on the compatibility of teaching and writing: "...teaching and writing have a lot in common. We teach and write by imitation and by instinct. Teachers and writers, given a modicum of talent, are stimulated and rewarded pretty much in proportion to how hard they work. Teachers and writers are students of the human spirit."

Still a student of the human spirit, Hassler's attitude toward combining teaching and writing has changed in the last five years. In 1979 he said he would probably never quit teaching. After writing on a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980, he began to appreciate the freedom from teaching that the grant provided. In a keynote lecture for the Robert Wright Conference at Mankato State University, he said, "...teaching is like writing, you know, it's bottomless. It will take just as much of your effort as you want to give it. And after teaching for 25 years, I have to train myself to hold back a little."

Preparation for classes and workshops "crowds out" the novels. On another occasion, he qualified, "I still believe in teaching, but not very much." Currently, he teaches one course each semester at St. John's University and keeps workshop commitments to a minimum.

After 25 years of reading student papers, it's not surprising that he's weary of it. He suggests that a writer can contribute only a limited number of years to reading papers that lack texture and attention to the language before he reaches the saturation point. "I may have reached my limit," he admits with a bit of sadness and fatigue in his voice. The job of encouraging others drains energy needed for writing. He seeks inspiration himself.

Hassler searches for work that inspires him or writers that can relate to his struggle. At the opening session of his three day workshop for writers, he paged through a worn copy of John Cheever's The Wapshot Scandal. His voice took on a tone of reverence as he read the description of the archbishop. After reading, he marveled at the texture and rhythm of the language and advised the listeners to "find someone who delights you and read and reread them."

Frederick Manfred is also a source of delight for Hassler. With a tone of admiration he said, "Last time I saw Fred Manfred,

he was turning 71. I asked him if he had another book in mind and he said he had his next four novels mapped out and then he was going to start on his non-fiction. Well, that's inspiring."

In a short essay, "Chase," published in the Winter, 1983 issue of Milkweek Chronicle, Hassler presented his "writer's testament." The narrator returns to his home town to meet old friends after a 30 year absence. Sam Romberg, his former companion in games of hide-and-seek, says "Where have you been hiding?" Instead of answering the question directly, the narrator thinks:

> Surely he means this as a metaphor but I, the master hider, cannot help taking his question literally. I cannot help thinking, though I do not tell Sam, that I am still hard to find, that I have come down from the oil drums along the railroad tracks and stolen into the unsearchable refuge of fiction.

Hassler, the writer and teacher, answers personal questions indirectly, goes down the side streets with humor and irony, wanting to be found in his fiction.

TAKING THE PLUNGE INTO COMPUTERS: ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Today, many teachers worry about being rushed into using classroom computers before they understand the new machines. A booklet from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English helps teachers take the first steps toward computer literacy. Computers in the English Classroom: A Primer for Teachers explains the kinds of things today's computers can do to support the teacher of English.

Authors Sally N. Standiford, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Kathleen Jaycox, Morton College, Chicago; and Anne Auten, ERIC/RCS, have been involved with computers and the teaching of English during the recent rapid advances of this new technology. They sketch the most important current uses of microcomputers for instruction in language, literature, and composition, plus their potential for testing, speeding up recordkeeping, and analyzing the effectiveness of lessons. They stress the computer's value as a tool for relieving the lockstep quality of classroom teaching. The machines' patient, individually-paced coaching in routine learning tasks frees the teacher to plan and conduct reflective discussion and other activities calling for analysis and other higher skills.

The authors offer a non-technical description of what a computer is, how it works, and the components needed for a reasonably flexible computer system for classroom instruction. They sketch how teaching strategies are handled via microcomputer, and how to check whether the student responses asked for and the feedback given in a particular program add up to sound instruction.

In discussing computer applications to English, the authors explain the current limitations of computerized instruction. They note the steps involved in planning and writing a lesson, testing it, and debugging it. And they offer a glimpse of how course material needs to be identified in order to program it for the computer.

A final section lists sources for evaluations of new products, as well as criteria for assessing the effectiveness of courseware for classroom use. Each section ends with a short scenario designed to help teachers envision themselves moving into computer assisted instruction. The booklet contains a reference list and a glossary of computer terms.

(Computers in the English Classroom: A Primer for Teachers by Sally N. Standiford, Kathleen Jaycox, and Anne Auten. 56 pages, paperbound. Price: $5.50; NCTE members, $4.75. ISBN: 0-8141-08180. LC: 83-61710. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 08180.)

EXERCISE EXCHANGE

Exercise Exchange is a biannual journal designed to foster an exchange of practical, classroom-tested ideas for teaching English at the secondary and college levels. The journal is seeking articles from classroom teachers on any aspect of teaching English--language, media, writing, literature, speech. Articles should be concise but fully developed explanations of specific teaching strategies and activities. The magazine particularly welcomes manuscripts from teachers who have not previously published. Guidelines for manuscript preparation are available on request as is editorial assistance. Subscription is $3 for one year or $5 for two years to individuals. Institutional rates slightly higher. Direct all inquiries, manuscripts and subscriptions to: Exercise Exchange, Department of English, Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky 42071.

USING VISUAL MODELS AS PRE-READING EXERCISES IN TEACHING LITERATURE

By Michael W. Meeker

The teaching of writing has changed significantly since I taught my first course in freshman composition eighteen years ago. The early sixties were not exactly exciting times for composition theory. As Susan Miller has recently suggested, we were in a largely "pre-theoretical" period.[1] Today we have theory, a great deal of theory, and it is almost redundant to assert that writing is a process. By comparison, our teaching of literature has changed very little in spite of constant theorizing about the nature of literature and literary study. Most of our literature classes are still modelled on the ideal graduate seminar. Since most English instructors teach composition as well as literature, it is surprising that the new composition theory has had so little influence on the teaching of literature.

Recent journal articles have stressed the need for a renewed integration of writing and literature, but primarily in terms of using more literature in composition classes or more writing in literature classes.[2] I will argue that teachers of literature can learn much from the new process-oriented rhetoric, especially from its emphasis on invention. Just as pre-writing exercises prepare composition students for writing, pre-reading exercises can help literature students understand what they read. For example, the use of visual models of a text's metaphoric structure generates an effective form of subjective-response criticism within the limited format of the college literature class.

Writing has always been a traditional part of the teaching of literature. But that writing, especially at the college level, has for the most part been in the form of reports, essay exams, and critical papers. Such writing assignments are valuable. They allow students to clarify and synthesize what they have learned, and they allow teachers to evaluate student progress. But such product-focused writing, with its emphasis on a correct answer or a defensible interpretation, forces even some of the best students to distrust their own responses to the literary text. They learn to view the work as a puzzle to be solved, a code to be deciphered; they seek its "meaning" without moving through the emotional intensity of experience that the writer wants to capture and evoke.

If we wish to move our students beyond a sophisticated "Cliff's Notes" approach to literature, we need to encourage them to evoke the literary text in all its particularity before making generalizations about it, to examine their own associations and feelings about the text before moving, perhaps too quickly, to an acceptance of the pronouncements of teacher or critic. Recent parallel developments in composition theory and literary criticism, especially in their emphasis on the processes of making meaning, of creating a text or a theme, suggest that pre-writing (or pre-reading) activities can be valuable heuristics in the interpretation of imaginative literature.

Maxine Hairston has recently argued that the teaching of composition is in the midst of a "paradigm shift" ("The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," College Composition and Communication, 33 (1982), 77). Judging from the steady procession of freshman rhetorics that has passed across my desk in the last few years, we are clearly moving away from an emphasis on the writing product (the "current-traditional paradigm") to what is generally termed a process-oriented approach to teaching composition. James Berlin has cautioned that there is still a wide gap between pronouncement and practice, that although "Everyone teaches the process of writing....everyone does not teach the same process" ("Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," College English, 44 (1982), 777). This only indicates, however, that these are exciting times for composition theory; the new paradigm is still developing. Theory has not, as yet, become dogma. And the more significant focus of the emerging theory is on what Berlin calls an "epistemic rhetoric."[3] It is less an emphasis on writing as process than on writing as discovery, on the connections between writing and thinking. When we think and when we write, we compose. We put ideas together. Like thinking, writing is a process that discovers or constructs relationships.

At the heart of the newest of the New Rhetorics, then, is an interest in the creative process itself, not merely in a refurbished inventio, but in a pedagogy committed to assisting in the making of meanings. Drawing upon the work of Suzanne Langer, Ernst Cassirer, Max Black, E.H. Gombrich, and Kenneth Burke--as well as I.A. Richards--Ann Berthoff states that "we can't make sense of one thing by itself . . ." and that we discover meanings "in the process of working (and playing) with the means language provides" (Forming/Thinking/Writing: The Composing Imagination (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden, 1978), pp. 44-5).

It is an unusual freshman rhetoric that fails to stress these generative powers of language or the processes of invention. Students today are led through Macrorie-Elbow freewritings, various adaptations of Kenneth Pike's tagmemic matrices, and Burkean dramatistic pentads. They study Aristotle's topoi, Berke's twenty questions, and Larson's lists. They practice brainstorming, dialoguing, looping, and cubing.[4] While no single technique promises mastery of the invention process, the importance of prewriting activities in generating ideas is clearly established.

Literary criticism seems to be moving in similar directions, although we cannot properly speak of a paradigm shift in the field. Since the New Critics focused our attention on the formal aspects of the literary text, we have eagerly shifted paradigms (archetypal, sociological, psychological, linguistic, anthropological, structuralist) in a search for the methods or criteria that would best evaluate and interpret the literary work. But a new pattern does seem to be emerging. Just as composition theory has found valuable support in the fields of cognitive psychology and linguistic philosophy, literary criticism is turning to epistemology and reading theory. James Hoetker points out that reader-response critics and reading researchers

still have much to learn from one another ("A Theory of Talking about Theories of Reading," College English, 44 (1982), 1979), but the sharing of ideas has already produced a renewed focus on the question of meaning, on the process of discovering a text.

Whether subjective, transactional, or deconstructionist, the newer New Criticism--like the New Rhetoric--stresses the function of the individual reader or writer in the making of meaning. When we read, as when we write or think, we compose. The chief theme of Ann Berthoff's book is that "the acts of mind involved in critical reading, in making sense of texts, are the same as those in operation when we compose: how we construe is how we construct" (p.6). Such reading may be a recomposition, but it certainly is no longer seen as a passive process--if it ever truly could have been. We don't merely decipher what we read, we recreate it (perhaps each time anew) out of the ideas, experiences, and skills we carry with us to the literary work. Reader-response critics such as Louise Rosenblatt (The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978)) see the text as more of a guide than a blueprint: the reader's evocation of the literary work is "an active, self-ordering and self-corrective process" (p. 11).

No matter how we define the literary text, we are forced to admit that each reader enjoys a different poem, whether it is the truest poem or not. As John Dewey wrote in 1934, "A new poem is created by everyone who reads poetically . . . Every individual brings with him . . . a way of seeing and feeling that in interaction with old material creates something new, something previously not existing in experience (Art as Experience (New York: Minton, Balch, 1934), p. 108). Some creations are certainly more informed and more effective than others, but it is our task as teachers of literature to move students to the fullest and most meaningful reading they can have.

Good teachers know this, of course, and they naturally attempt to provide means by which students can translate the text through meaningful associations with their own experience and knowledge. At its best the literature class is involved in a dialectic with the work, a place where students are encouraged to respond, to brainstorm, to question and construct a work, to build upon their own, their classmate's, and their teacher's ideas. Such a dialectic also performs what I.A. Richards called "a continuing audit of meaning," a testing of responses against the text itself (How to Read a Page (Boston: Beacon, 1959), p. 240).

David Bleich's methods of subjective criticism (Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism (Urbana: NCTE, 1975)) seem to offer specific help in translating reader-response theory into classroom practice. Bleich feels we tend to ignore or suppress the role that our feelings play in creating thoughts; therefore, he attempts to encourage the development of student "affects" and "associations" before moving to premature generalizations about the meaning of a work. For Bleich the literary work is its subjective re-creation, and he seeks to move students through exercises in perception, feelings, and personal associations before making judgments on literary importance. Interpretation, he says, "is always a group activity"--whether in the high school classroom or the professional journals of the critics (p. 94).

Bleich's ideas have found support among teachers at all levels. But his approach is ideally suited to the secondary school classroom, primarily because of his focus on the adolescent experience, and because secondary teachers of literature have had more opportunity to work in the affective mode than college teachers.[5] College teachers of literature do not usually have the time or the sustained contact with students necessary to utilize Bleich's methods, even if they do feel comfortable with his psychoanalytical approaches. They also are more committed, perhaps obligated, to covering a certain amount of subject matter. And thus we are left with what might be called the current-traditional paradigm of teaching college literature: lengthy reading assignments that often severely tax the student's reading level, a lecture presentation of what the instructor

views as the major aspect of the work, and an attempt at individualization in discussions in which the instructor provides all the questions and the clues. It is no wonder that the writing of our students often seems little more than an awkward imitation of the critical ideas of the instructor or critic without any hint of originality, common sense, or meaningfulness.

But there is something we can do. It doesn't involve spending half of our time on what we might consider "touchy-feely" games, and it doesn't require us to be skilled in psychoanalytic classroom management. It does require that we make use of our considerable knowledge, as English teachers, of process-oriented teaching. Just as we provide composition students with pre-writing assignments, we can provide students of literature with pre-reading activities. Let me illustrate what I mean by examining some of my own problems in teaching a course in "Masterpieces of American Literature" and in trying to get my students through Thoreau's Walden.

Anyone who has taught Walden will not be surprised to learn that my undergraduate students had difficulties with Thoreau--with his wit, his allusiveness, his Nineteenth Century style, and his general contrariness. I tried to point out his puns, footnote his wandering mind, and work through paragraph forms never taught in modern composition courses. I tried to explain and defend his sometimes abrasive and hortative stance. Above all, I found myself trying to make clear that for Thoreau, as for Emerson, nature was not mechanical but organic, not merely an ecosystem (a metaphor that contemporary students too easily substitute for transcendentalism), but a developing hieroglyph of God, an expositor of the divine mind.

Ideally, the class should have read Emerson's Nature and investigated the peculiar mix of Deism, German Idealism, Romanticism, the new natural science, the developing aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful, and that curious independence of American thought that all came together in places like Concord to form the complex amalgam of ideas and beliefs we call transcendentalism. Perhaps they all should have been older as well and have spent more time reading than watching TV. Realistically, in a ten-week course, about all I could do was try to explain that for the transcendental mind, beauty and order were the same (*kosmos*) and that art, as Emerson said, was "a nature passed through the alembic of man."[6]

None of which, of course, helped very much. For most students, the correspondence between nature and spirit remained some archaic foolishness to be dutifully recorded on an exam like an Emersonian syllogism:

> Words are signs of natural facts.
>
> Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts.
>
> Nature is the symbol of spirit (p. 31)

Most students never understood the correspondence as a key to *Walden*, and Thoreau remained an irritating enigma.

They were particularly puzzled by the crucial section of the chapter "Spring" where Thoreau finds delight in observing "the forms which thawing sand and clay assume in flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad . . ."[7] However, it was not surprising to them that Thoreau observes the coming of spring in a railroad cutbank, for he has already introduced the season, not by the traditional first robin or crocus, but by gauging and recording (in meticulous detail) the thawing and breaking up of the pond itself, for him a barometer which charts "the absolute progress of the seasons" (p. 204). Here the sand and clay flowing out of the melting snow obey the same immutable laws of freeze and thaw:

> When the frost comes out in the spring, and even in a thawing day in winter, the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava, sometimes bursting out through the snow and overflowing it where no sand was to be seen before. Innumberable little streams overlap and interlace one with another, exhibiting a sort of hybrid product which obeys half way the law of currents, and half way that of vegetation. As it flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines, making heaps of pulpy sprays a foot or more in depth, and resembling, as you look down on them, the lacinated lobed and imbricated thalluses of some lichens; or you are reminded of coral, or leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels, and excrements of all kinds. It is a truly grotesque vegetation, whose forms and color we see imitated in bronze, a sort of architectural foliage more ancient and typical then acanthus, chiccory, ivy, vine, or any vegetable leaves; destined perhaps, under some circumstances, to become a puzzle to future geologists (p. 208).

With some prodding, and a dictionary, the students managed to stay with Thoreau thus far. If the sand reminds him of leopard paws or flowing lava, that's his business.

The problem is that Thoreau is not merely describing nature metaphorically in "Spring." Nature is metaphor. Thoreau is moved as if he were standing "in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world . . ."; he feels nearer to the "vitals of the globe"; he finds in the flowing sand and clay "an anticipation of the vegetable leaf" (p. 209). The point is not that an imaginative mind can discover fanciful relationships between thawing clay and growing leaves. The point is that "nothing is inorganic," that the atoms of sand and leaves and leopard paws all follow the same universal law.

> The atoms have already learned this law, and are pregnant by it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype. Internally, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick lobe, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the leaves of fat (*Leibw*, *labor*, *lapsus*, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; *Lobo's*, *globus*, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words); *externally*, a dry thin leaf, even as the *f* and *v* are a pressed and dried *b*. The radicals of lobe are *lb*, the soft

> mass of the b (single-lobed, or B, double lobed), with the liquid l behind it pressing it forward. In globe, glb, the gutteral g adds to the meaning the capacity of the throat. The feathers and wings of birds are still drier and thinner leaves. Thus, also, you pass from the lumpish grub in the earth to the airy and fluttering butterfly. The very globe continually transcends and translates itself, and becomes winged in its orbit. Even ice begins with delicate crystal leaves, as if it had flowed into moulds which the fronds of water plants have impressed on the watery mirror. The whole tree itself is but one leaf, and rivers are still vaster leaves whose pulp is intervening earth, and towns and cities are the ova of insects in their axils (p. 209).

It is in passages such as these, where Thoreau moves beyond mere simile and metaphor to assert the underlying correspondences between all things, that students experience great difficulty. It is a mistake to dismiss such a passage as a playful exhibition of a naive nineteenth century linguistics, a mere playing with words. Although he is having fun, Thoreau is deadly serious. The feathers of birds are not described as being like leaves--they are leaves. And in the thawing clay Thoreau goes on to discover human forms--the ball of the finger, the palm of the hand, the bony system, and cellular tissue. "What is man," Thoreau finally asks, "but a mass of thawing clay?" (p. 210). To Thoreau "this one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature. The Maker of earth but patented a leaf" (p. 210).

To my students, in spite of all I did to explain the tenets of transcendentalism, the passage was only a tour de force, an unnecessary complication of the issue, a confusing and thus unimportant elaboration. And yet this section of "Spring," if not the keystone to Walden, is certainly representative of Thoreau's method, his way of thinking. In order to understand the importance of the chapter as well as what Thoreau is

attempting in Walden itself, students must do more than underline the epigrammatic passages concerning the principles of Nature; they must attend to relationships and detail, think like Thoreau, see the world in the grains of thawing sand and clay. Obviously, such learning is difficult to achieve in a ten-week course. And the problem is not just with Walden--there is Melville and Whitman and Faulkner and . . . just about any serious work of literature that requires a range of experience and sophistication that most college undergraduates lack.

Teaching any complex literary text to students without sufficient literary background (in some cases, it seems, without any background) is so frustrating that I considered not teaching Thoreau at all. Luckily, however, I stumbled across the following exercise in Berthoff's Forming/Thinking/Writing while preparing for a Minnesota Writing Project workshop on writing across the curriculum. Berthoff states that "virtually every aspect of composing is represented in listing: naming, grouping, classifying, sequencing, ordering, revising" (p. 63). She offers the following heuristic as a means of creating a dialectic:

Naming and Defining: Chaos and Dialectic

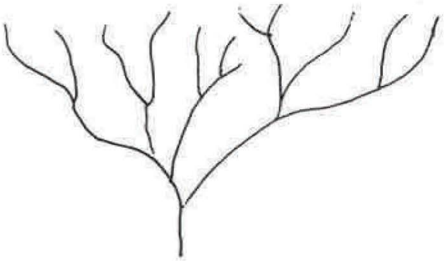


Fig. 1.

Step 1. Write down at least 20 words at random in response to this figure. In your inner dialogue, you can ask, "What do I see?" and "What does this figure make me think of?" Take five minutes.

Step 2. Across from each noun, set down a verb appropriate to the figure; e.g., tree . . . grows.

Step 3. Choose one of your words and see if any of the other words cluster around it. What context of situation is being developed that allows this clustering to happen?

Step 4. What is the most general name (other than "thing"), the one which could include other names, the way "produce" includes parsnips, pears, lettuce, apples, etc.? If there is no such word in your chaos, can you develop one by combining two or three words from your chaos? Can you add a new one?

Step 5. Choose two words from the chaos of names that seem farthest apart and write one sentence in which they both appear. Does this sentence create a context of situation or is it nonsense?

Step 6. Can you form two--and only two--classes that include all your names? (The names needn't be equally distributed.) How would you rename these sets?

Step 7. Using any of your original chaos and any new names generated as you grouped and sorted, write a few sentences in which you consider the figure (pp. 63-4).

Our group of twenty faculty from a wide variety of disciplines (business, history, chemistry, physics, nursing, psychology, mathematics, sociology, foreign language, education, etc.) produced the following list of "names" in response to Step 1.:

river
tree
brain
cracked plaster
leaf
bi-sulfate
free nerve ending
lightning
language tree
eyeball
artery
road map
drainage pattern
inverted mountain
fingers
chandelier
frayed wire
tendrils
palm of hand
lava flow
butterfly wings
erosion
antlers
root system
delta
capillaries
cortex
twigs

administrative hierarchy
cracked mud
highway system
railroad network
winter weeds
tornado
watershed
cracked glass
antennae
candelabra
wrinkled skin
nuclear explosion
cabbage
cracks in ice
stalagtites
pottery glaze

Our interdisciplinary group immediately discovered ways of using similar kinds of writing exercises in areas as diverse as physics, history, nursing, and business administration. And I, of course, saw immediately that such a dialectical exercise was a perfect means of introducing my students to the fundamental kind of thinking that lies behind Thoreau's Walden.

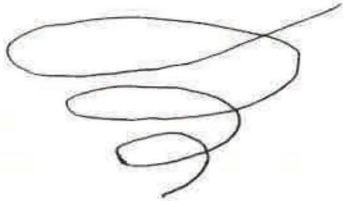
When I next taught Thoreau I had my students do the exercise the day before we were to read the chapter "Spring." As we recorded the responses to Step 1 on the blackboard, I was surprised to find that they were almost identical to the faculty list. The rest of their responses to Berthoff's heuristic were also similar to the faculty response. We noted the flowing, organic verbs that linked naturally to the list of nouns (trees grow, lava flows, brains pulse, roots expand, fingers extend, nerves communicate and so on). And we clustered words in similar contexts around the processes of growth and decay, the systems of root highway, or tree, and the structures of leaves, wings, nerves, and candelabras.

My class of 18 year-olds quickly related everything to everything, found parallels between the organic and the inorganic, correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm, and generated metaphors (in Step 5) that made them aware of the ordering power of language. "The leaves," one student wrote, burned on the trees like chandeliers." When they finally responded to Thoreau's passage on the railroad cutbank, the results convinced me that for the first time most of them were truly interested in (and making sense of) Thoreau's ideas in

Walden. They were thinking like Thoreau. They saw the earth, not as a "mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologist and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit--not a fossil earth but a living earth . . ." (p. 210).

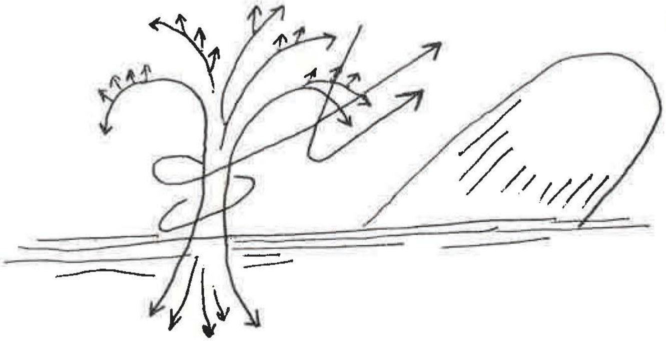
The Berthoff heuristic works so well because it requires that students explore their own sensory and imaginative responses before attempting abstract generalizations about the work. It focuses attention on particulars. Just as pre-writing helps composition students discover ideas for writing in the materials of their own experience and perception, the exercise in "chaos and dialectic" provides literature students with a foundation for critical analysis--in this case an understanding of Thoreau's transcendental metaphor. As does Bleich's method of subjective criticism, the procedure encourages emotional and associational response as a first step to literary criticism. It also teaches that interpretation is a "communal act" and illustrates how assumed group values and concepts play a role in literary analysis. Students glimpse the underlying similarities in their varied responses to the text.

At least they did in responding to Walden. But the Berthoff heuristic is an exercise in thinking and writing, not in literary analysis. Its application to Thoreau was pure serendipity. Could such a pre-writing technique be modified so it would apply to a wide range of literary works? The answer seemed to lie in identifying the key metaphor used by the writer and creating an abstract visual model for it. In some situations this is not difficult to do. The following "droodle" generated a very successful analysis of William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming":



Students associated the figure with tornadoes, floods, vortexes, broken watch springs, explosions, spinning tops, whirlpools, cones, spirals, gyres, and the flight of birds and falling leaves. They perceived the underlying metaphors of centrifugal and centripetal forces at work in the poem, the order of disorder in a world where "the centre cannot hold . . ."[8]

Some of my other graphics created more confusion than insight, such as this attempt at abstracting the visual and gravitational tensions implicit in William Carlos Williams' "Spring Strains":



Williams clearly puns on the visual tensions between the "swift convergings" of birds in flight, the "vibrant bowing limbs" of the tree, and the powerful mass of the rising sun: But --

> (Hold hard, rigid jointed trees!)
> the blinding and red-edged sun blur--
> creeping energy, concentrated
> counterforce--welds sky, buds, trees, rivets
> them in one puckering hold!
> Sticks through! Pulls the whole counter-pulling
> mass upward, to the right locks even the
> opaque, not yet defined ground in a terrific
> drag that is loosening the very tap-roots![9]

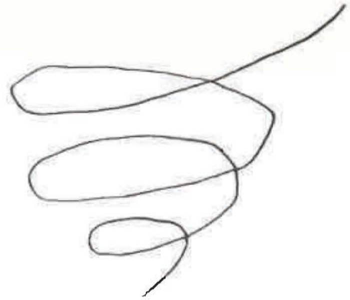
But my illustration seemed too representational. Obviously, I was limited by my inability to grasp the underlying metaphoric structure of the poem and translate it into an appropriate abstract figure.

I enjoyed creating the schematic so much that it was obvious to me that I was denying students the most beneficial aspect of the exercise. *They* should have been trying to find visual metaphors for the poem. Responding to visual models is an effective heuristic; creating those same models is even more effective. As Rudolf Arnheim argues in *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), "perceptual qualities of shape and motion are present in the very acts of thinking . . . are in fact the medium in which the thinking itself takes place" (p. 282).

Recent work on visual paradigms in the teaching of literature seems to confirm this. Carol Earnshaw Holmberg suggests that visual models "unite the experimental with the conceptual," the thought with the thing ("Using Visual Paradigms in Classroom Teaching," Minnesota Chancellor's Fellowship Project Report, (September, 1982), p. 7).

Holmberg argues that visual models allow students to perceive works of art as embodying "layered" experiences, reflecting "multiple levels of meaning," and that by "reconstituting" the text into its sensory, rational, imaginative/synthetic, and visionary levels she can illustrate the "expansive" effect of the work of art on the mind, thus guiding general education students into a "comprehensive and analytical response" to novels, short stories, poems, and essays (p. 2).

Especially relevant to my use of visual models is Holmberg's explanation of the imaginative/synthetic (or metaphoric) level of perception. Drawing upon Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, she defines metaphor as a combination of the sensory and conceptual levels: "The metaphor . . . provides the abstract imageless thought with an intuition drawn from the world of appearances . . ." (p. 6). To help her students grasp the concept of metaphoric thinking, Holmberg had them graph the concrete things mentioned in the poem. For example, most of her non-literature students at Metropolitan State University saw something like this in Yeats' "The Second Coming":



This example (which is similar to my own attempt) represents a high level of abstraction. Not all of the student responses were so "pure"--in fact, they existed on a continuum from the representational to the abstract. But in comparing and discussing their visual models, students came to understand the underlying metaphorical structure of the poem. The process is an efficient means of encouraging both subjective and consensus response to a text. It is a means of opening the realm of literary criticism to students. By creating their own visual metaphors, and discussing them and writing about them, students focus attention on the particulars of the text, on their own personal associations and feelings, and on the commonalities of literary response. The visual models relate individual truths to the more universal truths of a work of art, and provide a foundation for more analytical criticism. Individual associations may be highly idiosyncratic, but in a classroom of shared response to visual metaphors, the process becomes communal and is self-corrective.

Although the work of literature itself provides a guide to its re-creation, where readers do not have the necessary skills or maturity they do not just need more information; they need ways of generating and processing the associations and relationships that imaginative literature demands. To memorize a guidebook is not the same as taking the journey. Pre-writing (or pre-reading) activities such as the use of visual models help students build upon each other's knowledge and experience.

While there is no one heuristic, visual or written, that will work equally well for all literary analysis, this is not cause for despair. As R.S. Crane has written in The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), the pluralistic critic takes the view that "the basic principles and methods of any distinguishable mode of criticism are tools of inquiry and interpretation rather than formulations of the 'real' nature of things and that the choice of any special 'language' among the many possible for the study of poetry, is a practical decision to be justified solely in terms of the kinds of knowledge the critic wants to attain" (p. 31). If our aim is to help non-majors gain access to imaginative literature, literary criticism must be seen as a process in which students experience and re-create the work of art rather than merely accumulate and memorize information about it.

Notes

[1] "What Does It Mean to be Able to Write? The Question of Writing in the Discourses of Literature and Composition," College English, 45 (1983), 222.

[2] In addition to the article by Susan Miller, see James Hoetker, "A Theory of Talking about Theories of Reading," College English, 44, (1982), 175-81; Russell A. Hunt, "Toward a Process-Intervention Model in Literature Teaching," College English, 44 (1982), 345-57; and Anthony R. Petrosky, "From Story to Essay: Reading and Writing," College Composition and Communication, 33 (1982), 19-36.

[3] For example, Berlin uses the term "epistemic rhetoric" to categorize the work of Ann Berthoff, James Moffett, Linda Flower, Andrea Lunsford, Barry Kroll, and Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike.

[4] One of the best surveys of materials on invention is Richard E. Young's "Invention: A Topographical Survey," in Teaching Composition: 10 Bibliographical Essays, ed. Gary Tate. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976; Charles R. Cooper and Leo Odell, eds., in Research on Composing: Points of Departure (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1978), have collected important unpublished articles and provide an extensive bibliography; finally, Richard Leo Enos' "Heuristic Procedures and the Composing Process: A Selected Bibliography," Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Special Issue, No. 1 (1982) contains material not usually cited in the traditional English journals.

[5] For example, see A Guidebook for Teaching Literature by Raymond J. Rodrigues and Dennis Badaczewski (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978) with its stress on creative dramatics, individualized instruction, and materials geared to "the American Adolescent."

[6] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. by Stephan E. Whicher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957) p. 31.

[7] Henry David Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience, ed. by Sherman Paul (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 208.

[8] William Butler Yeats, The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats Definitive Education (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 184.

[9] William Carlos Williams, Selected Poems (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 9.

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IF THE AIM IS QUALITY, ENGLISH MUST BE TAUGHT AS A LIBERAL ART, NCTE PRESIDENT-ELECT SAYS

"Now that excellence in education is on everyone's mind, it's time to go back to teaching English as a liberal art," says Stephen Tchudi, president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The widespread belief that students must master grammar, spelling, and other mechanics of language before they can start reading and writing about literature is debasing the quality of U.S. education, this college teacher and author says. Translated into curriculum in the schools, this insistence on Correctness First puts the rewards of learning out of reach of young students. Too many of them, he believes, get discouraged and give up before they grasp what it can mean to become truly literate.

"English has traditionally been identified with the humanities and liberal arts," comments Tchudi, a professor of English at Michigan State University. "But in the past decade, English teachers have been more and more pressured into treating it as a simple 'basic skill' to be learned through drill and memorization."

"If studying English is to lead to true literacy," Tchudi says, "then English must be more than testing students on points of grammar and subtleties of spelling. English ought to expose students to a broad range of writing from many cultures and many eras. In English and other disciplines, students should be encouraged to talk and write about substantive ideas and issues.

"English taught as a liberal art can begin in the elementary grades," Tchudi says. "Children can be given opportunities to read far more than they do in school now, especially in the great works of children's literature. They need to write daily, everything from notes and letters to stories and plays.

"Spelling, vocabulary, phonics, and penmanship are all necessary within limits," Tchudi agrees, "but they don't lead to love and understanding of language the way a memorable work of children's literature does. You could spend twelve years on mechanics of language and still not be really literate in English. And even the mechanics become second nature only through constant reading and writing."

In secondary schools, Tchudi would like to see teachers look at English as more than career skills or even college preparation. The best preparation for both college and career, he insists, is broad reading and "frequent use of spoken and written English for a variety of purposes: intellectual, imaginative, and pragmatic." In short, a broad foundation in the liberal arts.

What does it take to educate students toward broad literacy?

"You don't need much expensive equipment or many resources besides books," Tchudi says. "But the school system has to be willing to give English and language arts teachers smaller and fewer classes."

Excellence in the language arts depends on teachers having time to respond thoughtfully to each student's writing and to prepare for discussions of what is being read, Tchudi comments. Such individual encouragement, especially for the so-called "average" student, diminishes as class size grows. And even before the present budget crises, he points out, most high school English teachers in the U.S. were trying to teach five classes a day totalling more than 150 students.

"English teachers nationwide are clearly concerned about excellence in education," Tchudi comments. "And they are willing to be held accountable for the quality of their work. However, they also need the support of the community and encouragement to teach as well as they can.

"In recent years, the public has been highly critical of English teachers, and teachers have listened and responded to that criticism," Tchudi notes. "Now it's time for the public to attend to the needs of English language arts teachers and give them the climate and support to teach English as a true liberal art."

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The Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English launches a new monograph series, Studies in Writing and Rhetoric, with a unique study that provides both theoretical and practical guidelines for the evaluation of composition programs.

Evaluating College Writing Programs, by Stephen P. Witte and Lester Faigley, to be published August 1 (136 pages, paperback, $8.50) critically reviews studies designed to evaluate composition programs at the University of Northern Iowa, the University of California at San Diego, Miami University, and the University of Texas.

Because present evaluation systems are so limited that they are neither reliable nor valid, the authors realized a need for theoretical and practical guidance, which they offer through discussion of generalities from the four studies and pertinent questions and guidance to evaluators of composition programs. The questions they devised demand much of program evaluators: What do we presently know? What assumptions are we making and how do those assumptions limit our knowledge? Are those limitations necessary or desirable? What do we still need to know? *Evaluating College Writing Programs* is a needed and timely work that provides a model for future Studies in Writing and Rhetoric monographs.

Stephen P. Witte and Lester Faigley teach in the Department of English at the University of Texas at Austin. Both have published extensively on discourse features, composing, writing pedagogy, writing evaluation, and literature.

ISBN 0-8093-1124-0

MINNESOTA LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT: 1984

by Jwalla P. Somwaru

The Assessment Section of the Division of Special Services, in collaboration with the Division of Instruction of the Minnesota Department of Education, is developing the following new instruments for assessment in English Language Skills during the spring of 1984:

Writing for grades 6, 9, and 11 (essays)

Language Skills for grades 6, 9, and 11 (objective tests)

The new Writing tests will replace the tests which are currently in use. Together with the Minnesota Reading tests for grades 4, 8, and 11, and the Minnesota Secondary Reading Inventories, these tests will comprise a substantial language arts package which will be available to schools and/or districts for local assessment during and after the statewide assessment in 1984.

The tests in Writing will enable the direct assessment of writing samples of Minnesota students in the following modes: narrating, describing, explaining, summarizing, persuading and analyzing. The model for the assessment is represented in Figure 1, while the details of the two dimensions to be assessed are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The objective tests in Language Skills are designed to be complementary to the tests in writing. These tests will assess students' knowledge, understanding and application of the rules and conventions of functional grammar and composition. A detailed list of the domains, areas, clusters, and outcomes is provided in Table 3. The content of this table should not give the impression that the state is returning to the teaching and testing of formal grammar as an end in itself. Rather, a knowledge and understanding of language structure is viewed as supplementary to the acquisition of writing skills. A demonstration project in which the study of language structure (functional grammar) is successfully integrated with the teaching of writing in elementary and high schools is the Weehawken Project of New Jersey (a Title IVC project validated as successful and cost-effective by the U.S. Office of Education in 1973).

The manual produced (or some version thereof) has been used effectively by many schools in several states, including Minnesota.

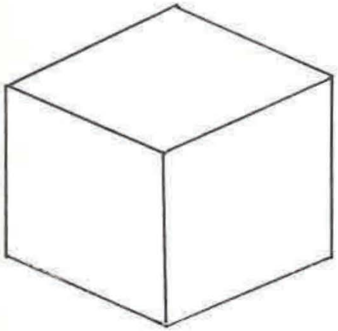
Several research studies have attempted to answer the question whether objective tests can be used as valid measures of writing ability. While significant correlations (ranging from low to moderate) have always been found between essay writing and objective tests in language skills, it cannot be said that the two kinds of tests measure the same skills and abilities. In the process of writing a student integrates linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive skills to create a product, and there is no substitute for a writing sample for evaluating writing ability. An objective test in language skills assesses whether a student knows, understands and can apply linguistic rules and conventions of usage in a recognition mode. The significant correlations often found between performances in writing and language skills reflect the underlying competence students have acquired in the use of language. Knowledge and understanding of grammatical rules do not ensure that they would be effectively used in writing: they constitute a necessary but not sufficient condition for good writing. If the teaching of grammar is integrated with writing, as is done in the Weehawken Project, the chances are favorable that knowledge and understanding of language structure will enhance the writing ability of students in the intermediate and higher grades of school by helping them to develop improved patterns of expression.

In discussions of the merit of teaching grammar, the issue is often polarized by the perception of grammar as consisting of the memorization of formal rules and esoteric terms, while composition is viewed as the free creative expression of a person. These perceptions are unwarranted, as grammar also includes the intelligent use of words in various forms, the building of good sentences, and the effective joining of sentences. On the other hand, writing (or composition) includes the use of linguistic skills in the production of rhetorical effects such as narrating, describing and persuading. A comparison of the content of Tables 1, 2, and 3 would show the common ground that exists between language skills and writing, as conceived in the Minnesota Language assessment. The language skills assessed are directed towards writing, while both linguistic and rhetorical elements are assessed in writing. Where does grammar end and where does writing begin? A student, who is a native speaker of English, comes to school with a working knowledge of the structure of the language, although he/she may not be conscious of the rules and their application. The teaching of grammar, when integrated with writing and speaking, would develop an awareness of the rules of the language, and possibly enhance the potential for extended use in the writing of better sentences.

An analytical approach is proposed for the assessment of writing (see Tables 1 and 2). In this approach, linguistic and rhetorical dimensions are scored separately, various elements being weighted differentially within each dimension. This approach will enable teachers to identify those linguistic and/or rhetorical elements in which students are weak, and to address them through appropriate instruction. The process can be continued, in that students could be re-tested in order to see the effects of instruction. It is the writer's opinion that a holistic approach to the assessment of writing has no diagnostic or instructional value. In several studies where performance in writing was correlated with knowledge and understanding of grammar, writing was generally evaluated by the holistic method, and this confounding of linguistic and rhetorical effects probably explains why low to moderate correlations have usually been found between writing and knowledge of grammar. It is hypothesized that a moderate to high correlation will be found in the Minnesota assessment between language skills and the linguistic dimension of writing. This is because linguistic and rhetorical elements will be evaluated separately, and one will not be allowed to overshadow the other.

In the process of developing the instruments for assessment in Writing and Language Skills, the need for a systematic and comprehensive model for written language expression became obvious. Such a model would specify the components and their relationships to each other, and allow for appropriate weighting in the process of assessment. We do not know that such a model exists. The model described below will serve as a basis for the assessment.

A THREE DIMENSIONAL MODEL FOR EVALUATING
WRITTEN LANGUAGE EXPRESSION



RHETORICAL ELEMENTS: Effectiveness in writing to achieve objectives: narrating, describing, explaining, summarizing, persuading, and analyzing.

LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS: Appropriate use of words and word forms, correct sentence structure, effective joining of sentences, appropriate use of idioms, correct spelling of words, correct use of punctuation, and correct use of capitalization.

CONVENTIONAL ELEMENTS: Accepted conventions for writing letters, dialogs and reports.

FIGURE 1

The rhetorical and linguistic dimensions are defined in greater detail in Tables 1 and 2. In the proposed assessment for 1984, the conventional dimension of writing will not be assessed. Attention will be focused on the rhetorical and linguistic dimensions only. Table 1 shows the weights which will be allocated to the various elements in the six modes of writing. In each mode, these weights add up to 100. Comparative weighting thus exists across the modes. In the statewide assessment, a limited sample of students in grades 6, 9 and 11 would be required to do one mode of writing (one package) and a package of tests in language skills. It would thus be possible to do correlation studies between the two dimensions of writing and language skills. After the statewide assessment, all of the tests in writing and language skills, together with their administration and scoring manuals, would be available to schools and districts for local use. All users will have the privilege of changing or adjusting the weights to suit their own purposes, and the scoring guides for composition should be considered as presenting only some possible and workable schemes.

The instruments for writing and language skills are now going through the process of development. Last fall, English teachers were asked to review lists of key rhetorical elements in the 6 modes of writing, and to indicate whether they were addressing these in their teaching of writing. Their responses generally confirmed the outlines sent out, but some modifications were made on the basis of these responses. Table 1 shows the final list of rhetorical elements arrived at through this process. Currently (April-May, 1983) selected teachers in various parts of the state are field testing the complete set of 16 items for writing and 600 items for language skills. These items will be scored and analyzed, and appropriate modifications will be made in the instruments and manuals before their final use in the spring of 1984.

TABLE 1

WRITING: RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

MODES OF WRITING	RHETORICAL ELEMENTS	WEIGHTS
1. NARRATING (Essentially telling a story)	Coherence	20 points
	Shows a well developed sequence of events.	20 points
	Shows a controlled point of view.	15 points
	Contains conflict and conflict resolution.	15 points
	Style:	20 points
	Character development . . . 5	
	Use of dialogue 5	
	A sense of drama 5	
	Use of appropriate verbs . 5	
	Originality	10 points
	Defined qualities 5	
	Underfined qualities . . . 5	(TOTAL = 100)
2. DESCRIBING (Giving a verbal picture of an object or event)	Coherence	20 points
	Contains adequate details and facts.	20 points
	Contains suitable adjectives and adverbs to make the description vivid.	20 points
	Contains suitable nouns and verbs to make the description vivid.	10 points
	Shows clear spatial and temporal relationships.	10 points
	Style	10 points
	Originality	10 points
3. EXPLAINING (Providing a set of directions on how to do something)	Coherence	20 points
	Contains an ordered sequence from beginning to end.	20 points
	Contains sufficient detail to allow replicability.	20 points
	Shows good organization of details for clarity.	20 points
	Style	20 points

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

MODES OF WRITING	RHETORICAL ELEMENTS	WEIGHTS
4. SUMMARIZING (Condensing a longer piece of writing)	Retains essential ideas and facts, and leaves out non-essential details.	40 points
	Contains a restatement of ideas in writer's own words.	30 points
	Shows coherence.	30 points
5. PERSUADING (Taking a position on an issue and defending it)	Coherence	20 points
	States a position clearly.	20 points
	Contains arguments supporting position taken.	20 points
	Shows disadvantage of the opposite point of view.	20 points
	Style and originality. (Includes effective use of rhetorical devices, e.g., repetition, humor, figurative language)	20 points
6. ANALYZING (Inquiry into the nature of an issue, a situation, or character)	Coherence	20 points
	Shows cause and effect relationships.	20 points
	Identifies significant relationships.	20 points
	Takes ideas to their logical conclusions.	20 points
	Presents a non-judgemental view.	20 points

TABLE 2

II. LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

1. Use appropriate forms of words.
2. Use words with appropriate meaning.
3. Construct simple sentences.
    - Use essential parts - noun and verb phrase.
    - Use other parts - determiners, qualifiers, prepositions, etc.
    - Distinguish among sentence, fragment, run-on.
    - Construct questions correctly.
    - Use passive transformation.
4. Join sentences effectively.
    - Construct compound sentences.
    - Construct complex sentences.
    - Join sentences for effect.
    - Expand sentences.
5. Compose paragraphs effectively.
    - Use topic sentence; thesis sentence.
    - Relate other sentences to topic.
    - Order sentences appropriately.
    - Use appropriate transitions.
    - Use techniques to develop paragraph.
6. Use idioms appropriately.
7. Spell words correctly.
8. Punctuate sentences according to rules and usage.
9. Use capital letters according to rules and usage.

TABLE 3 (CONDENSED VERSION)

LANGUAGE SKILLS (OBJECTIVE TESTS)

DOMAIN 1: LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION AND EXPRESSION
AREA 1: WORDS AND SENTENCES
    CLUSTER 1: USING CORRECT FORMS OF WORDS (4 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 2: USING WORDS WITH APPROPRIATE MEANING (2 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 3: CONSTRUCTING SIMPLE SENTENCES (6 Outcomes)
AREA 2: COMPOSITION
    CLUSTER 1: JOINING SENTENCES (5 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 2: COMPOSING PARAGRAPHS (5 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 3: USING IDIOMS (2 Outcomes)
DOMAIN 2: MECHANICS OF LANGUAGE
AREA 1: SPELLING
    CLUSTER 1: SPELLING BY APPLYING RULES (3 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 2: SPELLING IRREGULAR AND DERIVED WORDS (2 Outcomes)
AREA 2: PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION
    CLUSTER 1: PUNCTUATION (6 Outcomes)
    CLUSTER 2: CAPITALIZATION (3 Outcomes)

MCTE Award Program

The Minnesota Council of Teachers of English is pleased to announce an Award Program, beginning in the fall of 1983, for quality articles published in the Minnesota English Journal.

Cash prizes of $75.00 each will be awarded at the Annual Spring Conference to the authors of award-winning articles in each of the following categories:

Classroom Teaching:

- a description, explanation, or evaluation of a successful method, assignment, or curriculum for teaching English language or literature.

Theoretical or Critical:

- a discussion that advances our understanding of the study of language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening) or literature (or a particular work), or of the teaching of language and literature, or of the relationship of the study of language and literature to life and culture.

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Authors should follow standard Minnesota English Journal submission rules. The MCTE Publications Board will serve as judges. All articles published in MEJ will be considered eligible, though the Publications Board reserves the right NOT to grant an award if, in its judgment, none of the published articles meet the award's criteria or its standard of excellence.

MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO READ

by Jeannine Bohlmeyer

April may be the cruelest month, but a January interim is the most fun for teaching. Last January I taught a course called "I've Always Wanted to Read ____." The blank was for a lifetime reading plan in great literature. Students made long lists of the great literature they'd like to read and then spent about thirty hours a week working on that reading list. Class time--the other ten or twelve hours a week for the course--involved the reading in common of some short pieces from To Read Literature edited by Donald Hall. We used the common readings as a basis for discussion of techniques for reading and analysis of literature. We also read and discussed supplementary materials from Reading Slowly by James Sire, How to Read a Book by Mortimer Adler, and Good Reading edited by J. Sherwood Weber. On some days we listened to literature, especially poetry, and heard reports from student groups who had read similar works. The net result was a vital, enjoyable experience--mind and feeling involved in solitary reading and in sociable discussion.

The course attracted two kinds of students, about a dozen of each kind. Some really liked reading and looked on the course as an opportunity to spend a month reading and reading and reading. The others had not read much of anything except textbooks but thought they'd like to. All were self-selected; two students dropped the course on the first day because they hated reading. They apparently hadn't read the course title.

Credit requirements included reading a minimum of 2500 pages of great literature (no reading in other disciplines or in merely popular material for the purposes of this course) with a discursive bibliographical essay and some oral reports. The page goal was based on a reading aloud rate of twenty-five pages per hour and the assumption that silent reading goes at least that fast. It turned out not to be a useful goal since amounts of reading were much higher, an average of 3098. Students who were taking the course for a conventional grade averaged 3225 pages and those who chose a pass/fail basis averaged 2844.

Reaction to the course was highly favorable. End of course interviews with each student reported good experiences. All planned future reading, most having a book ready for the long weekend between interim and spring term, one planning a scheduled daily reading time for spring term, and almost everyone speaking longingly of being able to read next summer. Several students glowed with the accomplishment of reading a number of "whole books all the way through." Others discovered what no one could tell them meaningfully--that the classics aren't classics because they're boring. One student interested in political science rushed into my office to ask, "Did you know that The Scarlet Letter is about the difference between law and justice?"

Students infected each other, both through class reports and in the informal conversations. They read 128 different works. More students (12) read Wuthering Heights than any other single selection, largely as the result of an effective student report. Eight different Dickens novels accounted for 23 selections, with some students reading several of Dickens' works. Ten reports involved various Steinbeck novels; nine students read Jane Eyre and six read Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Eight students chose five different Twain works. Some students grouped their choices around a single author, within a period or genre, or in relation to some specific interest. One young man read Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, and The Divine Comedy to see what those works had in common. Other authors who proved popular were Jane Austen, George Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Flannery O'Connor, William Shakespeare, and J.R.R. Tolkien. Several students read Russian novels, mostly Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, and reported to the group.

Almost all the students reported gains in reading skills, not so much in speed as in comprehension and in intelligent analysis and heightened appreciation. Many reported a reacquaintance with the joys of reading, with the pleasures of experiencing another's world. Quite a few responded to suggestions in their supplementary readings that they experience the whole novel without trying to analyze each detail until they had the scope of the whole work before them. Some had read almost no fiction and were surprised to find that it contained the flesh and life of the skeletons they had met in theoretical courses. Almost all said it was fun to read material of their own choosing, at their own pace, and still be doing the work of a course.

While a class like this is ideally suited to the interim period that allows concentration on one thing, it might be adapted to a high school setting where one day a week would be used for discussion of skills and reports on reading and the other class days left free for reading itself. It might also be used in a college setting along with other courses, perhaps being less effective because less intensive but simulating the problem of making time to keep up a lifetime reading plan along with other responsibilities, duties, and pleasures. In intensive or extensive formats, it seems to be a way to introduce students to a stimulating, broad experience in the liberal arts. It's a course I hope to teach again.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT STUDENTS' WRITING

by Miriam Meyers

At the 1982 NCTE Convention in Washington, D.C., Richard Larson reported on "Where We Have Been Going and Are Going Now in Writing about Composition," presumably from his vantage point as editor of College Composition and Communication. In his list of five items, he included "Studies of Adult Writers: who they are, what special problems they present, and how they can best be approached." This interested me because I have been working with what is called the returning adult student for twelve years, both in writing courses and in other courses in which I place high priority on helping students improve their writing. Our writing faculty, moreover, keep an eye on the literature in composition, and some of us have conducted searches on adult students' writing, with poor results.

Much of the research now being reported focusses on what adults write on the job. Work in this vein, such as that by Odell and Goswami (1981), Van Dyck (1980), and Loris (1982) is certainly helpful to us as we think about the situations in which our students are most likely to apply what they take away from writing instruction. It is not particularly useful, though, in directing our attention to the skills and needs adult students bring when they come to us for help.

My purpose here is to add to our sparse knowledge of who returning adult students are and what their writing is like by reporting on some research I have begun on Metropolitan State University's diagnostic testing program.

A word about Metro U is in order.

The Minnesota Legislature established this upper division institution in May of 1971. Metro U students are older than the traditional 18- to 22-year-olds and are fully employed, inside or outside of the home, as well as involved, as adults are wont to be, in various other activities. They need flexible, individualized educational programs that allow them to complete their B.A. degrees in ways that take account of their lives and are respectful of their previous education.

Though most students enrolling at Metro have had at least two years of postsecondary education, from the beginning our students showed a need for help with their writing. A writing program thus developed to meet that need. The curriculum includes four developmental writing workshops, two first-level writing courses (General Writing and Writing for Work--parallel expository writing courses with slightly different emphases), and specialized writing courses focussed on professional or avocational (our students would say "creative") writing.

As Metro U enrollment increased, the need became apparent for a systematic way to give students advice about their writing. Two years ago, we began a program to test all entering students' writing, on a voluntary basis, during the first course students take--the Individualized Educational Planning course. It is in this course that students plan the upper division portion of their B.A. degree programs; only upon successful completion of the course is degree candidacy granted.

Evaluation of each student's writing is based on a writing sample on a course-related topic. Three trained readers score the sample using a 22-item analytical scoring process. Students are then given a diagnostic summary addressing (1) a collective readers' judgment of their overall writing skills, (2) an overall numerical rating and scores on five aspects of the writing sample: punctuation, grammar and diction, sentence structure, organization, and development, and (3) advice to students about appropriate ways to improve their writing, including enrollment in courses and workshops and use of the writing tutor.

Overall judgments on writing skills are based on composite scores (each reader scores the sample, then all scores are combined) and may be summarized as follows: 0-45, weak; 45-58, not well developed; 59-70, satisfactory, but not strong; 71-92, significant asset.

For the research reported here, I chose 100 students randomly from the fall 1981 entering class and looked at their performance on the diagnostic test and at other characteristics. In this sample, the average score was 51.56, the median score

51, and the range from 35 to 67. Readers rated the overall writing skills of the 100 students as follows: 21% weak, 56% not well developed, 23% satisfactory, but not strong. No students in this group demonstrated writing skill that readers judged as a significant asset.

Average scores on the five components of the total scores were as follows:

AVERAGE COMPONENT SCORES

Component	Score
Punctuation	13
Sentence Structure	12
Grammar and Diction	11
Organization	11
Development	10

These results seem to indicate that, like the younger students tested in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Whiteman, 1980), adult students have more control of the mechanics of writing than of organization and development of ideas. The results are consistent as well with Metro U faculty perceptions of students' writing competence and with the judgment of Metro U's writing program director. Aldrich (1982) found the same pattern of problems in adults' writing on the job.

This pattern of component scores obtains for subgroups within the population as well. Those students having overall scores in the lowest range and those having overall scores in the highest range (in this sample, the satisfactory range), for example, made the following average scores on the five components:

COMPONENT SCORES OF THOSE WITH SCORES
IN THE 59 - 70 RANGE ("Satisfactory") (n=23)

Punctuation	Sentence Structure	Diction	Organization	Development
16	14	13	13	12

COMPONENT SCORES OF THOSE WITH SCORES
IN THE 0 - 45 RANGE ("Weak") (n=21)

Punctuation	Sentence Structure	Diction	Organization	Development
11	10	9	9	8

Demographically, this student sample is close in characteristics to the entire Metro U student population, as established by institutional research. The average age of the sample group was 34 years, with a range of 36 years: the youngest student in the sample was 21, the oldest 57. Forty-six were male, 56 female. Eighty-seven percent are employed at least some of the time outside of the home; of those, 64% work 40 hours a week or more.

In this particular sample (figures are not available for the entire Metro U student population on this point), 35% of the students had been in college elsewhere during the year, and 64% had attended college within the past five years. Only 15% had not been in college within the past 10 years. These data on last experience with college indicate that the returning adult student is typically well accustomed to a college environment, contrary to some popular notions.

A look at average scores of selected groups of students within the sample shows little variation from the overall average score (51.56). Thus, those students 25 years of age or younger (n=10) had an average score of 50, while those 43 years or older (n=14) had an average score of 52. Similarly, those 24 students entering with 135 or more credits (senior status) had an average score of 52, while those 33 students entering with 90 or fewer credits (junior status) had an average score of 51. There appears to be no relationship, furthermore, between writing skill and college transferred from. The largest transfer group in this particular sample, 37 students from the Minnesota community colleges, had an average overall score of 50, while the second largest number, 27 students transferring from the University of Minnesota, had an average overall score of 50.

Of the 100 students in the sample, 21% did not achieve degree candidacy at Metro U. (The IEP course functions partly as a screening device.) The average score of this group was 52, compared to the overall sample average of 51.56.

Most of these returning adult students had postsecondary writing instruction before coming to Metro U. Of those in the sample, all but 10 had had at least one college writing course. A couple of people had had seven writing courses. The average number of writing courses transferred from other colleges was 2.22.

We are interested, naturally, in what writing courses students register for after receiving their diagnostic test results. In this sample, 20 of those 79 achieving degree candidacy, or one-fourth, registered in one of the subsequent five quarters for a first-level writing course. This group's average score on the test was 51.

Seventeen additional writing registrations came out of the sample in those five quarters.

In following up on the testing program, the Metro U writing program director found that writing courses and workshop enrollments increased 53% the first quarter after initiation of testing and 150% the second quarter, compared to enrollments the previous year. In addition, he tracked 26 randomly selected students through testing, writing courses, and subsequent testing, using the same instrument. Every student's score increased, and about ten increased dramatically.

One implication of the data reported here is that development and organization of ideas must receive a hefty portion of our attention in writing instruction. This is not to say that other matters should be ignored; certainly writing products, as well as processes, need attention, as these students' scores indicate. It may be, however, that we can find ways for adult students, at least, to pursue some of the surface editing skills in a self-instructional format so that we can devote more of our attention to helping them do what is most difficult for them--develop and organize ideas.

Further, it is apparent from our experience at Metro U that adults will voluntarily take writing courses if they are given information about their writing problems. Metro U requires no writing courses, though it strongly recommends instruction when appropriate. The writing program is thriving on our recommendations.

Finally, it is apparent that writing instruction alone cannot produce competent writers. Otherwise, the students in this sample, who have had college writing instruction already, would be better writers. This sample reminds us that all subject matter teachers have an important role to play in convincing students of the importance of writing as a way of learning and as a way of communicating what they know. They will help students write better by making writing an integral part of their courses. Models exist for such all-institution efforts, including the very fine Minnesota Writing Project of which Metro U is a part. I am convinced that many people who are committed to good teaching will join such efforts.

Metro U writing faculty members expect to continue looking at our students' writing for interesting correlations and patterns, delving more deeply into the issues I have raised in this exploratory study. We would like to see how scores of traditional age college students in other institutions and scores of adults already granted the B.A. compare with this group's scores. We expect to run more sophisticated statistical analyses of these and other data. Finally, we want to look at the kinds of writing tasks our students do on the job, how those tasks might influence their writing, and how external demands might inform our writing instruction. This work, we hope, will help us refine our sense, in Richard Larson's words, of "Adult Writers: who they are, what special problems they present, and how they can best be approached."

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Evaluating College Writing Programs (So. Ill. U. Press, 1983) by Stephen P. Witte and Lester Faigley confronts the problems of conducting adequate and valid evaluations. Even though Witte and Faigley avoid directly suggesting methods of evaluation, any person constructing or evaluating a collegiate writing a program will benefit from the questions raised and the solutions suggested.

In order to supply context for their "theoretical framework for evaluating college writing programs"(4), the authors critique the two dominant major modes of evaluation.

They find that the current dominant methods of evaluation, 1) the expert observer and 2) the quantitative pre-test post-test essay study fail to provide adequate or valid evaluation of a writing program because they are incomplete and subject to bias, to say the least(4-7). Witte and Faigley discuss the design, execution, and outcomes of four large studies to show that pre-post test studies, even when well thought-out, fail to address enough program concerns, measure too limited effects or, contenting themselves with studying theme performance, fail to address process, and ignore instructional concerns.

Adequacy

Witte and Faigley propose a multiple method approach to evaluation which grows out of a framework that 1) specifies "the necessary components of writing program evaluation" and 2) reflects "the interactions among those components"(39). Witte and Faigley describe five components:

1. Cultural and social context
2. Instutational context
3. Program structure and administration
4. Content or curriculum
5. Instruction

The effects of writing programs are found, they say, in the interaction among *all* the components, in process as much as in product. While effects may be *intended* or *unintended*, a good evaluation discovers both. Evaluations they note are frequently limited at the outset by very broad goals or mission statements which are agreeable to everyone and which substitute for precise, well-stated goals that are much harder to get consensus about. Further, a program cannot be evaluated in only one dimension--usually text production(56). Twenty-six possible sets of interactions of the five components exist, all deserving of attention (64). Moreover, none of these components need remain stable. Overwhelming as it may be, this is the territory to be evaluated if an evaluation is to be complete, effective and useful.

The description of each component refers to models for achieving perspective on that component and cites ample bibliography. For example, the discussion of content briefly abstracts the category systems of d"Angelo, Kinneavy, Britton, The Council of Europe, Moffett and others(50-51). In this way, the reader receives plenty of direction to guide future reading and future planning, either of a program or an evaluation.

Validity

Witte and Faigley argue for a "paradigm" of choices(70) among the available and yet to be developed methods of evaluation. These choices should reflect the current context for writing which recognizes that:

"1. Writing is no longer taught only in the English department or only in the freshman year.

2. Writing courses are recognized to have special needs, especially special training for their instructors.

3. Students write different types of writing for different audiences and purposes instead of themes.

4. The instructor's role has changed from strictly that of an evaluator to that of a coach.

5. Writing is taught by having students write instead of by lecture or discussion of readings.

6. Writing is not defined as a static product"(73).

Finally, Witte and Faigley propose the evaluator examine the various possible interactions to be studied, devise a set of relevant questions, and then select a method or methods of evaluation which will generate the required data. However, Witte and Faigley's suggestions for implementation do not constitute an applied model.

Witte and Faigley do give us some exemplary questions to ensure adequacy, but no exemplary selection of evaluation methods to ensure validity. Researchers will need to construct models for themselves, working from the program to be evaluated perhaps. In closing, Witte and Faigley suggest that while the task of evaluating writing programs may be complex, adequate and valid evaluations are possible and necessary for programs to function effectively and for the discipline to validate itself as a discipline.

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EDITORIAL POLICY: MINNESOTA ENGLISH JOURNAL

Minnesota English Journal is an official organ of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English. It ordinarily appears two times a year, Fall and Winter/Spring. Minnesota English Journal publishes articles of general interest to its membership, teachers K through college. Particularly sought are manuscripts which show how pedagogy implements theory and which describe or discuss current and real problems faced by some segment of the teaching profession in English in Minnesota. Manuscripts from Minnesota teachers are preferred. The Journal is distributed free-of-charge to the membership. Individual issues can be ordered for $2.50 per issue.

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