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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

MCTE begins its twenty-sixth year as a strong professional organization, and it is well that this is so. Following a spate of controversial reports, education is inching up on the national and state agendas. The universal call for excellence has put the spotlight on us in education, on our schools, and on our students, and the public seems in no mood for business as usual. In Minnesota, much of the rhetoric of the past two years seems likely to be translated into reality--and as professionals, we should have a say in that translation. Collectively we have power, and a strong MCTE can blend our many voices into one.

In these critical times of change we must guard against the cynical and simplistic assumptions that improvements in the classroom can be imposed from the outside, or that excellence can be legislated and then enforced. As teachers who care about language and about students, we know better. We know that mandates, heavy-handed management systems, and overzealous testing do more to stifle than to stimulate learning. As an organization, we must press for informed alternatives grounded in theory, research, and classroom experience. Both the stakes and the issues facing us are big enough to challenge every member of the Council. We need to be united, informed, committed, and willing to take part in the changes to come, for we have much to give. We have the resources and knowledge to recommend actions which represent the best of educational research and theory; we can make a significant impact on what happens to schools--especially to English classrooms. We can help make excellence more than the current buzzword.

Having had the distinct advantage of being active in MCTE for the past four years, and having worked with elementary, secondary, and college teachers throughout our state in committees, conferences, and workshops, I know full well the commitment and expertise of our membership. I urge you all to become more vocal and active. Share your Newsletters and Journals with nonmembers and encourage them to join our group, attend our conferences and workshops, write for our excellent

publications, and voice your opinions to our legislators to ensure that quality instruction is the focus of any change. Through MCTE we have the mechanism to get our messages to the educators and our public.

Our Minnesota English Newsletter carries details of the recent activities of your Executive Board, such as our MCTE Position statement on Legislation, news of our six state-wide technology workshops on using computers in English, our new mini conference in October, and plans for our Spring Conference at Cragun's in Brainerd in April.

We are facing an exciting year, and I extend my best wishes to all of you.

Shirley Vaux
President, MCTE

POLITICS AND TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

by Tilly Warnock

"George Orwell had big feet."

That was my son's reply one cold, January Wyoming morning when I asked what he would say about George Orwell to English teachers in Minnesota in May. The time was 5:30 a.m., and I was driving Walter to morning swim practice in the dark, with a wind chill factor of far below zero. His response surprised me, probably as much as my question surprised him. Walter is a ninth grader; he read 1984 in English class this year, but we did not talk much about it, certainly not about the size of Orwell's feet. Several times before, however, Walter had given me a perspective for a talk or paper, and so instead of dismissing his response as early morning madness, I turned to him with a puzzled look.

"He did. He did have big feet. And he took a giant step for mankind, but his steps were too big. You see, he thought that technology and computers were all bad."

I understood. The big feet idea appealed to me because I have worn size ten since I was ten. I also liked the technology topic, although I still feel uncomfortable with machines, even dishwashers, although my children seem to understand them by osmosis.

But what intrigued me most that morning, and still does, is not what Walter said but how he spoke--with confidence, seriousness, intelligence, and humor. He knew I had asked a real question, unlike my daily questions about how was school? how was work-out? did you make your bed? Walter spoke with authority.

I was reminded that January morning of another time Walter had spoken in a similar voice, and again it was when he had been asked a real question. After dinner as we were all talking about how we write, Walter was trying to exit unnoticed with three oranges and ice cream sandwiches for his after-dinner snack. We asked how he wrote; he stopped and said, "I listen to the voices," indicating the general area behind and between

his right ear and shoulder. "Sometimes I write from up here," he said, indicating his forehead, "but I know it is good when I write the voices."

As those two scenes merged that early morning, I decided to talk today about politics and teaching the English language, specifically about the politics of authority in English classes. What do I mean?

When I asked my essay writing class at the University of Wyoming what expectations my title aroused in them, they responded in ways perhaps similar to how you responded. Mike wrote that the title refers to the fact that English teachers are restricted in what they can do in their classes. Sally wrote that the title made her think of the "coping teachers have to do with the 'higher ups.'" Brenda wrote that teachers "must be half frightened to assign a book for fear some irate parent might start a book-banning war." Amy said that the title reminded her of an instructor she has who talks about "education as brainwashing." Eileen wrote that a teacher, like a politician, "must be able to please people, like parents, school boards, and most importantly, students." Mike wrote that "whether or not a person has a command of the language, he gets only one vote." John wrote that politics in teaching is "teaching those things that work-a flexible, moving method--based on the evolution of the language as it changes due to historical, social, and accumulative individual influences and needs." Jeannie said the title meant rules; to Robin it meant redtape; and to Karen it meant unions, negotiations, salaries, and benefits. Jeff responded that since "the teaching of English is drawn in on itself, there is an accepted way of doing things and deviations from the norm are wrong." Gary said that the title raised the question of why language is taught. "Sometimes," he wrote, "it seems that classes are added to the curriculum not because the course content will in any sense make the individual a better person, teacher, geologist, etc., but because someone needs a job teaching that class."

My approach is more narrow and simple than my students' perspectives, but I hope that it will encompass their vital concerns to some degree. I will begin by distinguishing between a politics of superiority and a politics of authority, with the recommendation that we divest ourselves of superiority and thereby gain authority, for ourselves and our students. I will then outline four ways I think we can gain authority: first, by becoming learners ourselves; second, by lowering our standards; third, by letting the lawn die; and fourth, by listening to the voices. I feel somewhat uncomfortable making such recommendations to teachers, even though my four suggestions are vague enough that you would not think I am presuming to tell you what to do. I decided, though, after discovering a topic and realizing that I would be in the land of 10,000 lakes, Garrison Keeler, Mayo Clinic, and my good friend, Sister Nancy Hynes, that I would try to speak to what I think is the heart of the matter in education.

Much of what I will say will be familiar to you, I am sure, but as George Orwell said, "We have sunk to a depth at which the re-statement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men."

Politics of Authority versus Politics of Superiority

The politics of authority that I want to discuss is perhaps the opposite of Orwell's politics in his essay, "Politics and the English Language." Orwell attempts to purge the English language and to correct the bad habits of English speakers. He does so by identifying problems with language, such as staleness of imagery, lack of precision, vague abstractions, dying metaphors, pretentious diction, and meaningless words. He concludes his essay with six commandments:

(1) Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

(2) Never use a long word where a short one will do.

(3) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

(4) Never use the passive where you can use the active.

(5) Never use a foreign word, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

(6) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

This is sound and familiar advice, found in most textbooks which advocate clarity and coherence. The problem is not in what Orwell says but in how he says it.

For many years at the University of Wyoming, and I imagine at many schools across the country, a popular English assignment asked students to read Orwell's essay and then to use his list of faults to analyze either a political speech or an advertisement. As director of the writing center, I saw many of these papers, and what students always agreed on, although they did not include this in their papers, was that Orwell does not practice what he preaches; he uses jargon, pretentious diction, long words, and the other atrocities he lists. Students agreed that Orwell's main message was "do what I say, not what I do." His is a politics of superiority.

Orwell prescribes what is clear and convincing with the confidence of a well-known writer who knows what is right. I do not want to suggest that we and our students should not read our superiors and in many cases do what they say to do. But how many of us here today can claim Orwell's kind of superiority? We might sometimes feel we know-it-all about grammar, or footnotes, or "The Open Window," but few of us, I believe, feel comfortable speaking of "right readings" and "good writing." We might in our own classrooms, with the door closed. I know I sometimes feel inferior to the readings, writings, and teaching before me, and, consequently, feel the need to act superior. Sometimes we even use our students to feel good about what we know and who we are. Orwell admits his own motives when asked why he writes. He said that the leading motive was his desire to be thought clever, to be talked about by people

he had never met. I do not think that this is the leading motive for most teachers, whose aim, I think, should be to help students think that <u>they</u> are clever.

But the politics of superiority reigns in schools. How many times I felt ignorant in classes when teachers asked a question and all I could think of was what in the world does the teacher want us to say. I recall being taught in the fourth grade that "lb." meant pound. I had shopped often, using the abbreviation, but because the teacher was working so hard to teach me, I learned that I must not know. I also remember spending much of the second grade trying to figure out when I was supposed to use the hump-back "r" and when I was supposed to use the flat-back "r." I knew that a "b" slightly turned could be a "p," "d," or "q," and I reasoned that the variations in "r" were similarly significant. I was afraid to ask, partly because no one else seemed confused, partly because much of what I learned in school was not what I was taught explicitly.

The power relationships between teachers and students often reflect the politics of superiority, the "do what I say, not what I do" approach. Often as beginning teachers, we are warned that our first task is to show the class who is boss. We often tell students what they need to know, instead of showing them or letting them learn by doing, and then we are confused by the fact that they do not learn. We are concerned about their inabilities, lack of interest, home lives, peer groups, and television watching. And these are not simply excuses; they are also political issues. But I want to suggest what we can do in our classes on Monday morning--not in several years after legislation, curriculum revision, and changes in life styles--in order to change from a politics of superiority to a politics of authority for ourselves and our students.

Be a Learner Again

The National Writing Project is founded on the belief that writing teachers must be <u>writing</u> <u>teachers</u>. The projects around the country let teachers write, so that they can under-

stand the writing process from within. What happens when teachers write is that they change the kinds of assignments they give, they begin to read drafts and papers differently, and they begin to have a new idea of what it means to learn to write. They realize that no one ever learns to read, write, speak, and listen all at once; people spend their lives learning by adapting what works in one situation to new contexts.

What also happens is that teachers openly admit their own insecurities about writing, about making errors, about sounding dumb, and, thereby, they gain authority. We no longer have to shuffle step and beat around the bush in order to hide our ignorance. Teaching becomes again an exciting, learning experience. As teachers write in class and share their writing, they too get in the swim, instead of remaining safe and dry on shore. In William Stafford's collection of essays, Writing the Australian Crawl, he explains that a swimmer has to believe that the water will keep him afloat, and a writer has got to believe that the writing will keep her afloat. He encourages teachers and students to take a deep breath, put their heads down, reach way out, and write.

When teachers become learners again, instead of models of perfection, we are probably showing ourselves as our students already see us anyway. Honesty comes into the teacher-student exchange.

By becoming learners, we also demonstrate that the person in power in the class values learning. Michael Cole and his colleagues, in The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking, come up with a very simple theory of cognition, but one which in our hoopla about theories and research we often lose sight of: "People will be good at doing the things that are important to them and that they have the occasion to do often." Students will be good at reading and writing when those actions count, and we can make them count by doing them ourselves, instead of showing ourselves filling out absentee slips, straightening books, and putting checks in grade books.

In Wyoming, we have a Statewide Humanities Leadership

Project, funded first by the National Endowment for the Humanities and now by the Wyoming Council for the Humanities, which aims to involve school administrators in humanities projects. Often administrators were not educated in the humanities, and they believe they cannot give adequate leadership. This project allows them to take humanities courses and to participate in follow-up workshops in local districts. Again, as in the writing projects, our understanding is that if the people in power do not value the humanities, then neither will students.

Of course, most teachers and administrators are readers and writers, but they are closet readers and writers. I have found that students follow in their paths. Each semester I ask freshmen if they write. Seldom does anyone raise a hand. I then ask who writes at home, in diaries, journals, letters, and several people raise their hands. I casually say I would like to read any of their writing, and the next day people bring poems, plays, fiction, even journals. For years I have wanted to print buttons which say "I Write for Life," so that students can see how many people in their community write.

In my work with writing across the curriculum I find that teachers rarely let students know that writing is a major component of their major and of the field they are entering. Recently, the UW College of Agriculture decided to make the language arts a part of their curriculum, because graduates on a survey said that they were inadequately prepared in communication skills, particularly in writing and speaking.

This semester I have worked with a graduate student in geology. John was a good student, but his advisor was surprised by his writing on his thesis. He asked if I would help, even though he thought the task would be difficult. After our first meeting, when John told me about his research in the mountain ranges around Laramie, he said that he had always thought the problem was knowing geology, but he knows the problem is communicating geology. Within two months he completed the thesis. I think this story makes two critical points, first that teachers seldom let students know how much they write or make students

aware that knowledge itself is writing. Science is a written body of knowledge, and history is an author's viewpoint.

Second, the story shows that students can communicate information to a person who does not already know the answers. I was a dummy reader and listener for John: he was the authority. I asked him real questions. In school, we usually do not ask real questions since we already know the answers. On essay exams, for example, the pretend situation is that students are informing someone, but the real situation is that the students are giving back information to someone who gave them the information in the first place. In conversation, telling someone what they already know is a violation of cooperative principles. If you do, you are either condescending or you are boring; in either case, you will not be heard.

We can gain authority by divesting ourselves of superiority, by reading and writing with our students, by showing them that we are learners also, not only by showing them what we know. We might also show students that we like what we do. We often play the role of martyr, carrying more papers home on weekends than anyone, in the biggest bags we can find. We return on Monday feeling virtuous for having had a miserable weekend. No wonder students dislike homework and writing; they know that we do not want to read it. Who wants to give someone something who does not want it? Who wants to read and write if it makes you look like English teachers on Friday afternoons? Instead of being martyrs and superiors, we can become learners and benefit both us and our students. What else can we do to gain authority?

Lower Our Standards

The poet William Stafford was once asked if he ever gets writer's block. He replied, "No, I just lower my standards." This may sound like blasphemy, since we often see our task as raising standards. But we all recognize, though, that we and our students often keep ourselves from learning because we are too afraid of making mistakes. No one learns to swim on

land before getting into the water, but we often teach in this fashion.

Think how seldom children see anyone writing a paper, much less a book. How discouraging it is to write something that turns out to be a mess, with blurs, blotches, and torn paper. Most children see only published books--a far cry from what they produce--and these are often treated as if they come from no where, certainly from nowhere nearby. I remember being furious at my freshman biology teacher when he asked on an exam who wrote the textbook. I now encourage students to check out the authors of all of their textbooks, so that they realize the information inside is not the truth, but someone's angle on the truth.

For several years, I have used Ross Winterowd's The Contemporary Writer. For the first assignment I asked students to read through the book quickly and write twenty questions to the author. Students ask how much he made on the book, why he needed to revise if he knew so much about writing, and if he really knew how to play tennis. Many ask who is Norma and why she is speaking of islands, and why he included that statement in the book since he knew his audience would not understand. Ross typed answers to their questions, and from that day on, the class took an active interest in the book, instead of swallowing it whole, as if it were a raw egg, good for them, or instead of ignoring it.

I remember being surprised when I first saw the manuscript for T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, with the criticisms by his wife and the comments by Ezra Pound which are similar to comments made by teachers on students' papers--too vague, be specific, repetitious, sounds like James Joyce, awk, and cut. I was equally surprised to see the manuscripts of Joyce's Ulysses which show years of revisions. I had always thought that real writers could write--even on their first drafts. Most of us think of writing as a natural talent, something some people are born with. I still cannot call myself a writer, even though I write all of the time, because stuck in

my head is the notion that a writer is someone who publishes novels.

My students are restricted by similar notions of who writers are and what writing is, and so a major objective in all of my courses is to help students see themselves as writers. We often think of writers as an elite group, but I think we should advocate an open-door policy to the community of writers. I tell students that a person does not have to play in the NBA in order to call himself a basketball player; a person does not have to publish novels to call herself a writer. If we cannot see ourselves in particular roles, it is difficult for us to perform those roles.

I believe that we can lower our standards so that we can begin writing and begin calling what we do writing. We can begin to address our students as authors, poets, and essayists. We can share drafts of professional writers and of others in order to remove some of the mystery and expose the hard work. When we see other people's writing in rough draft form, we begin to accept our own rough writing for what it is--a way to discover what we think and want to say, something that we can revise for others.

We can also help students recognize that books are not the absolute truth, because by lowering our standards in this way, we can encourage students to read actively. I recall the rituals we went through in grade school when new texts were issued. For hours we would slowly turn down pages, a few at a time. Books were sacred texts, they could not be written in, they could not be questioned, some could not even be taken home. In a sense these rituals might have given us respect for the word, but when I see my daughter spend the first week of school making book covers, instead of reading books, I wonder if we can encourage a more active, critical respect. I remember in the third grade when Mrs. Miller sent Jimmy Alberts out of class. He was so mad that he did the worst act he could perform as he left the room: he broke the spine of a book for everyone to see. We often teach students to swallow books whole,

not to taste, chew, and digest them.

In a recent book, Criticism and Social Change, Frank Lentricchia argues that teaching is a social action and that our major task is to help our students develop a critical consciousness, a term he adopts from the work of Paolo Friere:

> Perhaps, then, there is yet another and finer quality of critical consciousness than this episode reveals: that finer quality, through its clarity, its accessibility, its refusal to revise its past, its refusal to pose as all-knowing, is nothing other than a quality that permits itself, the critical consciousness itself, to be criticised--the teacher becomes student, the critic becomes text, the doctor becomes patient. And perhaps that is the best one can give one's students and readers: the means to resist oneself. (p. 159)

Lowering our standards is a way of ultimately raising our standards.

Lowering our standards can also mean taking a different attitude towards ourselves and our students. Kenneth Burke in his earliest book, Counter-Statement, writes about the relationships among students, teachers, and society:

> Indolent school children. Beating did little good. They remained indolent. Then it was found that by improving the ventilation one made them less indolent. After which it was that under a changed curriculum and new methods of instruction many of these school children not only ceased to be indolent but showed an exceptionally keen interest in their studies. So a pandemic of indolent school children might indicate that something is wrong with the school? And the most receptive children might be the ones most depressed by a faulty system? Then might indolence, under certain

conditions, be symptomatic of virtue in the indolent? (p. 112)

Burke's general point is that we can often solve problems by changing our attitudes towards them and by taking a new tack. Certainly opening a window and letting in fresh air usually helps, but what else can we do?

Let the Lawn Die

Annie Dillard once said that in order to write, you have to let the lawn die. This has become a motto for the Wyoming Writing Project institutes and for my classes. We all know that we will do anything to avoid writing. I used to have to wash my hair and clean the entire house before I could begin working. Students talk about other avoidance tactics they use. Sometimes, in order to read and write, we have to let the busy work go.

William Stafford, again, gives us help in this very difficult way of giving up our superiority, our control over all matters, in order to gain authority. Stafford says that every morning he sits down with pen and paper beside a window and waits for the nibble. He says that the nibble might not come on a given day, but if he is not sitting there waiting, he certainly won't be ready for the catch.

It is difficult to let students, and ourselves, read and write, in part because if someone comes into our rooms it may look as if nothing is happening.

A colleague at Wyoming tells the story of when he was trying to write his dissertation. His mother asked what he was doing, and he said that he was reading. She said that since he was not doing anything, would he mind doing a chore for her. Somehow we have gotten the notion that reading and writing are not real work. In our schools we have the DEAR program, which designates a particular time when students are to drop everything and read. We should, I think, have a particular short time when we drop reading and writing and do the other work which now takes up most of our day.

Letting the lawn die means that we begin to let students take more risks and responsibility, instead of seeing ourselves as the only capable person in the room. We gain authority by granting authority, and one way we can grant authority is by letting students write on their own topics. Donald Graves, in Writing: Children and Teachers at Work, shows how very young children have much to say and write. In his article, "Break the Welfare Cycle: Let Writers Choose Their Topics," Graves discusses the damage done by a politics of superiority which dictates that the teacher determine what happens:

> A seventh grade teacher left my writing workshop one Wednesday afternoon filled with renewed optimism only to return seven days later with that tarred and feathered look. She was a bit hostile to boot. "I told my class that they could choose any subject they wished for their writing assignment this week. Well, you'd think I'd asked them to undress in public." Her glance at me said, "That was a pretty dumb suggestion . . . letting them choose their own topics.
>
> "Some children asked for a list of good topics. Others asked outright, 'What topics do you (the teacher) like best?' More 'Our topics are dumb.' They pleaded, 'Give us the topics.'"
>
> By the time most children reach seventh grade, they are unable to choose topics. This serious symptom is an indicator of many other problems in the life of the young writer. Children who can't choose topics see writing as an artificial act disconnected from their lives. Writers need to know what they can command and defend, to put their voices on the line.
>
> From the second grade on, we won't let them choose topics. Instead, children go on writers' welfare, depend on the teacher for everything...

> The welfare trail begins. The child is fed a diet of snappy gimmicks: story starters, stimulating pictures, "dial-a-story" games, opening paragraphs, open-ended stories to complete, as well as teachers' favorite topics. (p. 98-101)

Graves assumes that children can write and that they have subjects to write about. He says that in all the years he has asked children to write a story, no child has ever raised a hand and said, "I'm sorry. I don't know how to write." Children write, and they can read what they have written, even if the teacher is too dumb to understand their squiggles.

We can let the lawn die, at least part of it, gradually, a portion at a time, and we will find that students begin to take responsibility. They begin to see themselves as decision-makers, as authors; they begin to speak with authority. What else can we do to give up superiority and gain authority, in addition to becoming learners ourselves, lowering our standards, and letting the lawn die.

Listen to the Voices

Perhaps most important, we can begin to listen to the voices in ourselves and in our students, and we can help them learn to listen to themselves, to the voices of their classmates, to the voices in books, on television, in newspapers.

Don Murray has admitted his feelings of guilt when he teaches by the conference method, because all he does is listen. Usually students begin to hear themselves and work out their own problems. Ken Macrorie helped us many years ago to recognize "Engfish" in writing, although we sometimes would rather hear the institutionalized voice than the wish-washy voice which emerges when students have no investment in what they are saying or writing. Kirby and Liner, in Inside Out, give a series of exercises to tune the voice, such as fast talking, mad talking, soft talking, and collecting dialogue. The exercises, however, might teach students that they do not, in fact, have a voice.

Murray, Graves, and Moffett encourage us to let students speak and write so that they can learn.

Very young children know the power of their voices. They know how to modify their voices when asking for a cookie or for someone to tuck them in. Young children also know the power of the written word. Glenda Bissex in Gyns at Wrk tells the story of her son's trying to get her attention. He tried several times to talk to her with no results and so he disappeared, to return with a written message, R U D F?

But instead of telling you more about voice, I want now to let you hear some voices of students in my essay class, whose voices you heard briefly at the beginning of this paper. Several weeks ago, I asked the class to turn in any samples of writing which presented their voice. Here are their voices.

Mike, who is now a graduate student in biology, was in my freshman class six years ago. On the first day, I asked the class to freewrite for a few minutes:

> I don't know why in the hell I am here. I hate to write. I have flunked freshman English four times in three different states. I don't want to be here. My palms are sweaty and I am mad.

Mike passed English and has already published an article on reptiles. Here is a sample of his article-writing voice:

> Restraining apparatuses for venomous reptiles for purposes of handling and study have employed a variety of designs. In all cases, such devices have had two principle functions, to protect the investigator and the animal under restraint.

Although the writing here is formulaic, Mike has clearly expanded his repertoire and has grown more confident.

Throughout this semester, Karen has worked on an essay about returning to school:

> As I loaded my two-year old daughter, Rhonda, into the old Ford truck and drove up the

country lane, I tore our family apart,
leaving my five-year old son, Stephen,
behind with his father and grandmother
on the small ranch that had been my home
for nine years of a troubled marriage.

Judy selected the following example as the voice she has begun to hear in her writing:

I was a junior in high school when my mother sank down on the floor of the freshly vacuumed suburban home. Her size five shoulders shook as she passed a hand over her carefully mascared eyes. An absurd, tight smile stretched to grimace proportions. With dread resolution my mother announced, "I just can't do it anymore." But my mother did go on. She rose the next morning as if last night's scene was someone else's property. By eight in the morning she had already made breakfast, put the house in order, showered, dressed and was ready for an eight-hour day. At lunch she would do the grocery shopping, at five she would attend exercise class, by seven supper would be on the table and then the remaining evening would be devoted to laundry. That was seven years ago and I have yet to see my mother erupt in anger and bitterness. But it is still there, smouldering in coals until fanned by a wisp of discontent when it will flame hot and consume itself again.

I am becoming a woman now. And I am angry.

Gary is also an older student, who after being an accountant for many years has returned to school. He selected a series of drafts to show a new voice that is emerging. The first appeared in an in-class, short writing about a job:

I wonder what they do with wool these days--bet it isn't handled like it was in 1946--one of the jobs I had during part of a summer when I was in high school.

He wrote on this job again for an in-class freewriting four days later:

I worked as a laborer in an old warehouse for a part of one summer between my freshman and sophomore years in high school. The job was working with wool.

A month later he returned to the piece:

The wool sacks stood on end, slightly sloped, each leaning against its neighbor, holding one another from falling. They appeared as a ghost-like army, row on row, separated by narrow aisles, in the shadowy darkness of the long warehouse.

At this point, Gary decided to let the writing become fiction, and he added the voices of the other boys with whom he had worked.

Our voices seem to come when we stop and wait--lower our standards, let the lawn die, and listen. I am glad that my son, Walter, trusts the voices that he hears. I am glad that Alice Walker wrote The Color Purple with its chorus of voices, and I am glad she described in her collected essays, In Search of our Mothers' Gardens, how she moved around the country, so that her characters could feel at home and speak clearly.

All voices we hear are not as strong. I am still haunted by a student's paper written several years ago. In Wyoming, we have a Wyoming Writing Day when all six, ninth, and eleventh graders in the state write on a common topic. Several years ago, students were asked to describe an object that means a great deal to them and to explain how it became important. This is the voice that haunts me:

The Truth

I am sitting here in _____ High School auditorium. I cannot think of one object that means anything to me. My mind is blank. I am sorry. I hope that you understand.

This student speaks with a voice of inferiority. He does not trust his own voice, and he does not trust the voice which would answer the question but in a meaningless way.

I want to close with a reminder and an image. The reminder comes from Orwell's 1984 where we see Winston's first act leading towards freedom and excellence is the act of writing in the diary. Winston had to pay the price, but he gained voice and authority.

The best image I know of a classroom where students and teachers alike are speaking and writing in their own voices with authority is found in Kenneth Kurke's The Philosophy of Literary Form, when Burke is describing how people learn language:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while until you decide you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers you; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.
>
> (110-111)

The hour grows late. It is now time for you to put in your oars.

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EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AGAIN:
DON'T LET THE PENDULUM KNOCK ANYONE OUT
by Olivia Frey

In April 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education in a report entitled "Nation at Risk" warned that the educational system is in trouble. The reverberations from the report, in politicians' speeches and news editorials, have echoed in our ears until they ring. Standards are low, requirements are less than rigorous, and young people are graduating who can neither read nor write nor work basic arithmetic problems, such as balancing a checkbook. Other similar studies followed the April report--the governors' National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, the Twentieth Century Fund, and, most recently, the Carnegie Foundation's "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America." All reiterate the same theme: decline in education.

Many have responded to these dire reports, as one would expect, offering numerous remedies for the troubled educational system. Professional educators in journals as well as parents and teachers in letters to the editor have suggested ways of improving the system: more homework, longer school days, merit pay, across-the-board salary increases, recertification, and the list goes on. In my home state of Minnesota, the legislature heard a report in October 1983 on "increased program requirements . . . learning requirements outside the classroom . . . graduation requirements and achievement standards." The Minnesota Board of Regents, the Community College Board and the State Board for Vocational Education will "develop proposals for admission requirements for incoming freshmen."[1] Actually, we have heard it all before. It is the sound of the pendulum swinging back again, from John Dewey's philosophy of progressive education to the traditional philosophy of educational excellence. And if we are not careful, if we do not weigh thoughtfully these choices that are before us, this return swing of the pendulum may knock out a large portion of America, the poor, blacks, and other minorities, those that a more

egalitarian system in the late 60's and early 70's sought to serve.

Diane Ravitch summarizes this swinging of the educational pendulum succinctly in "American Education: Has the Pendulum Swung Once Too Often?"[2] In early educational history, the progressives claimed that the "traditional academic curriculum" was neither adequate nor appropriate "for all children," clearly an egalitarian philosophy. Progressive education sought to be practical, to fulfill the individual instructional needs of as many children as possible. Soon, as progressive education was accused of being "anti-intellectual" and lacking in standards (sound familiar?), the movement began to wane. With the launching of Sputnik in 1957, the collapse of progressive education was assured. The cry that arose in the late 50's, early 60's, was "quality," "excellence," and "high standards."[3]

In the mid-60's, with civil rights, the "war on poverty," protests against the Vietnam War, in short, a sharper social awareness and responsibility with its concomitant rebellion against bourgeois values, the pendulum swung back again. Educators and writers, such as Charles Silberman (Crisis in the Classroom, 1970), were less concerned about academic excellence and more concerned about "social justice and personal liberation."[4] The temper of the time urged CUNY to institute its open admissions policy in 1970, five years ahead of schedule. Although instituted in haste, the policy was applauded at the time as the epitome of the egalitarian spirit in education.[5]

A chronological examination of the articles and reports about CUNY's open admissions policy is revealing. In 1969 and 1970, when CUNY announced its new policy, most educators praised the decision as a means of breaking down the unjust economic and political barriers that impeded otherwise competent minorities. By 1972, it was clear that open admissions was not working, primarily because of poor planning. Some even questioned the notion of egalitarianism that the policy, it was hoped, would foster. Scott Edwards writes in December 1972, "there are among persons real and measurable differences in

academic capacity . . . overt social distinctions based on such differences--the proportioning of praise and esteem to the degree of demonstrated merit--are useful and necessary." After four years of open admissions at CUNY, most writers foretold its death as a result of politics and economics. In 1976, CUNY charged admission for the first time and established new criteria for admission into the junior and senior colleges.[6]

The history of open admissions at CUNY is emblematic of the revival and ultimate demise of progressive education, the push for egalitarianism, in the early seventies, against which our present demand for "quality" education is a reaction. The present upheaval is only the after-shock following the earthquake. The most violent reactions occurred in 1975 when it was discovered that SAT scores had been dropping steadily since 1963, followed by the 1977 College Board report that the decline in SAT scores could be attributed to lowered standards, grade inflation, and a general decline in reading and writing.[7] There followed a plethora of reports reiterating the CEEB findings and advocating a return to basics.[8] In 1983 and 1984 we are hearing the echoes of these cries: back to a basic curriculum and a return to quality education.

It is perhaps time for educators themselves to learn a lesson from this history of educational change. The pendulum has swung violently back and forth for the last fifty years. The educational remedies of one decade, planned in haste and carried out with little foresight, are the reactions to those remedies of the previous decade, themselves planned in haste and carried out with little foresight. Many of the remedies suggested in 1983 and 1984, again, do not seem the result of serious reflection or careful planning. In particular, I would like to focus on three suggestions made by legislators, professional educators and others that have serious political, economic, and social implications for blacks and other minorities: more rigorous high school graduation requirements, higher college admission standards, and the abolishment of college remedial writing programs. Raising standards by these

means, would in effect deny, and unjustly deny, certain members of our society an education and all that an education can offer. I would also like to suggest that high standards do not necessarily preclude educational equity, that standards, particularly of literacy, can be maintained or even raised while admitting academically disadvantaged young people into our colleges.

In his zeal to improve the quality of a college education, one Minnesota legislator has suggested abolishing remedial writing programs around the state. The thinking of those who would suggest such a move or who have implemented such a policy goes something like this: Weak students will either succeed or fail. If they succeed, they will have done so by their own intrinsic merit. If they fail, then perhaps they were meant to fail. The net effect in each case will be a program of higher quality and a student who has met higher standards. Of course, such a philosophy over simplifies the learning process and those factors that govern academic success or failure. Students who enter remedial writing courses usually are intelligent, but simply lack the experience, or the appropriate set of experiences, the practice or the skill that would insure academic success, all of which a good remedial writing program can provide. I suspect those who advocate abolishing, or who have already abolished remedial writing programs know that their reasoning is less than sound. Such a policy is in reality only a rationalization for abandoning a program that, if done right, is expensive and enervating. Remedial writing programs and other student support services are often the first to go at small private colleges struggling for survival. Ironically, it is these very support services that would help these colleges survive by making it possible to enroll students who might not otherwise attend or stay in college.[9]

A second suggestion for improving the quality of our schools also does not seem the result of long reflection or sound judgment: the institution of more rigorous high school graduation requirements. Such a move again would be to the disadvantage of blacks and other minorities, for two reasons:

1. I doubt that major curricular changes would take into consideration the culture and background or the learning styles of minority students. 2. The students' level of performance under the new curriculum would most likely be determined by some sort of standardized testing similar to the competency tests that many students are now required to pass in order to graduate. For quite some time, research has shown that minorities have trouble with standardized tests, most of which, in spite of improvements, are still "culture-bound."

Minorities have already been less than successful under the present, relatively "enlightened" curriculum and pedagogies in our elementary and secondary schools. The teaching materials and textbooks in many of our schools are still monocultural, the implications of which in the classroom are varied.[10] Constantly learning and reading about a culture not their own, and hearing ideas and events interpreted from a single cultural perspective not their own cannot enhance a Black or Hispanic child's self-understanding. Researchers, most importantly, question how much learning takes place under such circumstances, since one aspect of learning involves relating and integrating new material to an already established cognitive and experiential frame of reference. Also, needless to say, the minority child will be little motivated to learn if what she hears or reads has only scant relation to her own feelings of life.[11] Minority students are not the only ones to suffer. Such a monocultural curriculum presents a narrow view of a society that is actually richly pluralistic. Non-minority students can never, in such circumstances, be prepared for the real society in which they must live. Indeed, the seeds for dissension and misunderstanding are planted early in the monocultural classroom.

Unmotivated, or unable to integrate new information with old, it is little wonder that minority students' grades are still on the average lower than non-minority students', and that minority students make up a large percentage of those who fail proficiency tests, one requirement for graduation. The suggested reforms of educators hoping to revive quality

education would only aggravate the situation. Most advocate a return to a "classical" curriculum: the basics in math and science and writing, history, and the classics of literature. Unfortunately, in our own profession, the "basics" too often translate into grammar drill and instruction in standard usage. Study or even consideration of other dialects have no place here. The "classics" of literature usually represent only American and European writers. Consider M. H. Abrams' Norton Anthology of World Literature, a college anthology that contains no representative works from Asia, Africa, or Latin America.[12]

These same advocates of a "classical" curriculum assert the merits of conventional teaching methods. Gilbert Sewall, in "Can High School Education Achieve the Democratic Ideal?" writes, "Academic reform also requires reconsideration of discredited but historically effective practice such as classroom memorization and drill, 'chalk and talk' teaching methods, and daily homework assignments."[13] Although there are perhaps good reasons why such teaching methods have been discredited, I am not going to argue their merits or demerits here. Rather, I quote Sewall to suggest that in reforming teaching methods, advocates of quality education will too often go back to the basic pedagogies as they have gone back in the basic subjects. Such reform would more than likely preclude any consideration of recent research in the different learning patterns, cultural values, communications behaviors and cognitive styles of minority students. For example, an intelligent minority student can, nevertheless, fail if the teacher and the student have trouble "communicating." According to Geneva Gay in "Interactions in Culturally Pluralistic Classrooms,"

> A knowledge of the structure and form of Cantonese can be useful to teachers of students who speak this language, but it alone will not enable them to understand why Chinese-American students from traditional family backgrounds tend to be verbally passive in the classroom and prefer

> mechanical instruction tasks over verbal and expressive tasks. Thus, teachers must understand that ethnic group communication styles are both linguistic systems and expressions of cultural systems.

Fortunately, the Chinese-American and Native American students would be relatively successful in Sewall's traditional classroom. Unfortunately, the Black and Hispanic students would not, since their communication behaviors and learning styles are very different.[14]

Minority students, for reasons that I have suggested, have difficulty in the schools as it is. Instituting a "new" curriculum, probably monocultural, taught using "tried and true" conservative pedagogies could not improve their educational environment using standardized tests would compound the unfairness. Research for many years has shown black students as performing below the level of non-black students in standardized achievement tests. Most recently, Barbara J. Holmes (1982) reports that "at least 50 percent or more of America's 9, 13, 17-year olds responded correctly" to the test exercise that the researchers presented, while "fewer than 50 percent of America's black students at the same ages responded correctly to it."[15] The literature is equally abundant that attempts to explain why the difference in performance exists. Researchers have generally concluded that most standardized tests do not have "normative validity." In order for such tests to be valid, all who take the test must have had the same opportunity to learn, must have been equally motivated, must have the same cultural and educational experiences to draw on. Even the few points that I raise above, including differences in learning styles, should demonstrate that minority and non-minority students have very different educational experiences. Certainly, proficiency tests as a requirement for graduation measure what the student has learned. But whether the black student fails a proficiency test, it may be more an indication of a failing curriculum or pedagogy than of that student's lack of

intelligence or ability.[16]

A third suggestion for improving the quality of education, that is, by raising college admission standards, could also be inherently discriminatory, for the same reasons that stricter graduation requirements could be unfair to minorities. Admission to college is based on those same standardized tests and that same high school performance, both of which may be an inaccurate indication of the minority student's ability, intelligence, or potential.[17] In a recent research study, Marvin L. Grant and Roy Singleton outline the traditional admissions criteria--aptitude test scores and high school grades--and analyze their reliability as predictors of a black student's success in college. They concluded that admissions tests contribute "only marginally to the prediction of success for Blacks," and that, while high school grades are slightly more reliable as predictors, there are "uncontrolled variations that affect grades, such as different teachers using different criteria in assigning grades, different levels of difficulty in courses, the effect of the social interaction between teacher and student, and the student's ability to perform on subjective and/or objective examinations."[18] The factors that I mentioned before--learning styles and communication behaviors--would also affect a minority student's grades.

Thus far I have discussed only the immediate effects on Blacks--restricted access to education--if the suggestions by those who advocate quality education are implemented without more serious reflection. There are other, far-reaching implications, in particular, political, economic, and social implications. Those who cannot read and write are, in effect, disenfranchised. Those without a college education must accept lower paying, lower prestige jobs. Those without an education will have difficulty improving the quality of their lives. While it is questionable that the suggestions for achieving quality education would in fact ensure quality education, those educational changes would most likely maintain the status quo. Those whom the present educational system rewards, usually not minority students, would be those graduated from

high school and admitted to college, and who would ultimately elect our leaders and even become our leaders, those who inevitably decide the curriculum and requirements in our schools as well as the laws of our land and the distribution of wealth. And so the system would be self-perpetuating, Blacks and other minorities eternally locked out.

It is hard to believe that those who advocate quality education do so knowing that a large segment of our population would, in the process of implementing the changes they suggest, be sacrificed on the altar of "higher standards." One would like to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that they are uninformed about the limitations of proficiency tests or unreliability of high school averages. Certain scholars, nevertheless, who have studied the status of multiethnic education in the 80's are not so generous. James A. Banks, for example, writes in his introduction,

> The rise of neoconservatism, the so-called "back to basics" movement, and the recent upsurge of racial incidents in the nation suggest that the national commitment to equality for excluded groups which emerged during the 1960's is rapidly waning and that many leaders would like to see the nation return to the "good old days" of doing business as usual, with little attention devoted to the problems and promises of ethnic group life in the United States. The current national sociopolitical climate is a pernicious one in which to talk and write about multiethnic education in the 1980's.[19]

I would consider Banks' observations extreme if I did not again and again, in the comments by those who advocate educational excellence, hear this indifference to or even scorn for the under-prepared student. A case in point is a comment by Gilbert Sewall: "For students with absolutely no academic or vocational interests, I would enlist the help of other social

agencies, not squander limited school resources in trying to pacify or 'save' these unfortunate children."[20] Certainly elitist and possibly even racist, Sewall's comment raises several questions: Why aren't these children interested? Couldn't their interest be sparked? Not to mention more practical concerns: What social agencies would one enlist, and who would pay for these services? Wouldn't it be more economical to invest time, money and energy in educating these children in the first place?

Fortunately, among those who advocate quality education, there are few Gilbert Sewalls. Most desperately want to improve the standards in our schools, unaware of all the costs that we, and particularly those who are Black or Hispanic, would have to pay. This essay, I hope, dramatizes what those hidden costs are. I would also like to end on a more positive note. I would like to suggest that quality education is not on a collision course with educational equality, that standards in our schools can be raised without sacrificing the egalitarian objectives of education.

A quality education can also be an equal education if we keep four points in mind: First, we can improve the curriculum in our schools without shutting out the minority student if our view of what is "excellent" and what is "classic" is not myopic. Non-minority students should also read and study the writings of cultures not their own, including those of Native-American, Central American, African, and Eastern societies. Second, new teaching methods that we introduce should take into consideration the learning styles and communication habits of all students. Third, in reviewing their admission standards, colleges should consider alternative admissions criteria, similar to the biographic/academic profile suggested by Grant and Singleton, who remind us that "alternative admissions procedures are not by definition 'lowered admissions standards."[21] Fourth, in our own English profession, the basics do not necessarily mean grammar study and the rules of standard usage, which by their very nature often exclude the language patterns

and nonstandard dialects of other cultures. We need to broaden our notion of the basics, as demonstrated in such studies as George Hillocks' The English Curriculum Under Fire: What Are the Real Basics? We might also see such teaching techniques as peer inquiry and conferencing as more "basic" to learning writing than the traditional "basics" of grammar. What better way than through more individualized instruction can the teacher and classroom accommodate the various learning styles of ethnically heterogeneous students? Focusing on the writing process rather than the product could also be considered essential in the multiethnic classroom. The writing teacher, then, is aware from the very beginning of the writer's purpose, which may vary considerably among writers of different cultures. The teachers can then judge the success of the writing in terms of this original purpose rather than in terms of some culturally narrow prescribed standard.

Certainly, no one disagrees that standards in our schools could be raised and the quality of the education that our children receive improved. Certainly, judging from recent reports, the nation is "at risk." But the true risk is not that American children will be poorly educated. The risk is that in our zeal to improve the quality of education, we will impede or even dismantle the egalitarian movement in our schools that received its greatest impetus in the 60's. Since this time, more and more textbooks have been published that depict a pluralistic society, more classrooms have accommodated minority learning styles, more support services have been established in colleges. Nevertheless, minority children still struggle in our schools. More still should be done. Let us not ride back into the past on that swinging educational pendulum. If in improving our schools we take into consideration some of the suggestions that I offer, we can discard the pendulum metaphor once and for all and, most importantly, the pendulous movement itself that prevents true educational reform.

NOTES

[1]Minnesota English Newsletter, 3 (June 1983), 4.

[2]Diane Ravitch, "American Education: Has the Pendulum Swung Once Too Often?" Humanities, 3 (November 1982), 1-3.

[3]See Arthur E. Bestor, Educational Wastelands (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1953) which best exemplifies the criticism of progressive education during this decade.

[4]Ravitch, 1-3.

[5]See Barbara Kaplan, "Open Admissions: A Critique," Liberal Education, 43 (May 1972), 210-221, for a thoughtful critique of the weaknesses of the CUNY 1970 open admissions policy. Her thesis is that the University system had no adequate plan for the sudden influx of so many different, academically unprepared students.

[6]For an historical view of open admissions at CUNY, see Wallace Roberts, "The Coming of the Common College," Saturday Review, 52 (June 21, 1969), 67 and 82; "Who Killed Elitism in Higher Education?" College and University Business, 49 (November 1970), 60-63; Scott Edwards, "Academic Standards and the New Egalitarianism," Liberal Education, 43 (December 1972), 445-455; and Leslie Berger and Jeannette Leaf, "The Promise of Open Admissions: An Evaluation After Four Years at CUNY," Educational Record, 57 (1977), 155-161.

[7]On Further Examination: Report of the Advisory Panel on the SAT Score Decline (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1977).

[8]Koerner report to the Sloan Foundation: James D. Koerner, ed., The Teaching of Expository Writing (New York: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, 1978); Graves report to the Ford Foundation: Donald H. Graves, Balance the Basics: Let Them Write (New York: Ford Foundation, 1978); 1969-1970, Writing: National Results (Denver, Colorado: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1970); Write/Rewrite: An Assessment of Revision Skills (Denver, Colorado: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1977); National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk" (April 1983); National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth; Carnegie Commission: 24 Studies of Secondary Schools (September 1983).

[9]One should not immediately assume that the weaker students are also those students who cannot afford to pay. Even in the case of students who must have some sort of financial support, the college would be making a sound investment, for political, social and economic reasons that I argue later in the essay.

[10]According to Nancy Larrick, between 1962-1964, black children appeared in only 6.7% of 5,206 texts published. Later, Jeanne Chall's research discovered that between 1973-75, black children appeared in 14.4% of books published. In 1982, the

situation had improved only slightly. Although black children appeared more often in textbooks published, the significance of their roles in these books was often minimal. Rudine Sims, Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children's Fiction (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982).

[11]See especially Tomas A. Arciniega, "The School Culture and the Cultures of Minority Students," in Education in the 80's: Multiethnic Education, ed. James A. Banks (Washington, D.C.: NEA, 1981), pp. 54-61. I recommend the whole collection to anyone interested in multiethnic education. The essays discuss how our schools have been less than successful in educating minority students and suggest reform that should take place.

[12]Maynard Mack, et al, eds., The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979).

[13]Gilbert Sewall, "Can High School Education Achieve the Democratic Ideal," Humanities, 3 (November 1982), 9-10.

[14]Geneva Gay, "Interactions in Culturally Pluralistic Classrooms," in Banks, pp. 42-54. Also relevant here is George D. Spache's analysis of the relationship between the cultural values and home environments of minority children and their difficulties with reading. George D. Spache, Investigating the Issues of Reading Disabilities (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976).

[15]Barbara J. Holmes, "Black Students' Performance in the National Assessment of Science and Mathematics," Journal of Negro Education, 51 (1982), 392-405. Also see S. L. Helgeson et al, eds., The Status of Pre-College Science, Mathematics and Social Science Education: 1955-75 (Columbus: The Ohio State Literature Review, 1978).

[16]Jane R. Mercer, "Testing and Assessment Practices in Multiethnic Education," in Banks, pp. 93-105.

[17]It is ironic that some educators are calling for higher admission standards at a time when the pool of 18-year olds is shrinking dramatically and many colleges are desperate to enroll any eligible young person. The Census Bureau estimates that by 1990, the number of 18-year olds in this country will fall from 4.19 million to 3.4 million. One would think that under these conditions, colleges would not raise requirements, but consider alternative admissions requirements so as to recruit from a much wider pool of young people, in effect recruiting more minorities. Not so. Many colleges have raised admissions standards, choosing to enroll fewer freshmen, in spite of the economically unsettling consequences. For example, in 1983-84, the enrollment at Smith College will decline 10%. Through its "Reach for Quality Program," the freshman class at Ohio-Wesleyan has shrunk from 662 to 488 students. Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 24 May 1983, sec. A, p. 10, col. 4.

[18]Marvin L. Grant and Roy Singleton, "Alternative Admissions Criteria in the 80's," Negro Educational Review, 33 (July-October 1982), 167-175.

[19]Banks, Introduction, p. 12.

[20]Sewall, p. 10.

[21]Grant and Singleton suggest that a "biographic/academic profile" would more accurately predict a black student's success in college than do traditional achievement tests or high school grades. Such a profile would include the following:

A student would most likely be successful if s/he

1. has made an early decision to obtain a college degree.
2. has aspirations for continued study beyond the bachelor's degree.
3. has selected high school elective courses which aid in preparation for college.
4. has demonstrated leadership abilities.

JUST SITTIN' HERE WATCHIN' THE RIVER FLOW

by David Healy

"What does education often do?" asked Thoreau. "Education makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook." I vividly recall the first time I encountered that observation in Thoreau's journal; instantly convicted, I began fearfully wondering how many brooks I had excavated over the years. Today, in the midst of a "basics" renaissance, Thoreau's words are likely to produce, not guilt, but puzzlement. Education ought to be straightening kids out, I hear the "reformers" arguing, but it's not. There's too much meandering going on.

Those of us who teach in the humanities, particularly English, are especially suspect when it comes to meandering, and as retrenchment battles heighten the pitch of interdepartmental competition, suspicions of our vagrancy are heightened among educational insiders as well as outsiders. But who among us has not at times envied colleagues in the "harder" disciplines, with their quantifiable subject matter and systematic evaluation methods? And who has not seen himself the object of manipulation and connivance at the hands of students too well versed in the art of working the system, or lack of a system? Or who has not wondered at the close of a class session, "Where is the point A we started from and the point B we moved to?"

Indeed, our stated distrust of the reactionary mindset notwithstanding, I suspect many of us would make fairly easy converts. After all, why not straighten a few streams? Lord knows they meander--winding in and out of class, texts, syllabi; wandering from the topic, the thesis, the point; weaving through the forest they cannot see for the trees they cannot hear crashing all about, silent noises falling on absent ears. As a composition teacher, I admit that writing is not an exact science, but it is not mindless meandering either. A good explanation or argument is logical, concise, purposeful, linear. What's wrong with a little straightness? Get off my back, Hank.

Still, there is an enduring and endearing aimlessness, a spontenaity, in my students that I stifle at my, and their,

peril. Thoreau's Nature is orderly, purposeful, productive. But it is also wild, random, impractical. Nature is full of the superfluous--so many colors, so many kinds, so much more than is necessary. And while in its great rhythms Nature is ploddingly predictable, in its multifarious immediate manifestations it is untamably, unalterably wild.

Some days my students seem ploddingly predictable, and the sins of other ditch-digging pedagogues are visited upon me in waves of apathy and sameness that subside to stagnant pools in a great, long trench stretching to nowhere. When, on the other hand, they are wild they are maddeningly random and impractical. The path from here to there is so plain, so straight. Why must they triple its length with needless convolutions?

The brook I am sitting by is barely a brook now in late fall. Its babble is hushed, like that of some students who darken the far reaches of my classrooms. But come spring my present seat will be awash with sudden energy. I must wait. I cannot hasten the seasonal flow. So, too, the classroom voices I long to hear are subject to stirrings I know nothing of from caverns measureless to man. My silent students, like silent springs, will flow at the beckon of a call I cannot give.

But when they do, when the babbling becomes cacaphonous, when the brook outleaps its bounds--then how to harness, tame, guide? For I cannot shake the conviction that guidance is my task. Can it be done without squelching the freedom and vitality of the brooks that meander through my classrooms? Can random, boundless energy by channeled without cutting a channel? If it can, I must content myself with being a water wheel, which leaves the contours of the brook untouched while producing utility, product, power. Am I such a wheel--converting raw, unfocused energy into productive good? If so, I must be satisfied to spin in place, driven by a force outside myself, used, lashed against, and sometimes idle--waiting for the stagnant water to move again.

THE POET DREAMING IN THE ARTIST'S HOUSE

by Katherine L. Basham

Contemporary Poems about the Visual Arts. Edited by Emilie Buchwald and Ruth Roston. Milkweek Editions, 1984, 142 pages.

This anthology contains poems (by seventy-three poets) arranged in four groups: portraits of the artist, scenes, still lives, and a last one which the editors call "the thing itself," a group of poems concerned with "the nature of art" and its relationship to our lives and to nature. The book ends with Phyllis Janik's Selected Annotated Bibliography of works about or of poetry related to the visual arts.

The editors have dedicated the book to poets and artists. I suppose the most fun will be had by readers who know the art these poets are considering. If there is collaboration it is unwilling inasmuch as we must say, "here are Picasso according to Cabral, Rothko and Frankenthaler according to Cherner, Graziano's Van Gogh, Quaglianno's Hopper, Sadoff's Hopper, Dacey's Weston, Tick's Kandinsky, Roston's Magritte, Browne's Moore, Nemerov's Klee," to name some. As Nemerov said in his poem, "The Painter Dreaming in the Artist's House," "It is because/Language first rises from the speechless world/That the painterly intelligence/Can say correctly that he makes his world,/Not imitates the one before his eyes." The least successful of the poems in this collection are sorts of reports, written out of no apparent personal necessity. The editors have claimed to be presenting the works of "participant" observer poets. In some of the poems, one will find the lowest level of participation. Even so, happily, this anthology is full of well-made poems of various kinds, some of them memorable and moving. Some of them are, of course, effective as espressions of personality. Some foster a receptivity to seeing visual works in a new way.

It must be said that in reading poems about various artists or visual works one knows and has feeling for, one is involved in a different relationship to the poems and to the works than in instances where as a reader s/he doesn't know the artist even

generally or the particular work which is the occasion for the poem. Because of this, my view of the need for and the contribution toward meaning of Randall Scholes' illustrations of this book changed as I read it. Often, Scholes' illustrations called my attention to the book's intention, away from the poems. This is a nicely made book, a pleasure generally to read. However, I preferred reading the poems without illustration.

One effect of a book devoted to a particular theme or to conventions of art is to make its readers thereafter noticers and mental gatherers of poems in the subject which the anthologists have not included. This makes all readers critics of the book. Another effect of such an anthology as The Poet Dreaming in the Artist's House is to make many Klees and Matisses and Kandinsky's possible as we hear and see them. So poets will write poems to join the conversation. For me, however, the happiest effect of reading this anthology was its "quickening" of my appreciation of visual art.

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WORD PROCESSING AND WRITING BEHAVIOR

by Michael W. Meeker

We are experiencing what the popular press terms a "word processing boom": one hundred manufacturers enjoyed word processor sales of 2.1 billion dollars in 1982, and sales are expected to jump 30% annually in the next five years--to 7.3 billion in 1985 (Glynn). The fact is that computers are used more for word processing than for any other purpose in American businesses. And 76% of all home computers are now used for word processing (Sandberg-Dement). Journalists moved wholesale to word processing in the early seventies, professional writers have turned to computers, and university and college students are discovering that the word processor "is the single greatest boon to writing, rewriting, and editing since the blue pencil" (Turner 1).

Word processing, an accidental by-product of computer

development, is clearly becoming a universal tool in human discourse. Increasingly, human thought and writing will be filtered and screened by the processor. But we have hardly considered the implications of a world in which most of our thinking and writing is done on the electronic page. I believe it will significantly change the process of writing itself.

Word processing affects the output, the creation and organization of our meanings in words. In Orality and Literacy Walter Ong suggests that "writing and print and the computer are all ways of technologizing the word"; rather than "mere exterior aids," tools represent "interior transformations of consciousness"--especially when they affect the word (80,81). Some will fear the new technology, but the shaping of a tool so that it becomes a part of us, an extension into the world, is not a dehumanizing experience. It can extend our abilities to function in the world, express our perceptions of self, and connect us with others. My intent here is to examine the effects of word processing on the process, the style, and the thought of writers. The following paper, then, represents an initial attempt to examine the effects of word processing on the way writers write and think about writing.

THE REACTION TO WORD PROCESSING

Most of the literature on word processing falls into two broad categories: the pedagogical and the evangelical. The "how-to" writers supply us with all sorts of unneeded technical data and tell us which word processing software they think is best. The evangelicals speak only in hyperbole, hailing computer-assisted writing as the greatest invention since the pencil, moveable type, or the wheel.

It is no wonder that some commentators seem a bit cynical, like the New York Times writer who attacked the "typographic pyrotechnics" of word processing as "the emperor's new words," an "exercise in verbose verbiage" (Sandberg-Dement,19). Or the Newsweek columnist who praised the pencil as the world's greatest word processor in a parody entitled "The Pencil Revolution"

(Lacy 84). Or nature writer Edward Abbey, on a camping trip in Alaska: "I activate my word processor. It's a good one. User-friendly, cheap, silent, no vibrations or radiation, no moving parts, no maintenance, no power source needed, easily replaceable, fully portable--it consists of a notebook and a ball-point pen from 'Desert Trees, 9559 N. Camino del Plata, Tuscon, Ariz.' The necessary software must be supplied by the operator . . ." (174).

Such parodies, no matter how devasting, only indicate that the technology, even as it is being resisted, is creating a new way of thinking about words, ideas, and the tools of writing. It is impossible to parody something that is not already assimilated. Thus, to use a McLuhanesque term, the new technology is "interiorized," our senses are extended, and "a new translation of culture occurs . . ." (Gutenberg 40). The new technology has, in fact, created the basis for the parody.

WRITING ANXIETY

On a more conscious level, however, we have yet to examine the probable effects of computer-assisted writing. What little information we do have comes from the testimony of individual writers or from scattered studies of composition classes. Nevertheless, some effects are consistently mentioned. Working with a word processor is always credited with relieving writing anxiety. For example, a teacher of English characterized himself in a recent article as a blocked writer--but on the processor

> . . .the words fly up on the screen, not ink on paper but images that, with a single keystroke, can be erased, filed, moved, changed. 'Nothing permanent here,' I feel, 'What I'm putting up on the screen is just images; no need to worry,' And so the editor takes to the sidelines, allowing the creator to produce language, both good and bad. The editor is called in later, at the appropriate time, to cut, paste,

> add, delete. I produce much more now . . . and I produce more with less effort (Moran 113-4).

Such a response is typical of the testimony of writers who have experienced word processing. "I've yet to hear of a writer," says James Fallows in the Atlantic, "who has used a computer and has willingly switched back to a typewriter or quill pen" ("Computers" 101). Part of the reason for this is purely technolological. The word processor's powerful editing and formatting capabilities save the writer time and effort. Word-wraparound, scrolling, and a running cursor are only the most visible features of a writing tool that allows revision and editing on a scale unmatched by any conventional procedures. Unlike revising on paper, insertions, deletions, and reorganizations are not cause for extra work. We can merge texts, search and combine files, even automatically correct spelling and grammar, and still always be able "to work with freshly typed scripts, confident that any sorts of changes can be quickly incorporated into a new draft" (Bean 146-7).

Since it is so easy, and since it can always produce a perfectly typed text without time-consuming recopying, word processing encourages revision. It encourages us to refine and readjust, to reorganize, to play with words. We look forward to revising and editing. Studies indicate that writers write more, enjoy the process of writing more, and spend more time at revising (Collier). The word processor also makes writers feel good about their writing, makes them want to sit down and write--which is often half the battle. Some even wonder whether revising will become too seductive--whether we will revise the guts out of our writing.

Actually the ease with which we can revise on a word processor allows us to put more into our writing, allows a greater freedom and spontaneity. The problem most writers have lies not in too much editing but in editing much too early, in thinking about the final product before they have sufficiently explored what they have to say. This premature editing usually results in

frustration or failure.

Using a word processor can eliminate the anxieties of beginning, the terror of the blank page. On a word processor one always begins in the middle of the action. The page scrolls out of sight. Margins automatically justify themselves. Because the electronic page is so impermanent, because we know it can be easily changed or erased, we write with less anxiety. We can risk saying something stupid or silly, knowing we can erase it with the touch of a key. We can insert material whenever it seems easiest. Even after wholesale global revision, our writing can be quickly formatted and printed to produce a perfectly typed page. Contrast this with type writing, where we must work with a printing press at our fingertips while we are still trying to discover what we have to say. We compose with solid, hard, immoveable characters. Once set, the lines are rigid. Error and change create serious consequences. It's hard not to be anxious.

INVENTION AND REVISION

The emphasis is on transcription rather than composition. Such a focus on the final product (or in our schools on the "basics" of grammar and mechanics) can obscure the primary importance of writing as a means of generating, organizing, and discovering what we have to say, of making meanings. It's also hard to get new ideas into such a system. Typography, as Marshall McLuhan pointed out in The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man, "tends to alter language from a means of perception and explanation to portable commodity" (161).

Writing on a word-processor puts some needed distance between the exploratory process and the final product. There is room for prewriting, for playing with ideas, for invention. Although a letter quality printer may be connected to the word processor, a guarantee that we can have a perfectly typed draft in moments, everything else about word processing suggests writing to be a divergent, open-ended process. Even as we work on a final draft, we can move paragraphs, delete words and

sentences, change things around. We can even add new material or do some freewriting in the middle of a finished paragraph--and revise or delete it later.

And we can do all this without worrying in the slightest about making any additional work for ourselves, because our new writing tool will reformat the sentences and paragraphs, re-justify margins, even change the page numbers and footnotes to account for the insertions and modifications. As Collette Daiute says in "The Computer as Stylus and Audience," the test editor "helps writers take risks because the consequences of making mistakes are trivial for their pride as well as for their hands" (136).

Finally, anxieties about writing decrease because the word processor actively encourages writing, is "interactive." This is accomplished primarily through the effects of a small blinking light called the cursor. Basically, the cursor indicates the point at which words will be displayed on the screen. But unlike the tip of the pen or pencil, it is a constant prompt, a device that solicits interaction with the text, a signal for the writer to do something. Whenever the writer stops writing or giving commands, the cursor begins blinking, waiting for more text. Some even argue that this invitation for input "encourages the writer to say more and to consider whether what is written makes sense" (Daiute 141).

A SENSE OF MASTERY

In addition to encouraging us to write and take risks, the processor gives us a feeling of mastery over writing. Even the name of the new technology ("word processing") seems to demystify writing. The traditional romanticists attitude toward writing as a magical creative act often leads to frustration when the muse doesn't cooperate. But word processing, like "data processing" (or meat processing) indicates a no-nonsense, pragmatic approach to the task of composing. Writers, like New York freelancer Bernice Hunt, often talk about a sense of mastery in using a word processor: "One has a feeling of

power--of control over the process that liberates creativity" (Biagi 8).

The language of computers and computer assisted writing programs also suggests that the writer is in control of the process. The text editor itself is composed of a series of "commands" that the writer can use to manipulate words. (All activated by a "Control" key!) As difficult as writing is, as recalcitrant and stubborn as words can be, anything that gives the writer control--or even the illusion of control--will seem a blessing beyond all expectations. Normally at the mercy of words and syntax, writers using a text editor can "delete," "retrieve," "search and replace," or "insert" words, phrases, sentences, even paragraphs and larger segments of text. They can file and retrieve words at will, define commonly used words or phrases in a "glossary" for instant shorthand retrieval, and command the printer to justify or center lines on a page. Using a word processor, writers have a veritable arsenal of weapons available, at the touch of a finger, which will literally put words in their places.

Writers also gain control of their time. In Writing and the Writer, Frank Smith's catalogue of writing paraphernalia suggests the problem:

> . . . I would include in a list of the tools of writing not just writing instruments and paper but also erasers, correcting fluids and tapes, scissors, paper clips, staplers, paste, and clear adhesive tape. Other important equipment includes all the different scraps of paper, index cards, and notebooks that can be used to address reminders to oneself concerning things still to be written (or already written--the control of time again). Different colors of paper and ink can be used to indicate separate parts or different stages of development of a text, and different colored folders to contain it all. Two indispensable tools for many

> writers are a large work space on which all these impedimenta can be spread out (including a separate desk for the awkward bulk of the typewriter and a swivel chair) and a waste-basket, or at least a floor, for disposal of pieces of paper that are no longer required.

While the word processor brings a lot of new baggage with it (disk files, computer tables, printer stands, reference manuals), it can save the writer time. "We don't realize how much time all that housekeeping--fiddling with paper, erasing, retyping--takes," asserts one professional writer; a word processor frees a writer from that" (Cedaring 10). The writer is even freed from most of the physical restraints of typewriting or handwriting. There are no carriages to return, no pages to number, no papers to shuffle, no pencils to sharpen, nothing to erase or cover up with "whiteout."

OUR CHANGING RELATION TO WORDS

Freedom is a psychological state as well as a physical one, and some unique features of writing on a computer monitor reinforce the writer's sense of control. The most easily noted feature is word-wrap or "wrap-around." Essentially, it allows the writer to type continuously without ever having to signal for a carriage return.

Because of "wrap-around," typing on a word processor can be physically easier and faster than conventional typing. Psychologically, wrap-around de-emphasizes the permanent, printed, lined and formatted nature of writing. The sentence remains fluid, unsegmented, a continuous chain of words. Most writers, like English teacher Warren Self, stress this fluidity in describing the differences between word processing and other forms of writing:

> My relationship with these words is different from my relationship with words I have written with a pen or a typewriter. The words on my monitor are less permanent; they have motion and a transient

> quality that alters my psychological relationship with them. They are less like permanent images that must be effaced to be altered, and more like fluid matter capable of many possible shapes and arrangements (19).

Most commentators, such as mass communications professor Lee Nichols, agree that the computer assisted writer is "far more fluid, with less fear of error and a greater willingness to risk, to try out words or ideas" (Biagi 9).

But for some this fluidity is threatening. Predictably, the New York Times writer mentioned above is disturbed by the lack of fixedness: "Scribed electronically, letters are ethereal forms. They appear, disappear, reappear like so many apparitions called forth by the 'Ouija' board at the writer's fingertips" (19). Psychological investigations regarding the effects of working with CRT's do indicate that our relationship to the material is changed by such display parameters as character size, shape, stability, flicker, resolution, luminence, contrast, and chromaticity (Waerm 449).

At first very distracting to a novice on the machine, this eventually becomes part of the word processing gestalt for the computer-assisted writer. Stephen Marcus of California's South Coast Writing Project suggests that students "no longer feel their words to be 'carved in stone' (often the stone of writer's block). Instead, their words now have the quality of light. Students can see their sentences slide back and forth, ripple down the screen, disappear, reappear . . ." (3). We are forced to see words as tools, as machines for our use, rather than magical tokens of reality. Language is itself a tool, a machine. With it we extend ourselves into the world, connect with others using "compatible" equipment, and create meaning.

But we also know that our technologies change us. Elizabeth Eisenstein's two volume work, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change (1979), makes clear how universal were the effects of the adoption of print--how it helped expand the Italian Renaissance to Europe, how it affected the development

of capitalism, of exploration, how it changed politics and family life and altered the way we think and communicate. Marshall McLuhan, in Understanding Media (1964) and The Gutenberg Galaxy (1962), has speculated on many of the less obvious ways in which the typographic revolution has affected human consciousness, as has Walter J. Ong in works such as Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue (1958), Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology (1971) and Interfaces of the Word (1977).

Ong, for instance, points out that the move from orality to literacy put greater stress on the word as a thing, that embedding the word in print made it a commodity, and that "it was print, not writing, that effectively reified the word and with it, neotic activity" (Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue 306-18). Unlike the handwritten text, print locks words into space and produces more rational and analytic expectations about the organization and presentation of ideas: according to Ong "manuscript culture is producer-oriented, since every individual copy of a work represents great expenditure of an individual copyist's time. . . Print is consumer-oriented, since the individual copies of a work represent a much smaller investment . . ." (Orality and Literacy 122-3).

We have already touched upon some similar expectations regarding the shift from hard copy to electronic print, but the effects of this revolution on style and thought have yet to be assessed. The product of word processing is still print, but for the writer it allows new interpretations of the writing process. Paradoxically, it would seem to push writing in opposite directions. On the one hand the writer is encouraged to be more conversational, more personal and expressive; on the other hand ease of revision and a sense of aesthetic distance from ones words encourage a more crafted and audience-directed prose. Word processing seems to assist both emotive and conative styles of writing, both expression and persuasion. Some specific stylistic changes brought about by electronic composing may help clarify this paradox.

CHANGES IN WRITING STYLE

On a word processor the writer is not only free from having to make carriage returns, but from line breaks altogether--as well as the forces of parallelism, visual repetition, the echo of unintended rhyme, and many of the other usual constraints of syntax. The text moves relentlessly forward into the blank screen. The electronic monitor does not have the spatial rigidity of the printed page (Ong, Orality and Literacy 121-130; McLuhan, Gutenberg Galaxy 79). This wrap-around feature may, in the long run, have as significant an effect on the kind of sentences we write as have the printing press and the newspaper column. Some suggest that sentences might be longer because "overly long Germanic sentences appear shorter on an 80 character screen than they do in print" (Sandberg-Dement). The ease of editing and the limited window of the display, however, may produce the exact opposite effect. It may be some time before we know how viewing our writing on a computer monitor will affect our style--it took two centuries after the printing press was developed for writers to discover how to consistently manage tone in a written composition (Gutenberg Galaxy 135). Discovering how to fully use the electronic page may be just as difficult.

And then there is the effect of scrolling. Perhaps even more visually shocking than word-wrap, our words not only wrap around the right-hand margin, they scroll out of sight at the top of the screen. Just as speech exists in a momentary window in time and then disappears, words on a word processor can be viewed only through a small spatial window (typically no larger than 24 by 80 characters). The situations are not exactly parallel, for the spoken word "exists only when it is going out of existence" (Orality and Literacy 71), while the words on the screen hang around a bit longer. Still, we write with only a small portion of the whole in front of us, and it slowly scrolls out of existence--at least visual existence. Some writing instructors have exaggerated the effect by having students switch off their monitors altogether, creating a kind of "invisible" writing that stresses the importance of prewriting by discouraging "local editing" (Marcus 2). This also brings to

mind the experiment in which James Britton found that skilled writers who were forced to use a stylus on a ditto master (so they could not see what they had written) could not write with extended coherence. Like wrap-around, this feature will undoubtedly have an effect on our writing behavior.

Another possible stylistic shift is related to what some have called the "autonomous" (Olson) or "context free" (Hirsch 26) quality of the printed or written word. Such terminology has been challenged, since no one ever writes in a vacuum. (If we don't have an audience, we invent one.) Yet the phrases have a certain metaphorical validity: they make clear that the written word cannot be questioned as oral speech can. A book that states a boldface lie continues to exist no matter how devastatingly we refute it. Thus, the electronic passage before us on the monitor might be seen as even more cut off from any context.

And yet many writers seem to feel that writing on a word processor produces a more natural voice, one that seems to have some of the characteristics of speech: "My style has become more open (some might say breezy)," says English teacher Charles Moran, and it "has more of the rhythms of spoken language in it" (114). It is difficult to immediately see why this might be the case. We cannot easily place the effect of the word processor on a simple continuum relating to oral or written language, to print or electronic media, to the aesthetic or the referential. On the one hand electronically assisted writing seems to be more spontaneous and ephemeral--like the spoken word; on the other hand, ideas thrown up on the monitor have a kind of otherness, as if we didn't really put them there. They are easy to question and change. The writer is always involved in a dialogue with ideas on the word processor, a dialogue which might logically encourage more of the conversational quality of speech. And when the electronic text is refuted (with the delete command) it does not continue to exist.

Unlike the case with ordinary speech, however, the limited window on our words will not necessarily be detrimental to coherence. The writing environment encourages a dialogue with

writing that tends to require more coherence. We can always "scroll" the materials back in front of us at any time. We are able to read reflexively, to employ the "backward scanning" habit that many have seen as an essential element in aesthetic reading. This self-refening quality seems the antithesis of casual speech. Furthermore, the split-screen technique, a variation on windowing, has the same reflexive effect. One is able to display duplicate versions of a text and then revise one, keeping the original in sight. When we work on a word processor, we can always put our text into a context.

Thus in a sense we can enjoy the spontaneity and linearity of speech, the sense of creating something totally new, from nothing, at every moment, while remaining within the self-conscious world of art, always able to recall and hold in focus all that we have written. We can move both vertically and horizontally through language, view our sentences both synchronically and diachronically. It is as if the cursor denotes a "slot" in the sentence, a reference point at which (by scrolling) we can escape the pressuring syntax of the linear, horizontal, forward-pushing line. The continuous scrolling of words generates a sense of continuity and flexibility which, like the wrap-around capability, does not impose the usual formal constraints on the writer, either of line or paragraph or page. And yet word processing stresses the reflexive, reiterative, poetic, quality of language even more than conventional page-bound text.

This paradox is similar to the dichotomy which has been at the heart of most of the approaches to writing and literature in this century. Modern linguistics has been wedded to this notion of polarities ever since Saussure spoke of the syntagmatic and associative planes of language in his "Course in General Linguistics." And Roman Jakobson, writing about aphasia in 1956, made an observation that became the foundation for current notions about the differences between the aesthetic and the functional in written language: the two major component disorders of the disease were strikingly related to the basic

rhetorical figures of metonymy (the substitution of the part for the whole) and metaphor (the combination or fusion of contexts), and Jakobson related them to the two axes of language: the horizontal, syntagmatic, combinative or metonymic axis, and the vertical, associative, selective or metaphoric axis.

The horizontal or syntactical force of the sentence drives the speaker or writer onward, forces closure, demands an ending. This kind of language is a public medium; it involves a social contract of sorts: if we are to engage in the thing called language we are obliged to make a certain amount of sense, to follow the rules of usage and sentence structure. The opposite axis, the vertical or associative dimension of language, encourages a more subjective and personal expression. At every given lexical "slot" in the sentence a continuum of words comes to mind, a set different for every speaker or writer. The specific words we choose will also be determined by the immediate context of the sentence with regard to our audience, our purpose, our emotional state, and so forth. We may even greak new semantic ground by forcing an unexpected combination of contexts, as in the use of metaphor. Jakobson's famous definition of the poetic function of language as that which "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Style in Language, 91-2), is formulated on the basis of this primary division of language modes. The point is that language is at its most effective when it defeats our common-sense expectations, when it dislocates or dislodges our normal channels of perception. In good art and effective writing the metonymic is always a little metaphorical and the metaphor is always approaching metonyny.

Writing on a word processor seems to combine language principles in much the same way. In one sense it is a "vertical" kind of writing. We can easily scroll and select from a series of similar choices, substituting and merging ideas throughout the text. On the other hand, the convergent restraint of syntax is not absent. Although we focus intently through a narrow window on a small segment of our writing, we are always

aware of the rest of the text, of the context which surrounds our immediate words. Writing on a word processor is the antithesis of autonomous or context-free writing. Nothing seems to stand in isolation. The word processor allows writers to engage in divergent thinking, to create and discover their ideas, while still providing the checks and controls needed to begin to converge, to come to some closure.

A SENSE OF OBJECTIVITY AND AUDIENCE

Word processing helps writers gain such closure by encouraging a kind of objectivity concerning their own words, a sense of aesthetic distance. We have already suggested that the machine encourages a dialogue between writers and their ideas. Daiute goes further and suggests that the processor helps us take a reader's point of view in revising (134). The impersonal language of word processing hints at this distancing (we talk of input, of data and data bases, of information and files, of bits and bytes). When we realize that our words are only discrete bits of information to the computer, perhaps they are more easily edited. Whatever the reason, the computer encourages a kind of self-monitoring (Daiute 134). Perhaps this is because it helps separate what Peter Elbow calls the creative and the critical processes; it allows time for prewriting, for discovery, as well as revising and editing.

It also allows us to change perspectives. When we make a "hard copy" of our text we gain a new focus, like switching points of reference on a drawing of a transparent cube (do we see it from below or above ?) or flipping from Duck to Rabbit, Vase to Faces, or Old Hag to Young Woman in various familiar figure-ground puzzles. Most writers who use word processors do not "wean themselves away from paper" as William Zinser (author of the best selling Writing on a Word Processor) seems to suggest to be inevitable and preferred. Warren Self, already quoted above about his changing attitude toward words, argues that when he prints out his draft on paper it seems different from the one he had been composing on the screen: "That difference makes

my reading of it a new experience and allows me to see the text in a new way; I do not feel as if I am reading my text again; rather, I feel as if I am reading a text for the first time, for it is the first time I have seen it in that physical form" (20). Alvin Toffler, who switched to a word processor half way through the writing of The Third Wave, voiced similar feelings about seeing his words on paper: he felt he came closer to "seeing them as a reader while still working as a writer" (Courter 41).

The writer can also gain a sense of audience because the electronic page is displayed on a CRT, a cathode ray tube or television screen. The television is a public medium, a "cool" medium. When our words appear there, they too are public. And we can revise and edit with greater objectivity. It is almost as if we gain an immediate sense of audience. Putting words on the screen provides a kind of "publication," a means of testing ideas. However, this perceived public domain has its drawbacks. Total strangers--who wouldn't think of peering over your shoulder as you write with paper and pen--are likely to stand behind you as you work on a word processor, reading what you write. Zinser speculates that because we have become a society of TV viewers, the tube belongs to everyone and "this makes writing a public act . . ." (44). Perhaps this is why we are able to peer over our own shoulders more easily when we write on a word processor.

It is impossible to think of the traditional rhetorical acts of Invention, Arrangement, and Style (inventio, dispositio, elecutio) as separate and distinct stages when writing on a word processor. Invention is a constant, reflexive process, one that takes place at every moment in our creation of a text. We tend to see writing as a totally integrated structure of activities because of the word processing gestalt. The electronic page is a medium that "favors the presentation of processes rather than products" (Understanding Media 39). But while it encourages a process-oriented thinking, the process is not necessarily linear. We discover our meaning even as we play with organization and

style. Revision and invention take place at every stage of the process. Contrast this to Ong's assertion that print, typing and even writing, always encourage "a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion" (Orality and Literacy 132).

PLAYING WITH WORDS

Our ideas are created in our working and playing with language. When we compose on a computer, words become tools we can use without anxiety. Even in the most straight-forward expository prose, we are encouraged to manipulate language. We are thus naturally encouraged to consider our writing more aesthetically. The word processor, in emphasizing language as a kind of raw material, a pigment on the compositional palate, frees writers and thinkers from a static commitment to their words. Composing on a word processor is like painting with oils. The colors blend. The results are palimpsistic ("rubbed again"--we can literally write over our words), a layering of drafts. The writer continues to revise and rethink up to the very last keystroke. John Hersey, one of the first well-known novelists to turn to word processing, suggests that word processing allows you to "keep the text open for weeks on end, putting in changes whenever you wanted, trying things, rejecting them later if they had no holding power, comparing versions--as if you were dealing with what a story should be, something alive" (Courter 41). Just as the visual artist can manipulate the painting with rag and turpentine, the writer can sweep through the text blending new ideas and erasing others.

The painting analogy is a good one. It points to an interesting visual and graphic component of word processed writing. Just as Gutenberg's moveable type created a new spatial pattern for writing, a new structure for organizing and creating ideas, so the visual gestalt of the processed electronic page will alter the way we "see" writing. Small things may become immediately obvious: shorter paragraphs for instance. Because we are limited to 24 lines, most paragraphs will fall

within that limit, primarily because we are so committed to the paragraph as a structural unit and we want to see the whole of it on the monitor. I think subheads will also become more accepted. The scrolling pages cry out for definition by an occasional subhead just as the difficulty in reading manuscripts eventually created the paragraph. These are only the more obvious effects. Ellen McDaniel points out that it took years for writing to stop imitating oral language, and word processing programs still imitate the typewriter and the printing press.

Thus we have probably not yet experienced the full stylistic potential of electronic writing. However, I think another clear tendency, as evidenced by the changes in hardware (the Macintosh for example) will be a new emphasis on graphics. Word processing programs will include Macintosh-type graphics, and with them will come the ability to easily integrate graphics and text, perhaps to let a picture speak for a thousand words. Perhaps words will become more like things, exhibiting what Jakobson called the "palpability of signs." Word processing may thus counter-balance the tyranny of the typographic.

McLuhan made the point that the printing press, with its emphasis on the visual senses, tended to artificially separate the visual from the rest of our senses. Word processing does not seem to have a similar limitation. The "mouse" and touch sensitive displays may be indications of what lies ahead. Word processing already can be a kind of finger-tip thinking, and the whole body could be more important in the way we write and think with computers in the future. In What Computers Can't Do, a 1972 critique of Artificial Intelligence research, Hubert Dreyfus found digital computers limited "not so much by being mindless, as by having no body" (xii). Human beings are not limited in their learning to what they can express in rules--they learn through their bodies as well. Interestingly enough, Seymour Papert, the developer of LOGO and one of the MIT researchers in Artificial Intelligence criticized by Dreyfus, now seems to agree. He argues in Mindstorms that the most effective thinking uses the whole body in what he calls "body geometry" and

"syntonic learning" (58, 963). The word processor appears to encourage just such a kind of learning.

In The Silent Language Edward Hall suggested that "all man-made material things can be treated as extensions of what man once did with his body or some specialized part of his body" (Hall 79). In some cases the computer has literally become such a physical extension, an "enabling" device. Mark O'Brien, a quadraplegic from Berkeley, writes that the word processor ranks second only to his power wheel chair in enabling him to overcome his physical limitations. And yet, what he writes about word processing seems to express only in the extreme what most writers feel, a sense of freedom and power: "My first try at rearranging a sentence gave me a sense of immense power, a feeling that can best be appreciated by quadriplegics living in a world designed by and for able-bodied people" (47).

Obviously, all this is very speculative. We still need more studies of the effects of word processing on writing. But it is clear that working with a word processor changes our behavior as writers. We compose more easily, less anxiously, and more prolifically. The word processor makes us want to sit down and write. It makes us feel good about our writing. It does this, we have seen, by encouraging prewriting and invention, by providing us with a sense of control and mastery over the actual writing process, by easing the burden of rewriting and editing, and by encouraging a kind of objectivity that allows us to become our own audience. In the process our style of writing may be changing, becoming more like ordinary language in its spontaneity, and yet more reflexive and contextualized; more self-referring and aesthetic, and yet more open and fluid--more like painting with oils than acyrlics. Perhaps the reflexivity of the new writing even suggests a thinking that is both divergent and convergent, spontaneous and analytical, specific and holistic, a more bodily thought.

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SOFTWARE EVALUATION FOR THE TEACHER OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

by ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

Sifting good software from bad is not difficult, but it is not like selecting textbooks. If you use the same strategies, you may waste both time and money. You can flip through many textbooks and get a good idea of their worth because you are sophisticated about what you are looking for. Also, when teaching with textbooks, you are still a major part of the show-preparing, emphasizing, explaining, highlighting, filling in the gaps, and

making up for weaknesses. The book will not slam shut if a student forgets to turn the pages in a certain manner. A computer program, however, can create frustration and confusion for the student. It can, in effect, "break down" if it is not thoughtfully designed. Therefore, teachers must learn selection strategies in order to become sophisticated consumers.

WHAT ARE THE INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS?

Never buy software without conducting a thorough examination of it. You should look at two parts of the software: the documentation and the actual, running program. The documentation is the written explanation that comes with the computer disk. Beware of any software that does not have such documentation, as lack of documentation often means the person who produced the program didn't organize it well or didn't bother with explanatory material.

The documentation should help answer some basic questions. Are the stated objectives of the program something you need for your students? What equipment specifications does the program take? If the program needs 64,000 units of memory and your computers have only 48,000, do you want to buy additional memory chips for all your machines so that this program will run? Does the success of the program depend on color-if so, do you have color monitors? Trying to distinguish the sentences written in red from the ones in blue on a black and white screen is tiresome, if not impossible. Does the program need disk drives or cassette players? If disk drives, how many? Is one of the strengths of the program that it will print out a paper copy of the student's work? If it is and you either don't have access to a printer or have one printer for thirty students, maybe the program isn't for you.

WHEN FIRST VIEWING THE PROGRAM, WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR CONCERNING ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE?

Suppose you like the subject matter, accept the stated objectives, and have the equipment. It's time to examine the program for the first run-through-and this ought to be the first of several

if you are going to be a competent consumer. Concentrate on three areas during the first run: Does the program carry out its stated objectives? Is it user-friendly? Does it have sound pedagogical structure?

You probably do not need help in deciding if the program carries out its stated objectives, because that's a regular part of teaching. But what about user friendliness? Is the program easy to use? Are there clear directions, or do you need technical knowledge about computers to make this program work?

In addition, examine the program for ease of operation. If you have to press the return key after your input, does it tell you to do so? Is the program menu driven? That is, do you start out with a page of choices, or do you have to start in the same place every time-reading directions at the beginning? What about a way to quit if you get bogged down or must leave? Can you get out of the program short of pulling the plug? Can you go back to see those directions you thought you didn't need in the first place, or thought that you'd remember after a quick read-through?

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FEEDBACK?

It's important to look at both positive and negative feedback. These terms do not mean good and bad. Rather, they refer to the feedback given for correct and incorrect responses. Is the feedback appropriate? Too much positive feedback isn't useful. Some programs go too far, using the student's name and a string of superlatives to reward a correct response: "What a marvelous job, Charlie. You sure know your stuff." This approach is boring and often condescending. Field studies show that a simple "Okay" or "Correct" is often enough.

Moreover, does the negative feedback help point students in the right direction? Computers can handle many possible answers in many forms in a helpful way-if the programming was done by a competent programmer and a designer who knows the content. Feedback that says "Think!" is useless to students who thought they were thinking but missed the answer anyway. A more helpful

feedback design is the corrective feedback paradigm (CFP). This system reruns missed questions through a questioning sequence at specified intervals to reinforce retention.

Finally, there are some programs that won't let students out until they have answered five or ten or fifteen questions correctly in a row. Some students just can't do that, and they get so frustrated by a lack of success that they quit. Keep this in mind as you evaluate a program. In addition, remember to check whether the program keeps track of the student's work, giving some type of summary and evaluation at the end.

WHAT PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES SHOULD I CONSIDER DURING THE FIRST VIEWING?

There are several important issues. For example, is the sequencing pedagogically logical? Does the program permit the student to interact-think, respond, wonder, predict-or does the student just read an electronic workbook? (You can buy quite a few workbooks for the cost of one piece of software, not to mention the cost of the computer.) The more interactive the program, the better. Get students involved in this evaluation and make sure that computer involvement is worth while for both their education and their time.

Look carefully at the language: Is it too formal, or too laden with slang? Is it so dependent on fad that it will be outdated in two years? Finally, do graphics and/or sound add anything to the program, or are they window dressings?

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A SECOND VIEWING?

If the program seems to pass the test so far-you like the objectives, it's user-friendly, and the pedagogy is good-it's time for a second round of assessment, in which you consciously make errors. This may seem hard. Teachers like to do things correctly and neatly. On this run-through, however, you'll need to force yourself to be a confused and/or slow learner.

Find out what happens if you just hit the return key with no input. Can you do it three times, get the correct answer, and page on through or do you have to make an attempt to answer? What

does your program do with perceptually correct but literally incorrect answers-especially misspellings, parts of names, or abbreviations? What does the program do with a totally "off-the wall" response-treat it as such or say, "Wow, that's interesting, Johnnie"? What heppens if you hit the escape key, hit many keys simultaneously, or randomly tap the keyboard? Try it. If the program is capable of handling such things, it's said to be "bulletproof." If the program isn't designed to handle accidental or intentional problems, it's going to backfire on some students.

If you look at these aspects, you will have given the program a good preview. If you still like the program at this point, then it's time to turn the program over to some of your students. Choose at least a couple-the quick/bright and the slow/unmotivated-and get their opinions. Their actions and reactions will reveal much more about the program.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT DEALING WITH SOFTWARE PUBLISHERS?

If publishers will not let you inspect programs on a trial basis, beware but remember that they are not entirely at fault. Software development, especially well-done material, costs money. If publishers send out disks for preview and you copy them and send them back, they stand to lose a great deal of money. So allow for the publisher's qualms when making arrangements for previewing. Send a letter guaranteeing that you will not copy illegally. In addition, request to see the real program rather than shortened preview disks. If they won't send just the disks, ask them to send a sales representative to do a demonstration and then try to get time for your own evaluation. Sometimes several schools can join together and invite several publishers to put on a software fair with a wider range of materials. It takes planning, but it is a way to see the material.

Another factor to check on is how to get a backup disk or multiple copies. You should be given either a backup disk or provision to make your own. Also, how does the publisher deal

with your need for five, ten, fifteen or thirty copies for your district? Paying the full retail price for each one could wipe out a budget for software on one item. Negotiate a reasonable, nominal fee for additional or replacement copies. In school settings, disks are sometimes lost, stepped on, or otherwise damaged. In addition, you should investigate the publisher's policy if, for some reason you didn't foresee, the program just will not work out. Do not, however, make the return option an excuse for weak evaluation practice on your part.

Finally, deal openly and honestly with publishers and expect to be treated in the same manner. Remember, they are somewhat new at this also. The copyright laws are ambiguous on computer materials and business policies and practices are just being formed. Publishers and educators must work together to establish a smooth working relationship. Tell your colleagues and educators in other districts about publishers who are good to work with. Set up a network of information.

In addition, make use of general professional resources, like reviews of software from EPIE (Educational Products Information Exchange) and MicroSift. Read software reviews and gather ideas about the instructional use of the computer in journals like Language Arts, English Journal, and Computers in Reading and Language Arts. But don't let others' ideas take the place of your own hands-on assessment. The ideas in this digest, along with documents like "Guidelines for Review and Evaluation of English Language Arts Software" (National Council of Teachers of English 1984) can help you to choose the best software for use with your students.

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CALORIE COUNTS FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

You're probably unaware of the calories you burn up in a typical work day at school. The following "exercises" can be done indoors, alone, and often without detection. The figures, courtesy of the U.S. Foreign Service Medical Bulletin, indicate calories burned per hour.

Beating around the bush..... 75
Jumping to conclusions.....100
Climbing the walls.....150
Swallowing your pride..... 50
Passing the buck..... 25
Throwing your weight around
(depending on your weight).....50-300
Dragging your heels.....100
Pushing your luck.....250
Making mountains out of molehills....500
Adding fuel to the fire.....150
Hitting the nail on the head..... 50
Wading through paper work.....300
Bending over backwards..... 75
Jumping on the bandwagon.....200
Running around in circles.....350
Eating crow.....225
Tooting your own horn..... 25
Climbing the ladder of success.....750

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STYLISTIC IMMATURITY IN COLLEGE WRITING

by Robert Raz

Like many teachers of composition, I have long known that most student writing is syntactically immature and that the

immaturity results, at least in part, from the failure of students to use all of their syntactic resources. And I have long believed that, to meet this student need, we should all be encouraging our students to experiment with syntactic structures they seldom or never use in their writing. But to provide the appropriate encouragement, we need to know what those structures are.

There exists, of course, a body of research that can help us with this problem. Researchers like Kellogg Hunt and Walter Loban, who have been studying the syntax of student writing since the 1960's, seem to have established not only that syntactic performance in writing does mature but also that it matures along generally predictable lines. Their research shows us, for example, that as students mature they write longer clauses and use more dependent clauses and reduced dependent clauses (Hunt, 1970; Weaver, 1979, pp. 68-70). And their research shows something even more helpful to the teacher who wishes to encourage stylistic experimentation: it identifies particular syntactic structures that rarely appear in student writing (Hunt, 1977; MacLeish, 1969). The research thus allows teachers to focus their work with style on specific points of stylistic underdevelopment. Constance Weaver, for example, concentrates on the participial phrase and the absolute in her work with college students (1979, p. 79).

But though I have found this research interesting and useful, I have also felt a need to take a close look myself at the syntactic habits of my own students, most of whom are Winona State University freshmen and sophomores from high schools in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. As a step toward this goal, I asked my English Department colleagues to help me collect a random sample of the writing of our incoming freshmen. During the first week of classes in the fall of 1982, we asked the students in the 28 sections of our first freshman writing course to write an impromptu essay explaining why they had decided to attend college and why they had chosen Winona State University. We then selected three essays from each section

at random.

As a result of our collective efforts, I found myself examining 84 freshman essays containing over 2000 independent clauses (T-units in Hunt's terminology) and over 27,000 words. During my study of these essays, I found much that I expected to find, but I also had my attention drawn to one stylistic limitation of surprising scope: at least in impromptu writing, which may well reveal a writer's basic stylistic instincts, these students use strikingly little syntactic coordination. And this syntactic limitation has serious rhetorical consequences for their writing. In part because of this limitation, the writing seems like the playing of a pianist who uses only the two octaves in the middle of the keyboard.

The limitations on coordination show up first in the number of structures coordinated. When these writers coordinate syntactic structures, they rarely coordinate more than two and almost never more than three (Table 1). In 90 percent of the instances of coordination, only two syntactic structures are involved.

Table 1

Number of Structures Coordinated

Two structures coordinated	860
Three structures coordinated	76
Four structures coordinated	17
Five structures coordinated	3
	956

But the limitation is not merely a matter of numbers. Table 2 shows that almost all coordination involves just three types of syntactic structures: independent clauses, noun phrases (pronouns or nouns along with any modifiers) and predicates (verbs along with their complements or modifiers). These three structures account for 71 percent of all coordination.

Table 2

Types of Structures Coordinated

Independent clauses	306
Noun phrases	247

Predicates	125
Infinitive phrases	55
Pre-nominal adjectives	28
Gerund phrases	24
Predicate adjectives	23
Noun clauses	21
Prepositional phrases	18
Adverb clauses	18
Adjective clauses	3
Participial phrases	1
Other structures	47
	956

Only one other syntactic structure, the infinitive phrase, is coordinated with any frequency at all, perhaps because coordination of infinitive phrases feels much like coordination of predicates if the infinitives are coordinated without the repetition of to--and these students rarely repeat to.

Particularly interesting to me in Table 2 are the figures showing the frequency--or infrequency--of dependent clause coordination. Those low figures would be even lower if I had not included in them such syntactically ambiguous sentences as this one:

> I didn't have much difficulty in choosing Winona State because it had the program I was looking for and also it was closer to home.

The writer may have intended the final clause of this sentence to be a second adverb clause--and I honored that possible intention--but because she failed to repeat the subordinating conjuction because before that clause, her intention remains unclear. In general, attempts to coordinate dependent clauses produced some of the most unclear writing I found. The following example suggests how much trouble these writers have with any but the simplest coordination patterns. The writer in this case attempted a series of five coordinated adverb clauses but was apparently unable to hold the series clearly in mind:

> I finally chose Winona State University because

they had the best teaching program, and because the cost was low, and the location was wonderful. The staff and teachers were friendly, and because when I needed help they were there to assist.

Another significant point not fully revealed by the figures of Table 2 is the restricted positioning of structures that function as nouns. For example, in 117 of the 247 causes of noun phrase coordination (47 percent), the coordinated noun phrase functions as the object of a preposition. Most striking in this regard is the absence of coordination in the subject position. Of these 247 cases of noun phrase coordination, only 33 (13 percent) occur in the subject position. (In 32 of these 33 cases, the coordinating conjunction is and. Except for one formulaic he or she, compound subjects with or do not appear.) The same pattern recurs with other syntactic structures. Thirty-six of the 55 instances of infinitive phrase coordination involve infinitive phrases used as nouns, but in only 4 of these 36 instances are the coordinated infinitives used as subjects. Similarly, only 2 of the 24 instances of gerund phrase coordination and none of the 21 instances of noun clause coordination occur in subject position. These writers are clearly uncomfortable with compound subjects of any kind.

To this point, I have been discussing what a transformational grammarian would call surface level coordination. Such a grammarian would point out that much coordination is disguised in various ways before it reaches the surface. According to this view, both of the following sentences result from coordination at an underlying level:

1. My father has smoked all his life, and he now suffers from emphysema.
2. My father, who has smoked all his life, now suffers from emphysema.

Sentence 2 is derived from the underlying coordinated structure by a transformational process that converts one of the underlying clauses into a nonrestrictive clause. Nonrestrictive clauses,

therefore, are produced only by writers who coordinate at underlying levels.

If this syntactic theory is sound, it seems reasonable to suspect that students who tend not to coordinate will tend not to write nonrestrictive clauses. Such is certainly the case with the students in our writing sample. Table 3 shows that only 7 percent of the relative clauses in the sample are nonrestrictive.

Table 3

Number of Relative Clauses

Restrictive relative clauses	307
Nonrestrictive relative clauses	23

And Table 4 suggests that the tendency to avoid nonrestrictive clauses is so strong that it affects the choice of relative pronouns even in restrictive clauses. The relative pronoun choices that these writers typically make with restrictive clauses

Table 4

Choice of Relative Pronouns is Restrictive Clauses

who	23
whom	1
whose	0
which	14
that	102
∅ (relative pronoun deleted)	135
when, where, why (relative adverbs)	31

(that and ∅) are precisely those choices that they cannot make with nonrestrictive clauses. They avoid the pronouns that mark nonrestrictive clauses (who and which) just as carefully as they avoid the nonrestrictive clauses themselves. Taken together, Tables 3 and 4 show that the bias of these students against coordination runs deep indeed, that it affects not only surface level structures but extends to underlying levels as well.

To what extent are the students in the sample I studied representative of others? Although I can give no definite answer to this difficult research question, I can point to one other recent experience which suggests that these freshmen are not alone.

In the spring of 1983, I asked a group of 25 juniors, seniors, and graduate students in an advanced writing course to compare a sample of their own prose with the prose of a professional writer whose style they admired. After checking an extensive list of stylistic features, almost all of them reported that the clearest syntactic difference they found between their own style and the style of the professional writer was the professional's far more extensive use of coordination and nonrestrictive modification. Like the freshmen in our sample, these more advanced students were making only limited use of syntactic coordination.

And this is a serious stylistic problem. The writer who does not coordinate freely and skillfully cannot write the clear long sentence. And the writer who cannot write the clear long sentence cannot produce the effective short sentence--cannot, indeed, achieve any of the rhetorical effects that good professional writers achieve by playing off long sentences against short sentences. Perhaps most seriously, the writer who does not coordinate freely and skillfully cannot achieve any of those important rhetorical effects that we have in mind when we use the term parallelism. Writers with such a stylistic limitation need our help.

More generally, writers with all kinds of stylistic limitations need our help. Students certainly know their language system, but when they write they fail to use much of what they know. If we are to help them overcome their stylistic limitations, we must encourage them to experiment with new things--with a series of four noun clauses, for example. It is often argued that stylistic maturity will develop naturally if we simply involve our students in enough meaningful writing activities. I find this argument persuasive when thinking about young students but not when dealing with students in the later years of their academic careers. Such students will not much longer have access to the kind of help a good composition teacher can give. At this point, teacher intervention certainly seems appropriate--not punitive intervention, but intervention that points out words, figures, or syntactic structures students rarely use and

that encourages students to experiment with these words, figures, and structures in their writing.

But to pursue such teaching strategies, we will have to be tolerant of error. We will have to avoid the rigid insistence on correctness that makes students afraid to write any sentence they cannot punctuate. To do this, we will have to be clear about our goals. Do we want mature, effective writing, or are we willing to settle for mechanically correct writing? Too often in the past, when faced with the kind of writing I see in our Winona State University writing sample, I have been overly concerned with eliminating verb agreement errors, vague pronouns, and the grossest punctuation and spelling blunders. Even when I succeeded, I did nothing but turn sloppy immature writing into cleaner immature writing, and in the process I probably gave many students an incomplete, distorted conception of what good writing is. I am no longer content with such dubious successes. It is time to aim higher.

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"PR AND THE ENGLISH PROGRAM"

by Nicholas P. Criscuolo

Business firms employ them. Corporations hire them. The movie and television industry make full use of them. Many education organizations have them on the payroll. All these people deal with an important responsibility--public relations. Call them press agents, promotion managers, media experts--they all have the same goal: to educate, communicate and promote a product.

In the case of education, of course, the product is quality education. For the purposes of our discussion, it is a top-flight English program. When school budgets weren't so tight, many school districts hired public information officers who worked with parents, interested citizens and the media. Their purpose? To let the public know about some good school programs and activities that were taking place in the schools. The type of information disseminated raised the public's confidence in the schools. Unfortunately, school budgets had to be cut and these people were the first to go.

According to the 15th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, as published in the September, 1983 issue of Phi Delta Kappan, 31% of the respondents gave the schools a rating of A or B. This is down 17 points from 1974 when the rating was 48%. Obviously, there has been erosion of the public's confidence in the schools.

Respondents in this Gallup Poll also listed "poor curriculum/poor standards" as a major problem. Since the English program is at the core of a healthy curriculum, one has to be concerned about this.

Read today's newspapers and watch TV programs. If readers or listeners believed what they saw or heard, the perception is that the English program is in trouble. The recent Carnegie Report stressed the point that the writing skills of students must be improved. Many members of the community express concern about the "frivolous" English courses that have been added to the curriculum. Kids can't spell, write a simple

declarative sentence or read. It's rubbish, but it is the public's perception.

Is the situation hopeless? Of course not. Although PR seldom is given the attention it deserves, teachers and administrators can launch legitimate activities which will help the public know that the English program is alive and well in today's high schools. The remainder of this article will describe briefly actual programs conducted in the New Haven public schools that are valid and have a public relations base.

Each year, the New Haven public school district participates in a variety of writing contests e.g. Fire Prevention, Brotherhood, etc. Prizes are donated by various local business firms, organizations and groups. Students receive the prizes at a Mayor's Reception at the end of the year. It's a big media event coordinated by the Mayor's staff.

During the course of the year, winning entries are published in the Sunday edition of the local newspaper. The public can then perceive that students are capable of writing pieces that are informative, insightful and creative and free of mistakes in grammar and spelling. Initially, editors at the newspaper were reluctant to reprint the winning pieces but persistence paid off and they agreed to do it.

Winners of Oratorical Contests have appeared at Board of Education meetings to recite their winning pieces. Since many parents attend these meetings, it's a PR idea that works. Since TV people and local education reporters cover Board meetings, some free PR is obtained.

Many English Departments have produced Required Reading Lists as well as Summer Reading Lists. A complaint voiced to me by some parents is that some of the titles listed are not in the library or local bookstores. We've solved this problem by communicating with local librarians and bookstore owners to make sure these books are available for loan or purchase. The list is then posted in the library and bookstores. Posting serves a PR purpose too: parents can see that we haven't abandoned the classics in favor of only contemporary authors.

Some of the students who work on the staffs of the city's three high school newspapers have been willing to work with students in the Talented and Gifted Program and inner-city schools. They are scheduled to visit elementary schools to help students sharpen their writing skills. They help students develop ideas for short stories and essays, edit, proofread, etc. Many of these secondary students are planning journalism careers and it's a good experience for them. In New Haven, Yale University students serve as interns on the staff of the local newspaper. Presently, we're planning a similar program for our secondary students.

There are many teachers with writing talent. This talent can be nurtured by encouraging English teachers to write descriptions of innovative programs and activities. These can be published in the Superintendent's Bulletin which often consists of notices of meetings and other mundane material. Spice it up by suggesting a column titled "Teachers' Corner" or "New Practices in English/Language Arts" which include practical teaching ideas. The PR factor: The Superintendent's Bulletin not only goes to all staff members, but to members of the Board of Education and the press. If a reporter sees an item of interest, the English teacher will be contacted for an in-depth interview or story on the program described in the Bulletin.

Not too long ago, an empty storefront window space was secured in a downtown mall to display creative projects emanating from English and reading classes. A large banner proclaiming "We're Raising Bookworms in New Haven" was placed at the top of the display for community members to see.

Parents want to be assured that English is being stressed. Parent meetings help. The principal of one of New Haven's high schools scheduled an hour of drama readings, plays and skits prior to teacher conferences. After the hour was over, parents walked the corridors to meet with teachers. These corridors were plastered with book exhibits, displays of media meterials, creative writing exercises--a good way for parents to note the priority the English program was given at the school.

Concluding Remarks

PR helps the general public understand just how effective a good English program can be. For some reason, PR is not one of the educator's strong suits. The media (both print and electronic) can be courted. The media can help, but it's the teachers themselves that are the best PR people. They can let the public know that legitimacy is at the core of the English program through a sound public relations approach.

RESOURCES FOR INVOLVING PARENTS IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

by ERIC, Myrna M. Haussler and Yetta M. Goodman

PARENT ROLE

The idea that parents play a vital role in their children's literacy development is not new. Edmond Huey, in 1908, wrote as follows:

> The child makes endless questionings about the names of things, as every mother knows. He is concerned also about the printed notices, signs, titles, visiting cards, etc., that come in his way, and should be told what they "say" when he makes inquiry. It is surprising how large a stock of printed or written words a child will gradually come to recognize in this way.

In 1934, Nila B. Smith acknowledged that early reading is taught at home rather than at school. Current literacy research, reported by Teale (1981), Doake (1981), Haussler (1982), and Taylor (1983), indicates not only that the amount of adult-child reading and writing interaction before school is important, but also that the quality of the interactions makes a difference. Parents' attitudes toward literacy, the time they spend interacting with children and print, and the accessibility of literacy materials in the home (such as newspapers, books, chalkboards, paper and writing implements) influence children's

reading and writing development.

It is thus becoming increasingly important for educators to communicate to parents and child care professionals their crucial role in children's reading and writing development. While face-to-face contact with parents is preferable for establishing cooperation between home and school, it is not always possible. For a variety of legitimate reasons, parents cannot always attend school meetings or conferences. In addition, much of the home literacy environment is well established before parents bring a child to school for the first time. For these reasons, brochures, letters to parents, and educational pamphlets about the role of the home in literacy development provide a valuable line of communication between the home and the school.

MATERIALS FOR PARENTS

Many international, national, state, and local organizations (as well as some private publishing companies) have recognized the importance of the parent in literacy development, publishing inexpensive brochures and pamphlets that are useful for parent education. Most of the pamphlets are written with parents as their audience and are reasonably priced. Purchasing these pamphlets and finding creative ways for disseminating them at school and in the community is an ideal project for the parent-teacher organizations and other parent or teacher groups.

In addition, teachers and administrators should reach into the larger community to alert other professionals-including noneducators-of the important role they can play in involving parents in literacy education. Schools should look for support for the dissemination of a variety of educational information by pediatricians, dentists, hospitals, childbirth and newborn class teachers, social workers, preschool teachers, and other child care professionals. Such literature should not only emanate from schools but also be distributed at doctors' offices and at other community agencies to provide parents with information about their important role in their children's success in school. In addition, state departments of education, book sellers, or other private industries might be contacted to help with dissemination and financial support.

The brochures or pamphlets may help parents think about their own role in their children's literacy development for the first time. Young parents at a newborn class may discover the importance of reading to their child from an early age or of allowing children to write on chalkboards.

At school, classroom teachers, reading specialists, and school administrators will find these brochures valuable in supplementing classroom reading calendars, newsletters, and personal letters which go home to parents throughout the year. Some are appropriate for explaining the importance of reading at the beginning of the school year; others list book selections which are ideal for sending home at winter holiday times; while still others will encourage summer reading at home.

Teachers and schools can thus build parent and educator cooperation in the development of literacy by becoming disseminators of useful, relevant information. Some resources may be obtained by writing to the organizations listed below. (Please include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope.) In addition, local resources should be checked. Many state and local reading, language, and early childhood organizations have a variety of fine brochures. Finally, a list of ERIC documents is presented below as a further source of helpful ideas and materials. With such resources, it is possible for school personnel to show parents and others in the community that schools provide leadership and take seriously the cooperative relationships necessary for literacy development.

ORGANIZATIONS

American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Association for Childhood Education International, ACEI Publications, 3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016.

The Children's Book Council, Inc., 67 Irving, New York, New York 10001.

Education Department, Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 245 East 47th Street, New York, New York 10017.

IMAGES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: EIGHT NOVELS

by Ilene Alexander

> In the space of one minute, three women are battered and another is raped; every minute an assault on a woman is reported while every eighteen seconds a woman is assaulted by a man she lives with (Kaye/Kantrowitz).[1]

Facts about woman abuse are generated and reported daily by public agencies and private organizations: as consumers of news, we are awakened daily by headlines about abused, murdered, assaulted, molested and harrassed women. Woman abuse, clearly and unfortunately, is a current affairs topic for students at any grade level. Students' experience with the issue ranges from personal to academic to judgmental to non-existent.

As a student of women's studies I know that women and men can better understand abuse if they view the violent event not in isolation, but as part of a pattern of events that lead up to the episode. Literature can personalize the experience, making woman abuse more than a statistical collection of data that masks the pain and fear of abuse or that clouds the variety of decisions and dilemmas abused women face.

As a student of English I know that quality novels offer readers an intimate glimpse of characters' lives and a sense that the reader knows the circumstances of the lives s/he is reading about. In looking for a graceful and relevant way to blend English methods of teaching literature with women's studies theories of violence against women, I realized that a number of novels could be brought together as an introduction to the novel course, a course that would introduce readers to a variety of novel forms (radical, epistolary, slave narrative, uptopian, adolescent, stream of consciousness) and would focus on a single relevant topic--woman abuse.

In this paper I will discuss eight novels that could be used in an introductory course--the novels could be used as a group for a quarter-or semester-long class, or used in pairs to supplement discussion in other English, women's studies,

social studies, or sociology classes.

While the course plan I will offer is structured for the college classroom, it can easily be adapted to middle school and high school use (perhaps even the grade school level in conjunction with the TOUCH program by using short stories from MS. magazines' Stories for Free Children and similar sources). Strong Women: An Annotated Bibliography of Literature for the High School Classroom is a good place to begin searching for other titles to be used in a high school setting.

Before considering which novels to include in this topic oriented literature class, the instructor will need to increase his or her own understanding of woman abuse. Several works on battered wives, rape, domestic violence, and sexual abuse have flooded library and bookstore shelves; some books are woman blaming--what did she do to provoke the attack, some point accusatory fingers at the overall violent structure of society, and others develop a contextual understanding of the multi-faceted causes and manifestations of violence against women. It is important to survey the material available but even more important to select background materials that offer an understanding of abuse--historically and statistically with some reporting of individual, personal interviews--that is not woman blaming.

Two recent publications can aid both teacher and student in the search for background material: Violence Against Wives, by R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash; Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement, by Susan Schechter. Schechter focuses on the movement that struggles for political, judicial, and legislative reform of laws and attitudes regarding battered women. "Toward an Analysis of Violence Against Women in the Family," chapter nine of Schechter's work, is a valuable resource that should be shared with students early in the class.

Chapters from Violence Against Wives, specifically chapters six, seven and eight--"The Violent Event," "The Violent Marriage," and "Staying, Leaving, and Returning," prepare students for an

early discussion of the myths and realities of battering in women's lives. The Dobashes state that "any approach to the understanding of a social problem must include a consideration of history, biography, institutional processes and cultural beliefs and ideas...We have avoided (a) narrow approach by embedding our analysis of individual violent behavior in the wider social and cultural context" (ix-x). This approach blends easily with the individual and contextual images offered in the eight novels.

The novels encourage readers to see male-female relationships in a context that does not (unlike so many best selling romances) romanticize violent behavior as a by-product of intense passion. In each novel the reader becomes part of the process of a character's self-discovery within the abusive situation. At that point, the reading becomes personal scholarship--readers connect events to each novel to various episodes in their own lives. By putting women at the center of the study, by using feminist fiction depicting women in important and realistic roles, by selecting writings that span a period of history in which the subordination of women has undergone only limited change, and by discussing the experiences of women--characters and readers, we discover the actual facts of women's lives and thoughts.

The learning process in such a study of literature helps students to observe the interrelatedness of abuse, social conditioning, community practices, and imposed (male) norms. Furthermore, it encourages students to see literature not as some "thing" divorced from daily concerns and issues.

Questions raised in this examination of literature will include: how have writers depicted women? what can be done or is being done to change stereotypes? what sources do we have and how can they be used to help explain roles and lives of mid-twentieth century or nineteenth century women? what are the basic assumptions--social, political, economic, biases--that form the context for the times during which the work is written? in what ways has the male point of view affected our understanding

of woman abuse? how has this view crept into popular and cannonized literature? how does literature socialize men and women? how can literature be used to unlearn outdated stereotypes? how can these novels add to our understanding of abuse? how can women learn about freeing themselves from abuse by reading feminist fiction? and so on.

The eight novels, discussed below, are easily available with the exception of Fettered for Life, an 1874 novel by Lillie Devereux Blake which was reprinted in 1981 by Arno Press. The Ayer Company distributes Arno's holdings but is slow to respond to queries regarding Blake's novel. Several libraries hold copies of the 1874 edition, which is now out of copyright so chapters could be xeroxed by classroom use; libraries holding Fettered for Life include Murray State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Yale, and University of Arizona-Tucson. As a substitute for the novel, Elizabeth Pleck's 1979 article "Wife Beating in Nineteenth Century America" could be used.

THE NOVELS

Blake, Lillie Devereaux. FETTERED FOR LIFE OR LORD AND MASTER: A STORY OF TODAY.

Blake's Fettered for Life, published in 1874 after she became involved in the woman's rights movement, serves as an excellent counterpoint to Brent's Incidents--the settings are clear contrasts, but the roles women were expected to fill and the violence condoned to ensure that women molded to their proper roles are much the same in both works. Through Blake's central character, Laura Stanley--an upstate girl, educated, and in New York City to begin a career--readers meet an activist feminist doctor, a wife murdered by her battering husband, a psychologically abused mother and daughter, a prostitute--used, abused and abandoned, a debutante looking for identity but denied meaningful work, and a newspaper man who reveals her startling secret.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. HERLAND.

Herland is a feminist utopian novel from an author whose own abuse by the psychiatric establishment influenced her politics. Gilman published Herland in 1915. While much of the

novel illustrates the self-sufficient and highly fulfilled lives of a "lost" civilization of women, it is through the eyes of the male narrator that we see the folly of our own sexist society. Readers enraged by the violent attitudes of our society when a companion of the narrator attempts to rape a resident of Herland: "Terry put into practice his pet conviction that a woman loves to be mastered, and by sheer brute force, in all the pride and passion of his intense masculinity, he tried to master this woman." The residents of Herland do not let the incident go unnoticed or unpunished.

Jacobs, Harriet /Linda Brent/. INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL.

Incidents is one of the few printed works written by a nineteenth century woman of color, a woman in slavery, that speakes openly of the culturally sanctioned sexual degradation faced by slave women and often overlooked by southern and northern white women. Written in secret and published in 1861, several years after Jacobs escaped her master's insistent advances, this narrative defies rules of caste, class, and sexual propriety to effect social change.

Olsen, Tillie. YONNONDIO.

Olsen put the family battering in a context that honestly characterizes the interaction between poverty, wage earning, family structure, patriarchal hierarchies, and individual perceptions. In this novel no individual is blamed for or victimized by the abuse, but the hierarchical social structures are closely scrutinized. All of the characters in this dark slice of life are burdened under the oppression of a system that only acknowledges success and readily condones violence.

Piercy, Marge. WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME.

Piercy contrasts the insanity of our social structures with the future world of Mattapoisett, Mass., in the year 2137, a world that Connie Ramos "envisions" as an escape from her bed in a mental institution. Connie's tour guide Luciente--whole name, in Spanish, means bright and shining--makes her aware of the power of violence and of the empowerment in fighting abuse.

Scoppettone, Sandra. HAPPY ENDINGS ARE ALL ALIKE.

This adolescent novel takes on the issue of acquaintance rape and the common attitude that lesbianism is "deviant" behavior in a storyline that also makes clear that rape is an issue of violence, not sexuality. The novel repudiates several on-going beliefs about women: that they ask for it; they need to be taught a lesson; they remain silent because their permissive behavior was really at fault. Scoppettone also takes up many of the biases inherent in the law enforcement systems and pushes those attitudes aside with the determination of her central character.

Walker, Alice. THE COLOR PURPLE.

The vibrancy of The Color Purple comes from the bonding among women that serves to counteract the violence done to them by men. Celie can emerge from the dark hole she was pushed into by her stepdaddy and Mr. _____ largely because she learns to draw from her own rich source of energy and submerged self-esteem. She merely has to be reintroduced to these characteristics, and that happens through her relationship with Shug Avery. The richness of the color purple surrounds Celie when she moves out from under the control of a man who beats her.

LeSueur, Meridel. THE GIRL.

The Girl is a song that honors the voices of Depression era women who collectively shared shelter and stories. As a feminist and writer, LeSueur saw herself as one "who strangely and wonderfully insisted that their lives were not defeated, trashed, defenseless but that we as women contained the real and only seed, and were the granary of the people. This should be the function of the so-called writer, to mirror back the beauty of the people, to urge and nourish their vital expression and their social vision." While women in LeSueur's collective were gaining confidence in the possibilities of their social visions, the unnamed protagonist in her fictional retelling of those years is caught in and betrayed by the social system.

The novels could be arranged chronologically or by genres but I prefer a pairing of novels that emphasizes a similarity in

either the characters' or authors' lives; therefore, the following arrangement:

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Linda Brent, 1861

The Color Purple, by Alice Walker, 1982

The first person slave narrative is Linda Brent's story of strong family, escape from slavery, separation from family, and risk taking. Walker's epistolary novel introduces readers to another woman in slavery, this one in a more recent setting; Celie, the central character, is slave to the white patriarchy and black patriarchy. Celie and Linda learn that they have the courage to become"whole women," women who do not take abuse; these images help students unlearn myths about abused women of color.

Yonnondia, by Tillie Olsen, 1974

The Girl, by Meridel LeSueur, 1978

Both of these novels are written by women who were forced to leave their early works untouched for a number of years--Olsen to raise a family before rediscovering her novel, and LeSueur to survive blacklisting before she had sufficient resources and community to nourish her work. In the novels, the conditions of poverty and the conditioning of young girls are topics interwoven with the descriptions of the abusive cycle. As novelists, LeSueur and Olsen are radical writers.

Herland, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1915

Woman on the Edge of Time, by Marge Piercy, 1976

By placing readers in a utopian context that is foreign to traditional surroundings, the focus becomes introspection; that is, the reader finds familiar topics and assumptions take on a different connotation in a setting that does not accept abuse as normal and acceptable.

Happy Endings Are All Alike, by Sandra Scoppettone, 1978

Fettered For Life, by Lillie Devereaux Blake, 1874

During the final weeks of the course, students will be looking for a change of pace in their reading and the instructor will be looking for closure that will encourage future thinking: the pairing of Scoppettone's recent work about an adolescent who

encounters abuse with Blake's historical work about a young woman first encountering ideas and discussion about woman abuse fulfills the goals of student and teacher. Furthermore, these novels show how little and how much laws and patriarchal attitudes have changed.

In assigning readings and written assignments, the instructor can build reasonable class requirements by asking students to do two things: write reaction papers for some or all of the novels, including follow up remarks after class discussion; present historical or current information about abuse to the class, making use of handouts as necessary. Reaction papers are most useful, I have found, when each student responds to a particular idea, theme, or character rather then attempting to summarize or analyze the entire novel. I find it interesting to read the reaction papers when students are given a few moments to add to their reaction papers after class discussion--typed reaction papers, two or three pages, are turned in at the beginning of class and written, brief comments handed in after students spend ten minutes writing post-discussion comments.

Reports to the class work best when the topics correspond to the novel being discussed, naturally; what is especially appealing for students is that they can make reports either on the aspects of the novel--forms, structure, types, or on other studies and research about domestic violence and woman abuse. Through reports to the class, students hear what social scientists have to say about abuse--reading and reporting on Behind Closed Doors, or The Battered Woman or Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape--and will be practicing reading, writing and reporting skills that are called for in a variety of classes outside the English department. Benefits for the instructor include assistance in presenting information, short and swift-to-read writing assignments, discussions that are easy to facilitate and an opportunity to focus on a particular topic through the eyes of many--students', novelists', characters'.

In the classroom, instructors may find that breaking into small groups to discuss specific questions (suggested before

small groups are formed) is an aid to generating and focusing class discussion. Sharing parts of their reaction papers also helps students, especially the quiet ones, bring their ideas into the exchange.

Literature is often used in the women's studies classroom so that students can begin to understand all that surrounds, underscores and interacts with women's lives; literature provides the tools that help students dig for the root that will help them understand an attitude, an ideal, a life. In literature courses it is important that students begin to see novels not just as an escape from reality but as a mirror of social conditioning and as a tool for learning new ways of interpreting and surviving in the world. Literature can help students and teachers see that:

> The seeds of wife beating lie in the subordination of females and in their subjection to male authority and control. This relationship between women and men has been institutionalized in the structure of the patriarchal family and is supported by the economic and political institutions and by a belief system, including a religious one, that makes such relationships seem natural, morally just and sacred (Dobash 33-4).

Literature can teach us that the patriarchal myths about abused women are, indeed, lies.

Partial Bibliography for "Images of Violence Against Women: Eight Novels"

THE NOVELS

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NOTES

[1]Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, editor of Sinister Wisdom, is currently at work on a book about women, violence and resistance; she spoke at Mankato State University 19 April 1984.

ERIC/RCS REPORT:

VISUAL LITERACY COMES OF AGE

by Hilary Taylor Holbrook

"Something there is in our intellectual
culture that doesn't like a picture."
Calvin Skaggs

"Back to basics" advocates who dismiss visual media courses as frivolous would not view kindly the idea that literacy in the visual media of television, film, and advertising is no less important to a solid education than are reading and writing. But even critics of curricula not grounded solely in the classic works of literature or the fundamentals of grammar and composition must acknowledge that the visual media, so pervasive in society as to be inescapable, are an influential force that shapes perceptions of reality, history, and society. In the face of such influence it would seem prudent to rethink curricula in terms of an appropriately broader literacy. Within this broader literacy, students should be made aware of the scope and power of these media, and learn to be discriminating consumers if they are not to be manipulated or deceived (Wagschal, ED 239 833; Gnizak and Girshman, CS 007 238).

Although the "basics" trend is an effort to abate verbal illiteracy, verbal and visual literacy are, to a high degree, inseparable. According to Skaggs, "One cannot increase visual literacy without enriching verbal literacy. It may also be argued that we can no longer achieve verbal literacy among our youth without attempting systematically to achieve a higher level of visual literacy."

English appears to be the discipline best equipped to impart visual literacy. Its primary concern has been transmission of general culture, of which the visual media are a major vehicle. It is also primarily responsible for teaching skills of critical analysis--elements of theme, plot, character, and style that are present in a sitcom, movie, or advertisement, as much as in a novel. This paper presents a case for visual literacy in the

English curriculum, supported by materials from the ERIC system, and looks at activities and methods for developing such literacy.

TELEVISION: WASTELAND OR FRONTIER?

Foster observes that students have three choices regarding television viewing: don't watch it at all, watch all they want, or watch it moderately with critical understanding and appreciation. With compelling arguments he dismisses the first two as unrealistic and dangerous, respectively. Among the mind boggling statistics he cites are the 95 percent (74 million) of households with television sets, more than have refrigerators, stoves, or indoor plumbing. He also notes television's effect on behavior, value systems, and perceptions of reality, effects that are immediate and dramatic, or subtile and cumulative over a lifetime. That leaves choice three.

One of television's least obvious advantages, according to Levinson (CS 504 288) is that the ability to discern television's strengths and weaknesses <u>is</u> teachable. Furthermore, this skill is self-perpetuating with every new program or commercial.

Among the discussion questions suggested by Harold Foster are the following:

--Does television create violence in our society or does it reflect the violence already present?

--Does television news accurately reflect the world?

--Can too much viewing harm an individual?

Foster also proposes exploring television myths such as the detective show (might makes right), the western (good and evil were more discernable in the "old days"), or the sociology of sport.

FILM--LARGER THAN LIFE

Presumably because "movies are for entertainment" (Where does that leave literature?), film studies have been a conspicuous target for curriculum critics; but like it or not, the movies are here to stay. The demise of the neighborhood theatre at the hands of cable television and the economy not withstanding,

it is the personal isolation and "larger than life" quality of the big screen experience that lend films their attraction and their persuasive qualities. Gnizak and Girshman (CS 007 238) describe a film curriculum designed for grades nine and ten that uses both English teachers and media specialists. The course challenges the notion that when one watches a movie one does not have to think. Students complete composition, reading comprehension, and drama/poetry exercises, as well as develop a script that they subsequently film.

Another way to use film study as a stimulus rather than an end in itself is to focus on literary works that have been made into movies, examining which of the two the students find better (students may be surprised to discover that very often the book is better than the film), how the two differed, and how having first seen the movie influenced the way they read the story and vice versa.

Foster also suggested that awareness of the structural elements of film--editing, movement, composition, camera angle, color, lighting, and sound as they are used to manipulate emotional response--is a significant factor in visual literacy.

ADVERTISING: THE HARDEST SELL

To serve as an example of the overwhelming influence that advertising exerts on social patterns, Ewen (ED 137 804) cites advertising as the tool with which manufacturing and industry have altered the character of daily living from productive to consumptive. Pressure from consumer advertising during the 1950s and 1960s created the "feminine ideal" of the housewife who remained at home, preparing prepackaged meals in a kitchen filled with state-of-the-art appliances and using all the newest health and beauty products to maintain youth and beauty for her husband. Such advertising has also been indicted as a catalyst for the national obsession with being thin.

Studies by Moore and others (ED 219 753; ED 165 182) on the effects of advertising and media consumer behavior on adolescents indicate that susceptibility to the persuasion of advertising is

positively related to the amount of mass media use and the amount of communication with family and friends about matters of consumption (the higher the media use and the more discussion, the lower the susceptibility), and negatively correlated to age and socioeconomic status (the younger the consumer and the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the susceptibility). The researchers also found that retention of advertising information was positively related to age, amount of communication with family and friends about consumerism, and socioeconomic status.

Bennett (ED 159 728) brings attention to two forms of advertising other than product advertising that warrant study: corporate-sponsored image and ideology advertising (the propagation of ideas and controversial social issues in a manner that supports the interests of the sponsor while downgrading the sponsor's opponents, such as power company interests in nuclear power.)

To counter the effects of various kinds of advertising, teachers have developed a variety of effective classroom practices.

Braden and Walker (ED 212 294) refer to advertising as a most effective symbiotic use of words and visuals. "Trademarks and corporate logos have become part of our visual vocabulary. The pages of almost any slick magazine will reveal visual-verbal combinations that turn the verbal metaphor into a visualized attention getter."

The persuasive language used such advertising can be an excellent tool for teaching rhetoric, according to Stone (ED 177 701). Since advertising demonstrates creative and admirable as well as corrupted uses of the English language, it can serve as the core of a composition unit, to teach students variety in diction, connotations, sentence structure, openings, use of detail, economy of expression, the sound of language, awareness of the reinforcement that words and pictures give each other, and persuasion through indirection. (Why is "No brand cleans better than Brand X" not the same as "Brand X cleans better than any other brand"?)

Vertin (ED 190 424) describes an individualized unit for study in advertising, developed for the junior high level. The teacher's guide and student booklet are designed to teach students to identify the different sources and types of advertisements, to recognize the main purposes of advertisements, and to analyze the purchasing powers behind the basic advertisement.

A section of Webb's paper on consumer education activities (ED 214 847) examines common advertising gimmicks, and provides related activities for secondary students, including finding examples of advertising ploys such as "weasel words," the "scientific claim," or "superstar endorsement."

Finally, a junior and senior high school media literacy curriculum guide (Bhakuni, et al., ED 211 973), written by participants in a summer workshop on media literacy, focuses primarily on manipulation in advertising. The four advertising lessons cover (1) advertising as manipulation, (2) the power of television commercials, (3) propaganda techniques used in media advertising, and (4) how advertisements persuade through words. The guide also lists goals for media literacy, including a television viewing questionnaire, and outlines several media projects.

A VISUAL CURRICULUM

Clearly, the need for media literacy exists, as do the materials for incorporating such instruction into the English curriculum without sacrificing more "fundamental" components. Burbank and Pett survey eight successful visual literacy programs from the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. The experience of one such program indicated that visual literacy is within the financial capabilities of school systems and, if properly carried out, will be supported locally. In many instances, small pilot efforts in one classroom or one school have grown into major projects involving teachers throughout the school system. The ERIC system contains other curriculum materials dealing with television, advertising, and film study, which can be found by using the thesaurus descriptors VISUAL LITERACY, ADVERTISING, FILM STUDY, and TELEVISION.

If the "basics" are those minimal skills necessary to function as an adult in society, then it follows that the ability to interpret information intelligently in a society that is becoming increasing visual is not only basic, but also essential.

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Minnesota Council of Teachers of English

HELPING STUDENTS TO FIND SOMETHING TO SAY: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING RESEARCH

by Frank C. Cronin

One of the most frequent laments of high school and college teachers concerning composition is the sheer lack of content, even after students have worked seriously at revision. The chief reason for this problem is that students are so often compelled to write on subjects in which they have no real interest and nothing fresh to say to any audience of teachers or fellow students.

Consequently, they are forced to painfully "crank out" line after line to fulfill the assignment--and thus learn to dread writing. What they really need first is to find a subject of deep personal interest in which they can immerse themselves with satisfaction and even pleasure, perhaps for a series of papers.

Assigned literary critical papers on subjects from remote periods of literature are often the object of bitter complaints from upper division college students, faculty, and especially successful business and industry people, as I have learned in course of my research into their writing processes and requirements.

We are living in the midst of the Elizabethan age of science and technology. Consequently, many of our students are fascinated by the new discoveries that are catapulting our civilization through profound change with ever-accelerating speed. Those students would make rapid progress in their writing skills if they were allowed to write about their beloved, scientific subjects for teacher and classmates. Unfortunately, many English teachers are fearful of giving up the power of the subject--an absurd timidity as those who have "taken the plunge" have discovered. Then they become real audiences and enjoy it.

It is only when students have found fresh, interesting material for presentation to a target audience--usually fellow students and the teacher--that they will be adequately motivated to develop their papers through all the stages and cycles of the composing process. Only then will they be enthusiastic about

revising, brainstorming, incubating and revising again and, perhaps for the first time ever, experience deep satisfaction in the writing process, the pleasure of exploring and thinking out on paper--in successive revisions--their own personal interests. It is also far easier to motivate the inevitable drudgery involved in the final, painstaking editing and proofreading when their live audience is waiting to hear their own, well-researched paper.

Research is a "scary" word for students. With our help, they learn that research can be fun when they are exploring their own personal interests. Furthermore, they must be taught that skill in finding published information quickly and accurately is essential not only for college and technical school students, but for all young people who wish to be successful in supporting themselves and their families in the high-technology future of written information as product, robotics and computer technology. Even a little training in basic research skills will give our students some "edge" over their future competitors.

In a recent American Business Communication Bulletin, James Suchan notes that even juniors and seniors at the University of Arizona, "had very little knowledge of the research tools in their fields--merchandising, marketing, accounting, economics, management, public administration, and so on."[1] Ironically, the basic research skills necessary for college and career success could easily have been taught in high school. Furthermore, the prejudices that research is necessarily a grim experience begins to crumble when students realize that they can easily explore their personal interests through a workable set of steps.

As in teaching the writing process itself, the key is to show students how to break the problems down into easily workable steps. The preliminary steps are (after choosing a a general topic of deep personal interest): 1) Check out the local resources: the library, source persons and their personal libraries, businesses, industries, agencies and the Reader's Guide. 2) Jot down tentative thesis statements, hunches, intuitions, and even rough, tentative outlines. 3) After further brain-

storming with teacher and small discussion group, plus some incubation time, limit and focus the general topic down to a problem or thesis that can be handled in one or a series of papers. 4) Quickly recheck the library's resources, the availability of experts, etc., on the limited and focused topic, and begin to assemble a working bibliography. 5) Then write a clear statement of specific topic, purpose and goals and proposed outline and submit this as a memo to the teacher. (These plans are still tentative--including the outline, they will evolve as one gets more deeply into the subject).

This limiting and focusing stage, which follows the playful, preliminary exploration of resources, is the point at which almost all students make mistakes because they are afraid of ending up with not enough to say; they often pick a huge topic and wind up floundering about. (Donald Hall recalls telling a student who had chosen "ecology" to come back in twenty years with thirty volumes.) The best teaching strategy at this point is brainstorming with individual students privately or in class to narrow the subject to what each individual can handle thoroughly.

Also, going around the class and briefly brainstorming with each individual is time well spent since those listening quickly learn the strategies for narrowing and focusing big, fuzzy topics. At this point, teachers must ask (in class or in private) such tough questions as "What precisely is the point you wish to make to me and your class audience?" "Why do you want to tell us about this subject?" "Do you think your paper will constitute useful, valuable and interesting information and insights for all of us?" Such a line of questioning may seem unduly harsh at first sight, but the crystal-clear focus on audience, goal, purposes, etc., to which they lead the student are essential to successful college and real-world writing.

Prewriting activities should take much more time than the actual writing if the student writer is to be successful and avoid dead ends. Even the most skilled researchers get into dead ends from time to time. Consequently, students should be encouraged to be bold in following through their hunches like

creative researchers. True creativity necessarily involves many dead ends that are no fault of the researcher. Teachers can illustrate this with anecdotes from the lives of great creative figures--and also promise to give full grade credit for the honest dead ends.

Research, like the writing process itself--is not the entirely neat and efficient process that so many textbooks imply. The dead ends are paradoxically integral to the process of growth--just as painful blunders in basketball or football are often the best lessons.

When student researchers do get stuck, some form of talk-write pedagogy is very helpful. Brainstorming with students, even for a brief period can also trigger fresh insights and teach some important strategies of research. Friends and the small group can also help brainstorming and asking tough questions that impel student researchers to ask themselves some of the crucial questions that didn't occur to them because they were too close to their subjects. Hasty and sweeping generalizations, reliance on doubtful authorities, and other violations of logic tend to disappear in the face of such strategies which in turn impel the student-researcher to continue the quest with renewed zest.

The steps of actual data collection are as follows:

1) Reskim the general reference works, starting with the Encyclopedia Brittanica and moving on to the more specialized reference works in order to get a fresh overview of one's subject.

2) Xerox, if possible, the most important sources. The student researcher should skim a lot and carefully read the better articles or chapters before taking notes to avoid the trap of aimless note taking.

3) The proposed purpose, thesis and tentative outline should be frequently reevaluated in the light of new material and new insights so that they will not end up with a mass of undigested and unrelated material. With their own purposes in mind, students can learn to search out the important headings and key material while skipping over what is not important for their purposes. (Tables of contents and the introduction and

conclusions of chapters and articles are good places to start in this active process of quickly extracting what fits the researcher's own purpose.)

4) Take notes very selectively. Pick out key materials that serve your research purposes and then extract, evaluate, and condense those materials into concise notes in your own words; only lines with exceptional "punch" are quoted directly. After this, use cards or slips of paper of all one size--or in a notebook that can be later cut up so that materials can be sorted and resorted.

5) Conduct interviews with available authorities only after doing your substantial research and come with prepared questions.

6) Incubate and review collected material and make new tentative outlines. Develop personal perspectives on the subject. "Don't let your sources do your thinking for you."

7) Brainstorm as often as possible with teacher, and small class group.

During these periodic conferences, teachers can help instill in the young researcher a critical, analytical attitude towards printed sources and also teach the importance of making clear distinctions among opinions, educated guesses, facts and logical inferences from facts. The teacher can also ascertain whether the student is reading the sources in a semi-passive fashion, absorbing comparatively little.

Student researchers should be reassured that their personal, unifying angles do not have to be completely original. Nor should they fear discovering that one of their sources has anticipated their thesis. The root of the word research is "rechercher", which means "to discover again". Students should also be reassured that they will be given full grade credit for all the work they put into their research projects. Good research takes time! All the thoughtful reviews, reorganizations, new trial outlines, thesis revisions, and new brainstorming sessions are time well-spent! They trigger anew the students' own creative processes.

This whole experience of research and writing from research

is immensely valuable for future college and real-world writing. It takes time and lots of teacher effort, but the achievement will be remembered and the experience used long after many other more trivial essays have been completely forgotten. Furthermore, it is only through creative, critical evaluation of the facts, and reflection upon what their legitimate implications may be, that we rise above the chaotic collection of superficial, capricious opinions and prejudices that we have collected willy-nilly in the course of living on the surface of life.

NOTES

[1]James Suchan, "Library Research for Business Writing Students: A Model," the A.B.C.A. Bulletin, June, 1981, 33.

POST HOC, STATISTICS, AND ANECODOTES: FRESHMAN COMPOSITION AND GPA

by Robert Houston

I

Like other college composition teachers, I have had my professional anxiety attacks, some minor and brief, others major and persistent. Whether out of neglect or resolution, some have passed out of my life. Others, more significant and resistant to self-deception and rationalization, endure. Like my peers I have read the compositions my students have written before, during, and after instruction. And like them I have asked myself if a career such as chicken-sexer isn't possible after post-doctoral study. I have truly wondered if the class hour my students and I worked on FRAG, CS, and FS, could have been better used contemplating questions like, "What is the good life, and what, if anything, does freshman composition have to do with it?" For me and every other writing teacher all of our momentary and

lingering doubts about course objectives, content, strategies and techniques have one source: we want our students to be better writers.

Unlike most other composition teachers, I have a moderate confidence in my ability to read, interpret, and use statistics. Although I have read statistically based studies that evoke Huff's How To Lie With Statistics, I have read others that have contributed significantly to research in composition. Despite knowing what happens when the coefficient of determination and the index of forecasting efficiency are applied to a correlation, I have tried to use numbers to assure myself that I actually am a teacher of writing. I have not always persuaded myself, but I believe I have convinced certain administrators. If the dean or academic vice-president should make the Damoclean charge that I am taking money under false pretenses, I can justify my paycheck by citing F ratios and t-tests and invoking score gains studies. As a tenured associate professor I know there are administrators who falsely believe 87 percent is more precise and meaningful and less symbolic than the word most. Numbers, not words, are the lingui franca for adjudicators of promotion and tenure documents.

When deliberating on my role as a writing teacher, I have tried to identify reasons why freshman composition is required. Part of the rationale, I have decided, has to be based on the presumptions that faculty and administrators have about its impact on the students' writing ability. If it improves their ability, the quality of their written work in their courses should be greater than it would be without instruction. If their written work is improved, they should earn higher grades than they might otherwise. Thus, I reasoned, if I have two groups of students who are equal in composition ability before instruction and one takes freshman composition and the other doesn't, the group receiving instruction should be better writers and consequently earn higher grades. I reasoned further: the higher grades that doubtlessly would be earned by those who took the composition course would be evidence that it effects

beneficial changes. And, necessarily, the higher grades would be oblique evidence of my colleagues' and my ability to teach writing. As a result of my reasoning, one fall quarter in the late 1970s I set out to accumulate the data that would confirm my reasoning and would be irresistible to those administrators who hear a siren's song in numbers.

II

I designated my two groups of freshman students Sample A and Sample B. Sample A took no freshman composition courses; Sample B took the first of two. Sample A earned exemption by taking the original College Level Examination Program (CLEP) General Examination in English Composition, and, with one exception, scoring a minimum of 425 (25th percentile). Sample A's mean score on this CLEP Examination was 530 (63rd percentile), for the national sample it was 498 (50th percentile).

Unfortunately, my two samples each had only 22 students in them. Although I drew the samples from a freshman class of over 2,000, just 15-20 percent of them had taken the American College Testing Program (ACT) English Usage Test. Test experts' reviews and its widespread use by colleges and high schools had convinced me that the ACT was as good as any such test can be as a measure of composition ability. To determine if the composition course affected GPAs, I had to be sure the samples were equal in ability before Sample B took English 101 Composition I. Of the few hundred students who had taken the ACT test only twenty-two exempted students had counterparts who had taken the test and had a similar score. Besides score, they were also matched according to sex and major.

If the Sample A student's Sample B counterpart did not have the exact same score, it was within one standard error of measurement (approximately 2), not standard error of deviation (5.4), of his or her score. Although Sample A's mean score of 22.18 (82nd percentile) was higher than Sample B's 21.32 (76th percentile), the difference was not statistically significant. I applied the F ratio and a t-test to the students' ACT scores and both measures, $F = 1.12$ and $t = 0.844$, confirmed that the two

samples were equal in composition ability. I used the 0.05 level of confidence throughout my study.

Although both Sample A and B were superior to the national student population ($\bar{x}$ = 17.3, 50th percentile) in their ACT English Usage Test scores, the two samples provide a means, otherwise denied, of comparing the GPAs of two groups of students of similar ability who made different course choices. To learn the effect a composition course might have on the GPA of the more typical student, some average students would have to be denied freshman composition and their GPAs compared with those of their peers who did take the course--clearly an impossibility.

Because males and females perform differently on standardized tests and have different GPAs, one of the variables affecting the make-up of the samples was sex. And since students from different fields of study have different test results and GPAs, another was academic discipline. Thus, I matched a Sample A male history major with a Sample B male history major; a Sample A female home economics major with a Sample B female home economics major. Only 6 of the 22 pairs in the samples were not exact matches. Instead of majors, their matches were the students' college at the university. For example, I matched a female theatre major with a female art major from the College of Arts and Humanities.

Sample size and representativeness are important; homogeneity can be equally important. My purpose in this study was to determine if taking a composition course had an impact on academic performance. By implication, if it did, there would be "proof" we composition teachers were doing our job and "evidence" Composition I should remain a required course. As a result of my reasoning and purposes, I presumed that conclusions based on small, homogeneous samples would be more tenable than those based on larger though less homogeneous samples. Having two such samples, I believed, would make conclusions about the one variable that distinguished one sample from the other, freshman composition, as sound as possible.

The two samples should have had different GPAs. As a result of the impact English 101 Composition I had on their writing ability, Sample B's GPAs should have been higher than Sample A's. To find out if any differences in GPA did result from the course work, I determined the samples' GPAs and applied analysis of covariance to them. Although I analyzed their GPAs quarter by quarter and year by year, my analyses of their freshman, sophomore, and junior cumulative GPAs were indicative of my findings.

The two samples' adjusted GPAs at the end of their sophomore year were not significantly different: Sample A $\bar{X}$ = 3.37 vs. Sample B $\bar{X}$ = 3.12, F = 3.38, $p > 0.05$. But there were significant differences in the samples' freshman and junior year adjusted GPAs. Sample A had statistically higher adjusted GPAs: for the freshman year Sample A $\bar{X}$ = 3.36 vs. Sample B $\bar{X}$ = 3.12, F = 4.21, $p < 0.05$; for the junior year Sample A $\bar{X}$ = 3.40 vs. Sample B $\bar{X}$ = 3.08, F = 4.12, $p < 0.05$. Contrary to mine and my colleagues' expectations, Sample B's GPAs were not higher. Consistent with any doubting administrator's expectations were the higher GPAs of Sample A.

However, neither an administrator nor a teacher can be pleased with the only conclusion I can draw from this apparently demographically and statistically sound, yet incomplete study. Before any inferences about a cause and effect relationship between a freshman composition course and student GPAs could be drawn, I should have determined that the students' writing ability was indeed affected by the course by conducting a score gains study. After they took freshman composition, I should have given Sample B an alternate form of the ACT English Usage Test. Any significant positive difference between their pre-course and post-course test scores would have been evidence that learning did occur. Unfortunately, I had no post-course test scores. The data I had acquired was on students who would be graduating at the end of that current academic year. To do my study properly in the future, I must start with fall quarter freshmen, give the composition students a pre- and post-course test, and then

compare GPAs over the next four years. Lacking the assurance that the course does indeed affect ability, the difference in GPA cannot be taken to be oblique evidence that Composition I is or is not effective. No one can say I or my colleagues do or do not teach or that students do or do not learn.

Even though approximately two out of three of Sample A's GPAs were higher than Sample B's, it cannot be assumed that not taking the course worked to their advantage. Perhaps more of their GPAs would have been higher had they taken the course. Perhaps more of Sample B's GPAs might have been lower had they not taken it. Perhaps the proportion of similar GPAs would have remained the same had Sample B not taken Composition I. The role of the course is ambiguous.

IV

Since my attempt to produce irrefutable statistics in support of Composition I failed, I had to seek other means of justifying the course and mine and my colleagues' existence as composition teachers. If numbers are unsuccessful, anecdotes might illustrate and support claims made for English 101. What the students themselves have to say about the course and exemption could provide additional and unique information. My two samples were fall quarter seniors when I polled them.

Twenty-one of the twenty-two Sample A students returned the questionnaires I sent them; fifteen from Sample B returned theirs. The two questionnaires shared questions asking for the usual demographic information on sex, credit hours earned, and GPA. Differences in the samples necessitated differences in other questions. Their opinions on these six major areas were elicited:

1. Their assessment of their writing ability
2. Their assessment of the impact of their writing ability on their GPAs
3. Sample A's opinion of exemption
4. Sample A's assessment of their need for freshman composition

5. Sample B's assessment of the impact of freshman composition on their writing ability
6. Sample B's opinion of freshman composition

The students gave one of five scaled responses to each question. For example, each sample was asked this question: What impact has your writing ability had on your performance in your courses? Their answers could be one of these five: a. No impact; b. Little impact; c. Moderate impact; d. Significant impact; e. Tremendous impact.

No statistical tool such as Chi square could be used to analyze the results of the questionnaires because the samples were too small. Also, I have not given a breakdown of responses in percentages because the naive often apply percentages to their universes, disregarding the sample size which helped shape those percentages. To cite Houston as saying 26 percent of all freshmen taking composition believe it is extremely difficult disregards the fact that out of a universe of over 2,000 only 15 students were sampled and only 4 of them voiced such an opinion. Rather than tediously give the raw data for each question such as the number for each a, b, c, d, or e response for each question for both samples, I have tried to summarize what I believe to be my most important findings.

Sample A students differed sharply from Sample B students in their estimation of their own composition ability; they had a decidedly higher opinion. And their two to one ratio of higher GPAs gives credence to their assessment of their ability and its possible effect on their GPAs. Just as they valued their ability, the majority of Sample A, in contrast to less than half of Sample B, thought writing ability had a tremendous, not merely significant impact on their academic performance. Consistent with their belief was their willingness to take the CLEP test and forgo freshman composition. Although similar in ability to Sample B according to the ACT test, theirs was a distinctly different self-perception which might have caused them to reject the course and be confident in their ability. Instead of rejecting freshman composition out of a smug denial

of any role of writing in college classes, they championed it and willingly had their ability and their confidence in it challenged in the classroom. Other composition teachers and I should take satisfaction in the value Sample A students attribute to composition ability.

The Sample A students did not view exemption and freshman composition as being diametrically opposed, one having merit and one not. Almost one-fourth thought freshman composition could have been of considerable or outstanding value to them. In response to the open-ended question asking for their comments on exemption, many said freshman composition is necessary and valuable particularly if the course focuses on writing, not on grammar or literature. Two of the twenty-one students expressed mild regret about not taking freshman composition, but two others lamented and said no one should be excused from college composition course work. Many students in Sample A said exemption is sound only if the student has had a strong background in English, usually made possible by taking accelerated or demanding high school composition and rhetoric courses.

Even though none of the students in Sample B ranked himself or herself among the ablest of all college writers after taking freshman composition, we composition teachers were sustained in one of our claims for the impact it can have. After taking it, nearly three-fourths thought themselves better than average and none thought himself or herself less than average as did two in Sample A. Nearly one-half of the fifteen Sample B respondents thought freshman composition right for them whereas only two did not think it right. Despite the fact that nearly two-thirds of Sample B's GPAs were significantly lower than Sample A's and only one-third no different from theirs, their support of freshman composition, especially when coupled with Sample A's regard for it, should bolster the confidence we teachers have in the course.

Two of the nine Sample B students were commented on their freshman composition course in their open-ended question said it was the most valuable of all their general education courses. Contrarily, five complained about the content of the course or

lack of instruction by the teacher. Differences in grading standards among instructors and their varying emphasis on expository or narrative writing distressed the students. Some complained they wrote too much; others said they wrote not at all. The students wanted more attention paid to writing essay examinations, term papers, and resumes. Although their responses generally indicated that the Sample B students found freshman composition course work somewhat repetitious and not difficult, their comments indicate concern about what should be and is taught in freshmen composition.

V

There remains this fact: almost two-thirds of Sample A's GPAs were higher than Sample B's. Even if no claim can be made for any effect Composition I had on writing ability, why Sample A's GPAs were consistently higher needs explanation. Conjecture leads inevitably back to speculation on the initial question of whether a composition course can affect students' writing ability. But before it does, the role the students' writing competency plays in a university faculty's evaluation of the students' work should be considered. Doubt in its impact on GPA has been mitigated, however, by the academic performance of the students having the higher estimation of their writing ability as well as a stronger belief in its importance. Additionally, as their questionnaire responses show, two-thirds of all the students from both samples would concur with those who believe composition ability affects classroom performance.

If competency does play a role, perhaps the elements of composition that affect a teacher's marking of an essay examination or research paper might not be those studied in a first term composition course. A course focusing on rhetoric or logic might be more rewarding than one focusing on the rudiments of expository prose and standard edited English. If it provided instruction in writing essay tests and research papers, the course might then more greatly affect academic performance. Or, too, the students may simply need more instruction. They may need to take two composition courses, the second demanding more and better

writing than the first. Rather than the content of the course, changes might possibly need to be effected in instructional strategies and techniques before the course might influence the qualify of the student's writing, just as those in Sample B believe.

Perhaps the relationship of one course with many others is too tenuous to be significant. Despite the sophistication of analysis of covariance, isolating one course and asking it to show an impact on sixty others may be too extreme a request.

Why students who were equal in composition ability and who received composition instruction did not have GPAs at least consistently equal to their peers who received no instruction might not be explained by what does or does not happen in the classroom. More important than freshman composition or the knowledge and skills the student already has might be the student's personality, his or her needs and desires. The self-perception and motivation of the exempted student may differ from that of his or her nonexempted counterpart. Sex, major, and composition ability may be less significant in their relationship to GPA than intellectual curiosity, ambition, or goal-orientation.

Perhaps, after all, I have heeded the moral at the end of Thurber's "The Unicorn in the Garden" fable: "Don't count your boobies until they are hatched." Fortunately for me as a researcher, Sample B did not earn higher GPAs than Sample A. If they had and if I had offered their GPAs as evidence of the claim that instruction in Composition I improves student writing ability, the post hoc fallacy could have added another to its legions. Unfortunately for the course, my colleagues, and me as a teacher, I have no score gains study that would have precluded the post hoc fallacy and satisfied any number fascinated administrator. Irrefutable statistical support for claims of the efficacy of freshman composition I don't have, but supporting anecdotes I do. Although their numbers are few, the students themselves have made positive statements about English 101 and have taken a strong position on the importance of composition ability and its role in academic performance.

A BIBLIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL INFORMATION

by Margaret L. Somers

Lois Debakey says in her seminal article, "The Persuasive Proposal"

> "...effective salesmanship is the basis of most successful human endeavors."

This sums up, in my opinion, the essence of proposal writing. Understanding this simple, but over-riding, principle is basic for the successful proposal writer. However, my goal here is to summarize the information available about proposal writing.

In researching what people are saying about proposal writing, how to do it and how to teach it to other people, I used several avenues. They included:

1. an ERIC search
2. a request for research information from the Big-10 and Big-8 universities
3. a request for proposal information from all the major government agencies and departments, such as NIH and HEW

The ERIC search netted 39 entries from 1978 to the present. Fifteen of these were on proposal writing for higher education, 13 were on general proposals, 6 were in communication, 4 were on writing grant proposals to help children, and 1 was in the arts.

Each of these articles said what Lois Debakey said, only with a specific emphasis in the area of interest. The articles on higher education emphasize bibliographic documentation; the articles in the general area simply emphasize sales; in communication, children, and the arts, the emphasis seems to be on establishing need and community involvement. Each of these articles is helpful and yet, when read as a group, I found them rather diffusive. In other words, I had trouble pin-pointing what they were trying to say except that all of them were saying what Debakey said: sales, sales, sales.

The government information, on the other hand, was intriguingly compact, rigid in its rules and format requirements and extraordinarily complete. The Department of Defense (DOD) had the tersest grant information, the Department of Health and

Human Services (HHC) (formerly the Department of Housing and Education and Welfare (HEW)) had the most complete information. The government agencies and departments seem to know exactly what they expect to see. If a grant proposal writer can show them what they want to see he or she will at least "make the first cut."

On the other hand, the people who sent me things from the Big-8 and the Big-10 schools were very diverse in their information. The school that currently seems to be the most organized and spot-on about grant proposal writing is Kansas State University (KSU) at Manhattan. KSU offers suggestions in pamphlet form, flyer form, (which I had never seen before) and booklet form. The directors of that office, seem to put their own advice into effect in the literature they provide to the KSU faculty. This information, called TIPS, includes the following, which I quote with their permission.

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (cfda0--provides descriptions of all Federal programs, including information on authorizing legislation, purposes, eligibility, appropriations, information contacts, application procedures, award processes, and related programs. Identifies the CFDA number for each program. NOTE: Since the Catalog is published by the Office of Management and Budget (OMD) it often does not include programs for which the Administration has proposed phase-out.

FEDERAL REGISTER--contains the legal publication of all program regulations (proposed and final), announcements of deadlines, funding criteria, etc., for Federal programs. The Federal Register is published daily by the U.S. Government Printing Office.

COMMERCE BUSINESS DAILY (CBD)-- contains announcements of Requests for Proposals (RFP's) and contracts to be awarded by Federal agencies. The CBD is published daily by the U.S. Government Printing Office.

THE GUIDE TO FEDERAL ASSISTANCE--provides current

information (program purpose, eligibility, application process, program contracts, etc.) for more than 200 programs which fund various college and university projects. A two-volume commercial publication updated monthly by Wellborn Associates, Inc.

ANNUAL REGISTER OF GRANT SUPPORT (ARGS)--contains general information on professional association, Federal program, and private foundation support--listed by subject area. Includes many private sources not included in other reference books. Information on Federal funding is not always current. Published annually by Marquis Academic Media.

FOUNDATION DIRECTORY--lists over 2,500 private foundations by state. Provides a brief description of each foundation's interests and scope, with basic information about annual funding, size of grants, officers, board members and the grant application procedures. Published annually by the Foundation Center.

FOUNDATION GRANTS INDEX--includes detailed summaries of grants made the previous year by some 350 of the largest American grantmaking foundations. Published annually by the Foundation Center.

THE FOUNDATION CENTER SOURCE BOOK PROFILES--provides substantive profiles of a factual nature regarding the funding activities of the 500 largest American foundations. Information is updated regularly throughout the year by the Foundation Center.

GRANTS INFORMATION SYSTEM--provides current information about grant programs available from Federal and state governments, private foundations, associations, corporations for research, training, and innovative efforts. Included in the service are monthly editions of the Faculty Alert Bulletin, which are organized in separate interest areas, including creative and performing arts, education, health, humanities, physical and life sciences, and social

sciences. A service of the Oryx Press.

THE TAFT CORPORATE FOUNDATION DIRECTORY--describes and defines more than 300 corporate foundations that are potential sources of money for non-profit institutions. Information includes program contacts, types of grants, areal of interests, size of grants, etc. Published by the Taft Corporation in 1977.

WASHINGTON INFORMATION DIRECTORY--provides easy access to information about which Federal agencies provide which services, and which agencies deal with which kinds of policies. The Directory can help identify who in Washington has the relevant information about a particular topic. Published annually by Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

FEDERAL YELLOW BOOK--contains telephone numbers of most federal officials who direct or administer grant programs. A loose-leaf federal telephone directory published and updated periodically by the Congressional Monitor.

In addition to these general sources, we also have resource materials which provide information about special types of grants, such as fellowships, special interest groups, such as minorities and specific disciplines, such as the arts.

Other materials in our library include books and pamphlets on proposal writing and specific guidelines for numerous Federal programs.

The CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE is the largest and best of the grant scource catalogs. The FEDERAL REGISTER and the COMMERCE BUSINESS DAILY offer contractual sources for grants or what your students might think of as free-lance work. The ANNUAL REGISTER OF GRANT SUPPORT and the FOUNDATION DIRECTORY are non-federal granting agencies. The others on this list are also non-federal supporting agencies. One might want to add the "TIPS" list the DIRECTORY OF RESEARCH GRANTS and the GRANTS REGISTER.

Students looking at this list and understanding the variety of grant requests, as well as grant requirements, might be stimulated to better proposal writing by knowing the variety of audiences and needs that are available.

The best teaching chapter on proposal writing that I have found is Chapter 13, "Proposals," from How to Write for the World of Work (2nd Ed.) Pearsall and Cunningham, Holt-Rinehart Winston, 1982. This chapter breaks down proposals into solicited and unsolicited proposals, gives examples of different kinds of organizations' requirements and, in general, makes available to the student what proposal writing entails. Pearsall and Cunningham reference Frank R Smith, "Engineering Proposals," from Handbook of Technical Writing Practices (Volume 1) edited by Jordan, Klinman and Schimberg, Wiley Press, 1971. However, I think that the Pearsall-Cunningham chapter is more readable than that article and is certainly more to the point for a teacher trying to explain proposal writing to students.

To go back to the Lois Debakey article, she quotes Samuel Johnson as having said, "no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money." That is the beginning and the end of proposal writing. There are a number of good articles available, a bibliography of which I have appended. They all say the same thing, however: sales, information and again sales.

There is now an automatic data search facility available, SPIN (Sponsored Promotion Information Network) that accesses 700 institutions that have grants available. SPIN, unfortunately, uses very broad topic title searches. For example, if you were researching a Shakespearean subject you would ask SPIN for literature and then narrow the request topic further from there. I am confident that SPIN will be used extensively enough to merit expansion and more defined search capacity soon.

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BOOK REVIEW

by Nancy MacKenzie

Charles Bazerman. The Informed Writer. Houghton, Mifflin, 1981, 360 pages.

The Informed Writer is a text that claims to teach "the skills that allow a writer to transform a stack of loosely related sources into an original, well-supported, thoughtful, coherent argument." The book in fact does this and more--and it's the "more" that makes this a unique text, well worth a second look. It does a good job in teaching the mechanics of the research paper--notes, library searches, bibliography--but so do a dozen other texts on the market today.

What's unique about The Informed Writer is the emphasis it puts on that otherwise neglected but crucial part of researching a paper: reading skills, skills we rarely try to teach in any organized way: paraphrasing, summarizing, reacting by means of annotation, analyzing the author's purpose, and reviewing a book, show, or product. The first three of these are skills we demand of students, but never fully or methodically teach them. And they are skills that can make the difference between a solid, intelligent paper and a tedious string of quotations.

Each of these five chapters explains the technique and gives good, usable exercises. The chapters are full of examples which are carefully chosen to develop a single subject. For instance, the chapter on summarizing uses a series of examples drawn from the field of sleep research, and the student is guided toward seeing the need to make sense of different, sometimes conflicting sources. The examples are also well-chosen in that they are unusual for composition texts, and hence are a breath of fresh air for teachers and students alike.

Those opening five chapters make the book a different and an exciting text. Part II is called "Using Sources Creatively," and deals with comparing one's reading with personal experience, comparing and synthesizing sources, and actually writing the research paper. These chapters are good, if less unique, and they work in the classroom quite well. The combination of

reading plus personal experience, for example, can generate a very useful short paper as one step on the way to the full-blown research paper.

The emphasis throughout on the real use of sources--not just the mechanics of footnoting them--is the book's strong point. It performs a real service by showing the student how to integrate reading and writing, and shows reading as a crucial part of the prewriting phase. We recommend the book very highly for use in a second composition course, since it does not deal with the basics of organization and style.

BOOK REVIEW OF EVERGREEN

by Deanna D. Evans

Susan Fawcett and Alvin Sandberg, Evergreen: A Guide to Writing. Second Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. Pp. xii, 414; 12 black-and-white photos. $?. Available to instructor: Instructor's Manual and Instructor's Package.

During the past decade college and community colleges throughout the country have introduced and/or increased course offerings in developmental writing; as a consequence, many new basic writing textbooks and workbooks have been published within the last few years. One of the most complete and effective is Evergreen: A Guide to Basic Writing by Susan Fawcett and Alvin Sandberg (Houghton Mifflin, 1980). This combination textbook-workbook focuses on effective paragraph writing and has become the required text for basic writing courses on many campuses as it was at Bemidji State University, the institution where I teach, during the 1983-84 academic year. Instructors who have used Evergreen and believe it to be an excellent text may be disappointed to learn that an enlarged, revised second edition

is in the college bookstores this fall. A thorough comparison of the two editions, however, indicates that the revised text is as satisfactory as the original as a basic writing text and provides a better grammar and spelling review.

Evergreen: A Guide to Writing, second edition, as its predecessor, is a large, spiral-bound, soft cover text. The publisher provides the instructor with an Instructor's Manuel, similar in format to the manual which came with the first edition; it contains teaching suggestions, chapter notes, and answer keys. A new, additional teaching tool is being offered with the second edition, an Instructor's Package; it was designed by Yolanda Stratham and the authors and consists of 174 $8\frac{1}{2}$" x 11" looseleaf pages, which the instructor is invited to reproduce mechanically; these contain supplemental instruction sheets and additional practice exercises with answer keys.

The most obvious changes to the text itself are its new black cover and its increased thickness. Perusal of the table of contents indicates that the revised text contains more chapters on grammar and sentence structure and a new unit on spelling. In addition, it contains an index by rhetorical mode of paragraphs and essays used in the text as "models." The print size also seems somewhat larger as do the blank spaces; these changes should help the student with reading difficulties. Moreover, many pages contain photographs, which not only add visual interest, but also make a substantive contribution to the text; they are used to reinforce the exposition (the photograph of a yak on p. 81 illustrates the concept of "class" definition) or to provide the subject matter for writing topics (the photograph of the man in the "Pizza Joe" hat on p. 67 is the basis for a spatially-ordered descriptive paragraph).

In spite of such visible changes and additions, the instructor who uses Evergreen primarily as a textbook about writing will find few substantive changes. The first four units (pp. 3-260) still focus on the writing process and contain virtually the same information that they contained in the first edition, as well as some of the same examples, exercises, and assignments.

Unit I still defines the paragraph and stresses the need for a topic sentence and coherence; the student is still taught to focus the subject and to make a pre-writing "jot" list; (in the second edition the process is labeled brainstorming). Unit 2 still consists of seven chapters, each introducing a particular mode of development and containing a "check list" and suggested topics for student paragraphs. The seven modes are presented as follows: illustration, description, process, definition, comparison and contrast, classification, and persuasion. The most apparent modification to this unit is the deletion of the material on analogy, which was treated as a special kind of comparison in the first edition (Chapter 7). However, much of the analogy material is retained in the discussion of simile in Chapter 12 (pp. 196-200) of the second edition. Unit 3, which contains the discussion of metaphor and simile, has been somewhat expanded. This unit, focusing on ways to improve the paragraph, concentrates on diction; avoiding triteness; consistency in tense, number, person, and discourse; sentence variety; and principles of revision. Unit 4 remains much as it was. In this useful section, the student is shown that the modes of paragraph development can be used to organize short essays; it contains as well chapters on how to write introductory and concluding paragraphs and how to answer essay questions.

As this analysis of the first two-thirds of the text shows, Evergreen, second edition, is substantively the same writing text. Alterations and modifications that do occur are improvements. The concept of an analogy was confusing to many basic writing students and, consequently, has been deleted. Minor changes in the exposition also are improvements. For example, in Chapter 1 of both editions, the student is led through the process of creating a paragraph with a topic sentence about a sloppy person named Pete. In the first edition, the topic sentence reads, "Pete is one of the sloppiest people I know." In the revised edition the sentence has been replaced with this less personal, more objective sentence, "Pete's sloppiness is a terrible habit." A few "model" paragraphs have been changed as well, presumably because the

subject matter may be of more interest to students from economically deprived backgrounds. A spatially-ordered paragraph on the youth of John D. Rockefeller, for example, has been replaced with one about life in a tenement. Most of the "model" paragraphs from the first edition have been retained, however.

The second edition differs most drastically from the original in the last two units. Unit 5, "Reviewing the Basics," has grown from nine to eleven chapters. Three are on sentence structure; the excellent table on coordinate and subordinate sentence patterns from the first edition (p. 145) has been included (pp. 278-279) and is followed by a useful sentence-combining practice. Unit 6, "Improving Your Spelling," is new to the second edition and most useful. It consists of two chapters: Chapter 28 contains ten parts and includes several rules and exercises for such spelling problems as when to double the final consonant or to drop the final E. The last Chapter includes a glossary of look-alikes/sound-alikes, including such perennial problems as past/passed and it's/its.

As the comparison between the two editions shows, the revised edition is more than a repackaged, more expensive version of the original; it is a good text made better. While the excellent guide to paragraph writing of the first edition is retained along with instruction on organizing a short essay and answering essay questions in the first two third of the text, the expanded section on grammar and sentence construction and the additional unit on spelling result in Evergreen, second edition, being a more complete text-workbook for the basic writing student. With the supplementary assignments included in the Instructor's Package, the instructor of a basic writing course should not need any other text.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

IDEAS FOR TEACHERS FROM TEACHERS:

ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS

by Diane Allen

from the National Council of Teachers of English Publication Date: April 14, 1983

NATIONAL CLASSROOM IDEA EXCHANGE NOW AVAILABLE IN BOOK FORM

Elementary school teachers, on their feet before a class for six hours every day, consume ideas for learning activities at an astonishing rate. To help teachers in their constant search for ways to engage children in using and learning the language arts, the National Council of Teachers of English has stepped up its efforts to foster coast-to-coast sharing.

Ideas for Teachers from Teachers: Elementary Language Arts, just off the press, grew out of a popular NCTE Convention tradition, the Classroom Idea Exchange, which for seven years has enabled teachers from throughout the U.S. to trade written descriptions of their favorite classroom activites. The book presents 122 suggestions from more than one hundred teachers. Included are ideas for teaching reading, writing, word study, vocabulary development, spelling, grammar, usage, punctuation, observing, and evaluating.

Additional sections, "Getting to Know Each Other" and "The First Five Minutes--and the Last," feature language activities that dispel the tensions of the first day of school, encourage interaction, focus the attention of a roomful of first- or sixth-graders, and end a long day in upbeat fashion. An element of play is present in many of these activities, fostering the belief that using and learning language is an enjoyable part of everyday life. Most of these ideas from teachers are designed for briefer time-spans, but a few can extend over several weeks. Cartoons that can be shared with the class illustrate a number of the activities.

(94 pages, paperbound. Price: $5.50; NCTE members, $4.50. ISBN: 0-8141-2246-9. LC: 83-4175. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 22469.)

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

QUESTIONING: A PATH TO CRITICAL THINKING

by Leila Christenbury and Patricia P. Kelly

FROM ERIC/RCS AND NCTE: AN AID TO BETTER QUESTIONING

Every teacher's aim is to ask the kinds of questions that spark lively discussion. But questioning is a learned act. A new booklet in the Theory and Research Into Practice Series helps teachers draw on findings from research on questioning to polish their classroom techniques. Questioning: A Path to Critical Thinking was prepared by Leila Christenbury and Patricia P. Kelly, both of whom have taught English at the high school and college levels. It is published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English.

The authors offer a concise survey of current knowledge about the teaching potential of various types of questioning. They review the literature on hierarchies of types of questioning, such as Benjamin Bloom's sequence ranging from "to know" through "to apply" and "to evaluate." And they discuss the uses and limitations of such hierarchies for organizing language arts instruction, as revealed through research. Among the findings: heavy concentration on higher-order questions doesn't necessarily enhance student learning. Through their behavior, teachers may inadvertently defeat their own purposes in questioning, for instance, by giving students no more than a second or two to respond.

Christenbury and Kelly show how teachers can use the concept of the questioning circle to evolve flexible inquiry techniques. They show how the circle concept can be applied to questioning in literature, composition, and language study and offer further suggestions for improving one's questioning strategies. Rounding out the booklet is a series of games to help students learn to generate their own questions.

(Available from the National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois. 33 pages, paperbound. Price: $3.50; NCTE members, $3.00. Stock No. 38047.)

NOTES

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.

Manuscripts should be submitted to the editor. Please use an approved style sheet, either APA or MLA. Footnotes should be included in the text if possible. Manuscripts should be 7-18 pages, typed double-spaced.

The editor prefers manuscripts that exploit the theme chosen for the given issue. Themes for the coming year will appear in the Winter/Spring issue of the preceding year and be posted at the MCTE booth during the annual Spring convention. Prospective contributors may write the editor to request a statement of themes for the year. Enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply.

The editor will make every effort to acknowledge receipt of a manuscript within two (2) weeks and to inform the contributor of its acceptance or rejection within 60 days. Include with the manuscript a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The editor reserves the right to accept or reject a manuscript. The editor may return a manuscript to request its revision. The editor may make minor changes in the manuscript without consulting the contributor.

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