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Jon Hassler's "Thanatopsis" as Seen by Miles Pruitt in *Staggerford*

by
Georgia Sarroub

Staggerford, the story of a thirty-five-year-old high school teacher, reveals the humor and tragedies in the lives of the people in a small Minnesota town in the late 1970's. Behind the simplicity of the plot and delineation of characters emerges superbly the theme of death. Dominating the story, this theme is introduced early with a direct reference to the words "Thanatopsis,' which brings to mind William Cullen Bryant's well-known poem and invites a comparison between his view of death and Hassler's view.

Miles Pruitt teaches English in Staggerford High School and lodges at the house of Miss McGee, his ex-elementary school teacher and a devout Christian, who has taught in a Catholic grade school for forty-one years. Because Miles was born and has spent his life in Staggerford, he knows all the townspeople, the students and staff, and the Indians from the neighboring reservation. Staggerford, however, has little to offer for excitement to the young and old alike, and Miles, more than anyone else, must fight harder against the dullness of everyday life. As the years go by, his loneliness grows more acute and plunges him into a quiet despair that becomes part of him, a daily companion.

One day, a modern Indian uprising occurs, during which the Indians occupy the Staggerford football field, seeking to avenge the beating of the chief's boy by a white student. The whole town is on alert, perhaps for the first time in its history. As the Indian affair reaches its climax, Miles, too, reaches his personal crisis, for he encounters his final death inflicted by the Bonewoman, the last in a series of women involved with him. The other five are, in order of sequence, Miss McGee, Carla Carpenter, Anna Thea Workman, Imogene Kite, and Beverly Bingham.

In addition to the word "Thanatopsis" —the name Miles has intentionally given to Anna Thea — the theme of death is reinforced by multiple references to death, especially in the first chapter, and, most importantly, with the apparition of the Bonewoman, "the scavenger" and "crow, picking over carrion" (42). The presence of the Bonewoman foreshadows Miles's death, whereas the wordplay with "Thanatopsis" is cunningly used by the author, who encompasses all the women playing an important role in Miles's life in the persona of a female character. One by one these women

influence Miles and contribute to the different types of death he undergoes before he finally reaches physical death. Thus, through his relationship with women Miles experiences the death of his religion, of teenage and mature love, and the death of his sexuality.

While continuously facing this "Thanatopsis" or view of death, however, Miles adopts and employs, as a means of self-defense, a stoic optimism and genuine desire for survival. While accepting the imminence of death, he believes in the goodness of life on earth and in the value of perpetuating the immortality of the human spirit. Thus, in the persona of Beverly Bingham—his spiritual replacement—he experiences "Thanatopsis" promising resurrection, and he leaves the world peacefully, convinced more than ever of the goodness of the human nature. Unlike William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), whose poem "Thanatopsis" advocates a stoic pessimism and excludes the resurrection of the soul, in *Staggerford* Hassler, all the while criticizing the role of Catholicism and Christianity, emphasizes the need for spiritual survival. The author's statement, considering the turbulence of the last decades of the twentieth century, is refreshing and welcomed. His is a statement devoid of dogmatism and emanating from the simple truths learned from day-to-day living.

In this paper, I will present Miles Pruitt and his "Thanatopsis" as experienced through the relationship with women and his victory over death as he succeeds in perpetuating his spirit in Beverly Bingham. Also, using Bryant's "Thanatopsis" for comparison, I will discuss the importance of Hassler's message in *Staggerford.*

Miles loses his religion at the age of twenty-five, and the woman associated with this loss, though not causing it, is Miss McGee, who along with the nuns, used to march Miles to church every morning. During his second year in Miss McGee's house and after a vigorous practice of fasting on Fridays, Miles experiences the death of his faith:

> Miles had been reared by Catholic parents and educated by sisters and monks, but ten years ago, at the age of twenty-five, he had lost his faith in the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and Life Everlasting. He had lost the whole works. His faith had not been crushed by a disillusioning experience; it had not been argued away by a glib heretic; it had simply evaporated.(25)

Miss McGee tries in vain to restore Miles' faith and persuade him to attend Sunday mass, but her outdated way of worshiping, instead of attracting Miles to church, keeps him away. Rejecting all the innovations in the Catholic Mass, Miss McGee refuses to say her prayers in English, and she still uses her old missal in which most of the Latin prayers are obsolete. But she would rather be wrong half the time than

> give up these 1272 double-column pages of litanies, vigils, introits and collects, with the Latin and English printed side by side — the frozen Latin looking as archaic and attractive on the page as it used to sound on the lips of the priest

> when he would turn his back on the congregation and raise hands and his voice and implore the bronze figure over the high altar to come down again from the cross. Priests did not do that anymore. Now they faced the congregation and celebrated on what Miss McGee called the high picnic table. (96)

Thus, with her peculiar remarks, Miss McGee further reinforces Miles determination not to attend Sunday mass.

Miles' loss of religion was preceded by the loss of his adolescent love. At the age of eighteen, he had fallen in love with Carla Carpenter, a dark beauty who spent the beginning of her senior year in the convent, having earlier decided to become a nun. Miles and Carla shared the same dreams, and one day Miles asked her to marry him. Miles, in all his innocence, believed in Carla and considered himself a winner, in spite of his family's disapproving of the relationship. He soon, however, learned that "everything in life (is) subject to change—without notice" (129), for he caught his sweetheart and his brother together in a hotel room in Minneapolis. That day Miles, his eyes burning with tears, buried his adolescent love along with his torn suit, a reminder of his broken heart.

The torn suit, shredded by the bandsaw in Carla's garage, is associated with the event that foreshadowed the death of Miles' first love. One night Miles, intending to make love to Carla took his suit off and placed it on the bandsaw, in which the suit got tangled, and Carla's father could free it only by cutting it to pieces. Carla was, of course, responsible for turning the bandsaw on accidentally and for killing Miles' first love.

Carla's further development into a grotesque individual, an exact replica of her mad mother, convinced Miles of the death of a dream in which he once had ardently believed. In Carla's face, young Miles had a view of death, a "Thanatopsis" that crystalized in his mind and became associated with the faces of all the women he would come close to. This "Thanatopsis," along with the pain, instilled in his heart a doubt that haunted him and shook his beliefs in the validity of life.

His failure to propose marriage to Anna Thea Workman comes from the "Thanatopsis" he experienced with Carla; only this time Miles voices his inner thoughts, insisting on calling Anna Thea "Thanatopsis" and attributing his choice of name to the existence of too many *Th's* in Anna Thea's name. In his conversation with Miss McGee, Miles hides the true meaning of "Thanatopsis":

> "I've called her nothing but Thanatopsis since she moved to town. The first few times I met her, I kept forgetting what her real name was, and all I could remember was that it had a lot of vowels and *Th's* in it, and the word Thanatopsis always came to mind."

"Her name is Anna Thea."

"I know that now. But I like Thanatopsis better. It fits her."

"It does not fit her. Thanatopsis is Greek for 'view of death.'

"I know what it is Greek for." (48)

Miles falls in love with Anna Thea, a talented home economics teacher whose dark hair has "a tinge of sable in it," and who "would make somebody a nifty wife" (29). But he waits too long, pondering perhaps over whether this Thanatopsis can inflict the same wounds the two others had:

> After dating her several times, Miles began to think about marriage; but Miles's thoughts were generally long thoughts, and before he came to a decision Thanatopsis Hayworth married Wayne Workman who came to town as the new high school principal. So now she was Anna Thea Workman, though Miles still called her Thanatopsis; and to this day she taught home ec across the hall from Miles's classroom, and Miles was still in love with her. (29-30)

For Miles, seeing Anna Thea at school means encountering death every day; this is the reason he insists on calling her Thanatopsis. Failing to marry Anna Thea has brought upon him the death of all the dreams he has as a mature man: a wife, a happy home, children. By losing her, he loses a "treasure" as he states in his discussion with dentist Oppegaard:

> "And what do you think of Thanatopsis Workman. I mean as a woman isn't she a treasure?
>
> "Miles, are you drunk?"
>
> "All I want to know is what you really think of Thanatopsis Workman."
>
> "You mean Anna Thea?"
>
> "Yes, but Anna Thea is her nickname; her real name is Thanatopsis, and it makes her husband angry when everybody calls her Anna Thea."
>
> "Her real name is Thanatopsis?"
>
> "Yes, isn't she a treasure?" (87)

This dialogue takes place at Wayne Workman's house during the Halloween party at which Miles drinks heavily. But it is perhaps a unique occasion for Miles to reveal

thoughts that he would never reveal under any other circumstances. Thus, while still talking to dentist Oppegaard, he gives his most honest opinion about Imogene Kite, the thirty-year-old librarian and his frequent companion:

> "And what do you think of Imogene Kite? Doesn't she remind you of young Abraham Lincoln?"
>
> "Miles, you are drunk."
>
> "She is a rail splitter if I ever saw one," (74)

As all the other women in Miles's life, Imogene represents a different type of "Thanatopsis" in whose presence he experiences the death of his sexual desire. As director of the Staggerford Public Library, Imogene has developed into a "walking encyclopedia" whose company is "only slightly more exciting than solitude" (74). Miles and Imogene sit together "at football games, lectures, cantatas, and funerals for years" (29). She is, however, "too tall and bloodless to be attractive and Miles noticed that as she edged into her thirties, she was developing the features of a turkey, a tom" (29).

Throughout the years, Miles has never touched Imogene except for one night when, deep in sorrow for having lost Anna Thea he grasps her by the shoulders and kisses her hard on the mouth. The kiss, like the seal of death upon Miles's mouth, becomes the reason for even Miss McGee to ridicule Miles, for she breaks into an "uncontrollable laugh" and exclaims, "How dreadful" (44).

Indeed, Miles's life is dreadful. Staggerford has little to offer to a single man of Miles's age. The irreparable losses he has experienced and the boredom he encounters in everyday life plunge him into a depressive mood, leading him to ask himself whether or not life is worth living. In addition to the view of death he has had by associating with his various women friends, Miles feels the presence of death in everything that surrounds him, like the dying leaves on the ground, the dying ferns in Miss McGee's yard, the dying man in the back of the Hub, the gigantic oil paintings of cancer of the mouth, the funeral that takes place on Friday, and the cemetery where he visits the graves of his mother and of Mr. Vandergar, the teacher who dies of cancer.

Miles's choosing to wear Lyle Kite's green ranger uniform to Wayne Workman's Halloween party is not coincidental. Lyle Kite had died years ago, and Miles asks Mrs. Kite to lend him the uniform. By wearing the dead man's clothes, Miles expresses the true state of his mind, for he considers himself a dead man, at least spiritually. His choice also indicates his stoic attitude towards death and his acceptance of its imminence. In contrast, superintendent Stevenson, who has spent most of his uneventful life fearing a heart attack, he flees the house, abandoning the party and the company, as soon as he sets his eyes upon the dead man's clothes.

By becoming familiar with "Thanatopsis" and by accepting it as part of gaining experience and reaching maturity, Miles succeeds in overcoming the pain, and in being able to look beyond death, into a sphere of existence where there is hope for spiritual renewal and resurrection of the spirit. The opportunity for renewal comes to Miles in the person of Beverly Bingham, the daughter of Clarence Bingham, the Chippewa Indian, and of Corrinne Kaiser or Bonewoman.

Beverly Bingham, a senior in Staggerford High School and the second best student in her class, regards Miles as an anchor that will save her from her insane mother who walks around with a gun, ready to shoot not only the rats that eat her chickens but any individual who trespasses on her property. Her mother's insanty and the miserable living conditions at home drive Beverly towards Miles, who, in her eyes, is the teacher, the father, the friend, and the lover figure.

Beverly, with her dark beauty, her scholarly achievement, her cigarettes, her unkempt clothes, and her spontaneity resembles a wild flower bud sprung out of the Bonewoman's dirt yard, a flower that, given proper care, could blossom into full beauty and maturity. "I wish you and I could be in love with each other" (104), Beverly tells Miles, as she kisses him quickly on the cheek and asks, "Mr. Pruitt, is there any chance you'll fall in love with me ?" (105).

Beverly's words bring about an awakening in Miles, an uplifting of the spirit that had remained dead for a long time and a warm feeling in the heart. So the day Miles read Beverly's composition paper,

> her handwriting conveyed, like a photograph, the blush of her cheeks, the blue of her eyes, and he felt his heart do the same trick Thanatopsis Workman always made it do. It leaped a little. He was dismayed and delighted—mostly dismayed. Don't tell me I'm falling in love with Beverly Bingham, he said to himself, don't tell me that. (110)

In Beverly's presence Miles experiences a "Thanatopsis" with hope for resurrection and continuity of spiritual renewal. The possibility of renewal strikes Miles so suddenly that he has difficulty believing in it, and only as time goes by does Miles become convinced that whether it is for love, for pity, or for need of help, Beverly holds the key to the understanding of his new existence, the link to a more meaningful future, one with promise for new interests and a more definite purpose. The last words of Beverly's "What I Wish" paper lead Miles into a self-examination and a re-evaluation of the past, for her words help him not only draw parallels between Beverly and other women but also define the role he is going to play in her life:

> So there's a lot of things I wish. I wish my dad had had a normal life and I wish my mother was normal and I wish I knew where my sister was and I wish I lived in a house where the birds didn't fly around upstairs and I wish I knew what was going to happen to me in the future. Please help me Mr. Pruitt. (111)

Miles starts helping Beverly by advising her to apply for a scholarship and plan to enroll in a junior college. As Beverly's admiration and love for him grow deeper so does Mile's acceptance of her love. One day during class discussion, Beverly refers to Miles as the most accomplished person she knows in her life, thus making her love known to her classmates. Upon Beverly's saying his name, the students "turned to look at Beverly, who was gazing at her teacher with such bald admiration that Miles blushed. The class saw the blush. They looked back at Beverly and saw in her blue eyes that she loved him" (235).

Miles's most positive influence upon Beverly shows in her firm faith in the future. While reviewing *Gone With the Wind,* Beverly emphasizes Scarlett's inspiring words, "Tomorrow is another day." Beverly points out that Scarlett is right to believe in tomorrow "because it's the only thing a person can do when everything else goes wrong" (237).

Nothing can go more wrong for Beverly than Miles's death. He is killed by the Bonewoman, who during the Indian uprising defends her territory and has vowed to kill the first man who sets foot in it. Upon seeing Miles lying dead in the muddy yard, the sorrow-stricken Beverly makes "a noise she had never heard before, a faint, high warble from the bottom of her soul, from somewhere further back than her birth—the anthem of the crushed spirit, the keen of the widow" (276).

In his first encounters with the Bonewoman, in both Miss McGee's and the superintendent's house, Miles sees a "Thanatopsis" that freezes his heart. He senses

> that the Bonewoman had somehow brought to the neighborhood the shadows and frost of the end of October—that by walking through the garden she was somehow hastening its decay, its freezing, its cover of snow. . . .(T)he Bonewoman called a sense of the end of things. Shadows and frost and the end of things. (42)

Indeed she ends Miles's life at the moment he and Beverly enter into a new life cycle, one full of hope and promise.

Among all the women Miles associates with, only Beverly feels deep sorrow after his death. But Miles's spirit joins that of Beverly, who, crushed by pain, sings the centuries-old lament that hundreds of generations repeat through eternity. Beverly takes Miles's place at Miss McGee's house and life in Staggerford, interrupted for a while by rather uncommon events, seems to take its usual course as noted in Miss McGee's words:

"You must dress now, Beverly, and come down and help me with supper." Beverly slowly nodded. "Today will be our only absence from school, Beverly. Tomorrow you and I go back on our regular schedules." (289)

Thus, Miles succeeds in perpetuating his spirit in Beverly, the woman in whom he saw a "Thanatopsis" promising resurrection.

Almost two hundred years ago, William Cullen Bryant wrote his best known poem, "Thanatopsis." Both authors share the belief that since death is imminent, one must approach life stoically, calmly awaiting and preparing for death to come. Bryant's stoicism, however, is too pessimistic, for it emphasizes the integration of the material human body with nature while it fails to point out the existence of the spirit and the importance of preserving its immortality:

> . . . Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
> Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
> And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
> Thine individual being, shalt thou go
> To mix forever with the elements,
> To be a brother to the insensible rock
> And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
> Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
> Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mold. (lines 23 - 30)

Hassler's approach to death conforms more with the Christian belief according to which despair and constant fear of death can be overcome by a continuous commitment to productive living and by helping others. Thus, Miles remains calm and unflinching under suffering. Also by instilling hope into Beverly, Miles scores a victory over death, for while his material body joins the natural elements, his spirit is perpetuated in Beverly.

As we reach the end of the twentieth century, and because we live under the constant fear of a collapse of the economy, of fatal epidemics and, ultimately, of a nuclear holocaust, we welcome Hassler's depiction of his theme. Miles, the antihero, defies death in order to survive—with humor and dignity.

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The Return of Agatha McGee: Self-Acceptance in John Hassler's *A Green Journey*

by
George S. Larson

"Things throw light on things"—this phrase from Theodore Roethke has an almost magical significance for Agatha McGee, the protagonist of Jon Hassler's *A Green Journey*. It suggests the possibility of epiphanies, moments of insight which allow individuals to see themselves and their existence in ways they have not before. Although Agatha would probably acknowledge that she has had her share of these moments, she very likely does not perceive the insight still to come to her.

During the course of *A Green Journey*, Agatha reaches the end of her career as a sixth grade teacher at Staggerford's St. Isidore's School. Taking stock of her accomplishments as retirement approaches, Agatha is not at all sure that her priorities have been well placed. (Actually, they have, but Agatha does not herself fully realize this until later.)

Except for her college years, Agatha McGee has lived her entire life in Staggerford, having taught at St. Isidore's for forty-six years. A concerned and demanding teacher, she tries to shape her students' lives so they will reflect the values she cherishes. As the novel opens, for instance, she befriends her former student Janet Raft, now pregnant and unmarried. In fact, her involvement with Janet during the time of the child's birth and the weeks immediately after cause Agatha to wonder if she has missed something in life. Such thoughts also make her think about the direction her life should take in the future. Could this future, she seems to ask herself, include James O'Hannon, a teacher in Ireland—or so he has identified himself—with whom she has corresponded for several years? To grasp the significance of the personal crisis Agatha faces, one must first examine her character, then assess the reasons for her seeming dissatisfaction with her life, note the romantic fantasies she nourishes and finally observe the insight she receives into herself, confirming that she has actually lived her life rightly, guided by what is consistent in her nature.

Agatha's principal traits include her awareness of her slightly elevated social standing in the town of Staggerford, her commitment to conservative doctrines and practices within Catholicism, and her determination to shape events and people so that they

conform to her vision of how things should be. In some ways as an only child—her brother died when she was very young—Agatha is the daughter of an educated and prosperous Staggerford couple. Her father, the town's first lawyer, also served in the state senate, and Agatha still resides in the commodious family home on River Street, Staggerford's prestigious avenue of impressive older homes. Her relatively independent life has not required her to adapt herself to others very frequently, and this gives her a conviction of the correctness of her own views.

It is this conviction that makes Agatha such a formidable opponent for fellow Catholics of a more liberal persuasion. "Her heart," Hassler writes, "had been broken countless times since Vatican II" (28). "In the old days," she muses, "you never judged Catholic ritual—a Mass was a Mass. But nowadays, churchgoing could be a horrifying surprise—guitars on the altar, female acolytes, charismatics babbling in tongues" (6). It is, in fact, her disgust for changes implemented by Vatican II which leads to her correspondence with James O'Hannon. Having subscribed to the conservative international newspaper *The Fortress*, she notes in it a letter from James reflecting views similar to her own and she initiates the correspondence.

Currently, her major course of frustration within the Church is her new bishop, Richard Baker, or "Dick," as he asks his parishioners to call him. He closes church schools, changes worship ritual, and strips churches of adornments. But worse is coming. One Sunday morning Agatha's Father Finn reads a letter from Bishop Baker:

> "Beginning immediately, I intend to stop visiting the parishes of the diocese for Confirmation. All joy and spontaneity have gone out of this wonderful, meaningful sacrament. It has become a rote exercise. From now on I will confirm the souls entrusted to me only when those souls come to me as individuals and ask to be confirmed. They may do this at any time." (69)

Agatha acts on this invitation. After determining the least convenient time to call on him—during his Sunday evening card game—she brings a dozen of Staggerford's youth to ask for Confirmation.

Such persistence, determination, and conviction of the justness of her own views has characterized Agatha throughout her life. Janet Raft's father, for instance, remembers, years after the fact, his discomfort when Agatha pointedly indicated that he had dribbled on her windows and foundation when painting her house. In fact, after bringing the pregnant Janet to Agatha's at the beginning of the novel, Frank Raft still obviously thinks of Agatha as a teacher, for he "paused for further instruction" and then "fled across the porch" (2). Even Agatha's conversation conveys something of the imperious: "answer me this" she often asks as though she were drawing a response out of a slightly recalcitrant student. Agatha's mettle surfaces again when Stephen, Janet's son and the first baby of the year, is not recognized as such because of his illegitimacy. Through Agatha's arm twisting, the town merchants do eventually come across with the appropriate gifts and prizes.

For much of her life, Agatha McGee has been comfortable as guarantor of Staggerford's manners and mores. But presently she is no longer so satisfied with her life. Perhaps because of her involvement with Janet, perhaps because retirement is near, perhaps because she must find some way to occupy her leisure time, she becomes more reflective than usual. After Janet and Stephen leave her home, she must admit that there's something lacking in her routine. Hassler states that "normally she found schoolwork absorbing, but this afternoon it struck her as vaguely tiresome. The first thing she had to correct was a spelling test—how paltry compared to helping a new life into the world" (21). And later, when she sits down with *Economic Geography for Young Readers*, "she wished she had something more interesting to do with her evening" (23). Her disillusionment deepens:

> After all these years of showing the way, she had lost faith in herself as standard-bearer. Just as her teaching career struck her as depressingly plain in retrospect, so her efforts to improve people's lives, or at least to keep these lives from deteriorating, seemed ineffectual. (96)

A conversation with Frank Raft gives her further pause for thought. When Agatha inquires why he calls a chokecherry a tree rather than a bush, he laconically answers:

> "If I'm ever in doubt about how much credit to give a thing, I always give it more, to be on the safe side. . . ."
>
> Yes, (thinks Agatha) that was always your way, wasn't it?
> *Always too easy going, always soft in your judgments*—she left this part unspoken.
>
> "And you, Miss McGee, you always give it less, ain't I right?" (36)

Agatha eventually counters in her "most self-assured tone: 'As for my high standards, it's my nature, Francis. It's much easier to live your life according to your nature than to go against it'" (37). Agatha's comment here is particularly interesting since she is in the process of going against her nature—or rather, not respecting enough as she tries to assess her life.

Reflecting on her teaching, she finds it doesn't give the satisfaction she expected. She had (50) "improved the minds of over twelve hundred twelve year olds, and that was certainly nice to know, but what did she have to show for it but gradebooks?" And when little Stephen finds her forbidding (51) shes wonders, "Why is everyone so formal with me?"

Given her understandable uncertainty about her life's focus — everyone goes through this kind of questioning — it is not strange that Agatha wonders if her friendship with James O'Hannon — thus far only through letters — might not offer her something she

has not yet experienced. Perhaps the possibility of marriage crosses her mind. We learn that "the reason Agatha had never married was that when she was young and had the opportunities she hadn't felt the need, and later, feeling the need, she had no opportunities" (7). When she was twenty-five she had turned down a proposal from Preston Warner, a farmer, because he was not in her social class. Agatha's reflections about this proposal suggest that marriage was never the highest priority for her, regardless of what she might think at the present: "'I was born to teach, not to churn,' she had said, not realizing that he was her last chance, though it's doubtful that realizing it would have changed her mind. She loved classrooms. Barns made her sneeze" (7).

But now she muses about romance with James. His letters "(give) her heart a little kick," and she anticipates them so eagerly that she rips them open at the mailbox (24). Such eagerness, even excluding the possibility of romance, is most understandable. Living in a small town, slightly aloof from others because of her background and education, Agatha obviously needs someone to whom she can pour out her feelings, especially when her correspondent shares her own conservative views.

Thus, when the opportunity to join a tour to Ireland arises, she accepts, even though it is led by Bishop "Dick" Baker and will include her shallow and garrulous neighbor, Lillian Kite. Although she pretends she is going to trace her Irish ancestry, Agatha is really going to see James. So pleased with the prospect is she, that Hassler tells us that "not for anyone's sake would she give up this adventure, never mind if rumors of romance drifted back to the townspeople who had been watching her every action since she was seven years old. . ." (89).

One suspects Agatha may even relish rumors of such a romance. Of course she vigorously denies this when she tells Janet of her correspondence with James:

> "Janet, I have to tell you something. There's a man in Dublin I'm going to be seeing."
>
> "There is?"
>
> "He's a teacher. He lives in a small town not far from the city. We've been corresponding for four years, and tomorrow evening. . . It's a correspondence that. . . You see, Janet . . ." She fell silent . She felt confused. Never in her adult life had she been at a loss for words.
>
> "What's his name?"
>
> "James O'Hannon. You have seen his picture on my desk at home. He's . . ."
>
> Janet looked at her curiously in the amber light. "Yes, I've seen it. I thought it was your cousin or something. What is he, your boyfriend?"

> "Now, Janet."
>
> "He is, isn't he! He's your boyfriend!" Janet squealed. "I can't believe it." Laughing, she took Agatha's arm and hugged it. "James O'Hannon is your boyfriend."
>
> "Stop that and listen to me."
>
> "Oh, Miss McGee, a boyfriend!"
>
> "Not a boyfriend, Janet. He's sixty-six."
>
> "A manfriend, then. How wonderful."
>
> "Will you please be still and listen? It's nothing like that." (126)

Nevertheless, Agatha's initial meeting with James fulfills her expectations. James is intelligent, handsome, though older-looking than he was in the picture he sent her. When she tells James that she can't take the walk he proposes because she's not wearing the proper shoes, they both look down at her shoes and she "(is) thankful for her trim ankles" (140). As they return to her hotel by taxi, James' thoughtfulness leads Agatha to wonder if he is pondering a proposal. But he only asks, "'Is it true that Americans neglect confession these days?'" Yet, when he walks her to the elevator of her hotel, "in plain sight of all, he embraces her" (148). Hassler adds, "ascending, she felt that for a mere seven hundred dollars she had been carried not only from the New World to the Old, but also beyond it, to the realm of her happiest dreams" (148).

James, however, is different the following day. He's nervous, tense, even irritable, although there still are tranquil moments. As they sit resting from their tour of Dublin, Agatha feels she "wouldn't mind if she never moved from this bench. She felt whole and complete and exhausted. . ." (157). But then, at the end of the day, James announces that he must spend the next several days dealing with a crisis that has suddenly come up. He will get in touch with Agatha before she leaves and hopes they will continue to correspond. Agatha is stunned.

But not for long. By morning her practical, determined nature has reasserted itself and she realizes James needs her, regardless of the particular nature of the trial that he is going through. Since it is now Sunday, she takes the bus out to St. Brigid's, his parish church at Ballybegs knowing she will find him there. She enters the church:

> The pews were filling fast. She knew where James would be sitting; he liked the front pew near that Virgin's altar. He wasn't there; she walked partway down the aisle to make sure. She returned to the back and stood waiting. The bell stopped ringing. Half a dozen men came in quickly at the last minute, unceremoniously,

dipping in a perfunctory genuflection and slipping into pews. Still no James. She saw a place for herself near the back and went there and knelt. . . .

There was a long wait. Eleven thirty-five. Coughing. Two or three babies whimpering. Then a small bell tinkled over the sacristy door, and six altar boys stepped out into the sanctuary, two abreast, carrying candles. They were followed by the priest wearing white for Corpus Christi. He was a tall, white-haired man. He was pale, with ruddy spots high on his cheekbones. He was James. (163)

Agatha flees the church with a bitter laugh. However, as one may well expect, this shock, intense though it is, does not stop her life. Although James has hurt her greatly she does find it possible to see him when he calls at the Dublin boarding house in which she is now staying. Later, as they sit in Stephen's Green, James asks Agatha if they will still write. "I'm sorry," she says. I can't be sure (274). Attending noon mass at a nearby church her feeling toward James softens further:

She (asks) God if the pleasure of knowing James would someday heal the injury of discovering the truth about him, and she was amazed to find that it was already so. The pain of his deception, though lingering, was no longer a chaotic sort of pain, nor was it, she suspected, as strong as the emptiness she would certainly feel if she had never known him. She assured God that her forgiveness of James was complete. However, she didn't go so far as to tell God that she'd resume the correspondence. (276)

So the correspondence with James will begin again and it will serve for Agatha the function for which it was intended: she will share with James her views, her frustrations and delights—all of the things that gave meaning to the correspondence before she allowed it to be distorted by romantic fantasies, comforting fantasies created when she doubted the value and accomplishments of her past decades.

Recovered from her trauma, Agatha now begins to seriously consider accepting Bishop Baker's request that she become principal of St. Isidore's School in its final years before closing. After weighing positive and negative factors, Agatha notes that

the horizon was blue and clear. What lay beyond it was the principalship. She would take it. To be fair, however, she must warn the bishop, next time she had a moment alone with him, that he'd have an easier time closing St. Isidore's with someone else in charge, that as principal she'd be in a strong position to fight for its life. She was amazed that her course should be so clear, when for weeks it had been veiled in haze. Things throw light on things. (285)

Agatha had not seen her course before because she momentarily lost confidence in the qualities and achievements that had always defined her life—her involvement in the

church, her dedication to teaching, her interest in students—and believed she must look elsewhere for significance and meaning—that elsewhere being an imagined romance with James. But she would hardly have been able to adapt herself to marriage with James, let alone live in Ireland. Significantly, her fantasies never progressed beyond the possibility of a proposal, suggesting that something within her recognized the tenuous nature of her dreams. Now, as she flies home, Agatha contemplates the changes she will make as principal. Her life is back on course.

Thus, although most readers of *A Green Journey* probably assume that Agatha's "romance by letter" with James signals a new and beneficial change in her life, it does not. Her vicarious, imagined romance with James simply reveals that approaching changes in her life frightened her into considering options which were consistent with neither her personality nor her interests. Although Agatha is seriously hurt and angered when she discovers James' identity, the shock of this discovery allows her to once again see her life and herself realistically, to accept herself and to devote herself to her major concerns of the past decades. Thus, Agatha's return from Ireland also marks her return to the kind of life which she finds most comfortable and meaningful.

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Trading Places: A Recent Teacher Exchange

by
Olivia Frey

I had not taught in the English classroom for ten years—in the high school classroom, that is. I have been teaching, of course, but at the college level, off in the "ivory tower," so to speak.

I decided to teach in the high school again because I am Director of English Education at St. Olaf College, a middle-sized liberal arts college in Northfield, Minnesota. In order to be an effective director of the program as well as a credible methods instructor, I knew I would have to stop talking in the abstract about how to motivate high school students or how to teach them "the writing process." I would have to do it.

Two years ago I did. I traded places with Marsha Besch, an English teacher and Department Chair at Apple Valley Senior High, during St. Olaf's Interim semester, convenient for the sort of exchange that we had planned. Marsha taught a course entitled "Minnesota Writers" at St. Olaf, while I took over her full load at Apple Valley—four sections of composition and one section of teen fiction.

Faculty exchanges like the one that Marsha and I implemented will be happening more often in the future. Teacher Education Programs have been automous for too long, according to the report "Minnesota's Vision for Teacher Education: Stronger Standards, New Partnerships." In his address to the Minnesota Task Force that wrote this 1986 report, John Goodlad *(A Place Called School)* stressed repeatedly that education students must have powerful training experiences," and that School-University partnerships can provide these experiences. Calls for the renewal of teacher education, like the task force report and Goodlad's address, commonly cite three needed additions to teacher preparation: more extensive laboratory field experiences, formal induction periods, and "ongoing staff development" for teachers in the schools as well as in the teacher preparation institutions (Task Force 20).

Our own faculty exchange program is actually one part of a large scale venture between Minnesota's Independent School District 196, which includes Apple Valley Senior High, and St. Olaf College. Started in the fall of 1983, the program includes summer symposia—St. Olaf and Apple Valley faculty jointly conduct seminars on topics such as "U.S.-Soviet Relations" or "Utopian Fiction" —as well as a series of lectures and student-faculty mentorships. The theme for this summer's symposium,

now called "Dialogue '88," is "Change in the '80's: Where Is It Leading?" Two other school districts—Northfield and Richfield (Minneapolis)—have joined in the "dialogue." St. Olaf and the local schools are not total strangers to each other now. We don't as often hear comments that so many of us have heard, or made, before, like "What do my students need to know in order to be prepared for college?" or "What are they teaching in the high school classroom?"

The specific question that sent me to Apple Valley was, "Can an English teacher with 120 students teach writing using "the process approach"?" When I taught at Liberty High School in Pennsylvania 12 years ago, I taught "the product." I taught grammar and all of the rhetorical formulae—thesis sentence, the five paragraph theme—all out of the context of students' own writing. I trusted that if my students knew the rules, they could transfer them to their writing, and write well. Needless to say, I didn't teach such things as brainstorming strategies and revision. My students didn't write well, a fact I attributed to either their inattention or thick-headedness.

My thinking, and consequently my teaching, has changed quite a bit since 1976. Now I teach the "writing process" in my Freshman English and other writing classes. In fact, I am probably the most process-oriented teacher I know. I am not even really "teaching" so much as watching my students write and responding to what they do. In these classes, students do not just "do their own thing," of course. Students read essays that I have assigned, keep writing notebooks, and meet in small groups that I have carefully structured and that I monitor throughout the year. Nevertheless, within this context, students have a great deal of freedom. I never lecture about rhetorical strategies, while I do mention them when they come up in the readings or in student's own essay ("Say, you have used a good transition here. What's a transition, you ask?"). I rarely assign topics, giving students instead strategies to come up with their own paper topics, as well as strategies for drafting and revising. I meet all of my students in conference at least every other week. I have not taught grammar for a long time. Rather, I teach "grammar" in the context of my students' own writing.

Of course, this is how I have taught freshman English and my advanced college writing classes. This is also how I have instructed my methods students to teach when they get "out there" in the high schools. But I have always wondered whether the process approach would work in the secondary schools as well as it has for me at the college level. Haven't I always had it easy? How would it be different if I had 120 students at a time rather than 50? And so I arranged with Apple Valley and Marsh Besch, to teach there for a while.

As I began thinking about my days at Apple Valley, particularly my writing classes, I grew apprehensive. Won't these high school students need more structure? Can I trust them to work hard enough to come up with their own topics and to sustain this work long enough through successive drafts? What if they start talking about skiing instead of critiquing essays in small groups? Adding to my fears were the number of schools

that taught formal grammer and the number of cooperating teachers, whom I met when I observed student-teachers, who never had conferences or responded to rough drafts, claiming that because of their teaching loads and the numbers of students that they had to manage each day, it couldn't be done. Nevertheless, I was slightly encouraged by the fact that some of my colleagues at Apple Valley and other area high schools were requiring rough drafts and teaching brainstorming strategies. They were not "process" teachers to the extent that I was, perhaps, but that was one of the things that I wanted to find out. How would I need to modify my teaching strategies so that they would work for high school students? Although still a little apprehensive, I looked forward to the days that I would start getting some answers.

Finally, I found myself on that first dark January morning driving to Apple Valley, wondering what I had gotten myself into. My spirits matched the weather—cold and bleak. My colleagues at St. Olaf and Apple Valley lauded my commitment to quality education and teacher training, but they also doubted my sanity.

In order to ease my transition into the high school, and the students' adjustment to a new teacher, I had met with Marsha for two weeks before we traded places. I talked with her students, browsed through the book storeroom, reviewed high school red tape, shuffled attendance cards, deciphered Marsha's grading system, and planned my classes almost down to the minute. I was in some respects prepared.

But I was not really prepared. I was not prepared for the long day, for standing up six hours straight each day. My legs ached for the first week. I was not prepared for the frantic pace. I had no time to reflect on my classes, what had worked, what had bombed. I had three minutes to put down one pile of books, corrected papers, handouts, and class notes (Where did I put the attendance cards!), and pick up the next pile for the next class. God forbid if my piles got mixed up, which they often did. Apple Valley is an "open school" and my desk was strategically placed in a busy walk area. When students ran from class to class—They never just walked. They ran, danced, rolled, or bounced from class to class, but rarely walked—someone inevitably careened into my desk, sending papers and books flying everywhere.

I was not prepared for the noise. I taught on an open platform, suspended almost in midair. My "classroom" had no ceiling and no walls. (At least it had a floor. I suspect that if the architects could have gotten away with it, they would have dispensed with the floor, too.) We hovered over the library, and were encircled by the chemistry laboratories. My lessons were punctuated by clinking glassware, and by the incessant hubbub of students walking (running, dancing, rolling, bouncing) to lunch, or flirting and giggling in the library.

I was also not prepared for how quickly I adjusted and to what degree my experiences began to affirm most of what I had been teaching my English Education majors for so many years. Of course, not everything that I had been asserting in methods

classes proved to be workable. One crucial aspect of my thinking about classroom management changed dramatically. In past methods classes, I have always discussed earnestly the importance of keeping students "on task" at all times. I urged methods students to come up with mini-lessons in case the hour lasted longer than the lesson. I had warned of the pedagogical dangers of letting students get off the track in small groups. At Apple Valley, however, I discovered quickly that it was impossible to keep the kids on task for the full hour, partly because of the high school environment, which the open architecture exacerbated, and partly because of the level of development of high school students.

After a few days of angry frustration, I began to see that keeping kids constantly on task was not only impossible, it was also undesirable. Staying on task the whole day would overload the kids' minds. Often, too, when I gave them breaks, I was also giving myself a break, before we all broke. I also tolerated some socializing, especially in small groups, because my students were (are) adolescents, after all, and their growth and development depended a great deal on socialization. In education lingo, I was "addressing the affective dimension in education." Put another way, "kids are people, too."

A more relaxed classroom allowed me to get to know these students "as people." What should I call it—"bonding," "establishing the appropriatet student-teacher relationship"? All of these terms seem inadequate. Simply put, I cared about them, and cared about what they learned or didn't learn. And it was this caring, and not just how much I knew or how effective my pedagogy was, that influenced their learning. They mattered to me. The material mattered to me. Maybe, they thought, there was something in this after all.

A more relaxed classroom also meshes with my philosophy of teaching writing. I have over the years recognized that learning to use language is an ongoing process, a natural process, and decided that the best that we can ever do is *not* push, or test, or drill, but create an environment in which we encourage students to see how language works, probably an environment that replicates a child's early language learning experiences. Such an environment in which children are "rewarded" for language use; that is, language helps fulfill the child's needs or enriches her life. Or the child is not rewarded. She fails to communicate and does not get what she needs until she is clear. She tries harder, then, because it matters to her. "Choice" and "will" are crucial factors in her decision-making process. In the classroom environment that I describe above, the student wants or needs her peers, or the teacher, to get her point. I don't mean here "writing for the teacher, but writing to make real contact. Kevin wants us to know why it was so hard to leave his best friend Bobby in the second grade. Anne, the hearing-impaired student, wants us to know what it's like to live in silence. The writing context and the interaction with readers demonstrate the importance of clarity or the mode that would be most effective, and lead to a real understanding of how and why the language works as it does. For learning to take place, a parent or teacher can not *do* it, but might *help* it.

We teachers have good intentions and work very hard to make things happen. We structure and organize, and struggle to "finish the book" and "get through the material." This is particularly true in the area of language and writing. Elementary students must master key vocabularies. Junior high students must be able to formulate a thesis sentence and put together the five paragraph theme. Senior high students must be able to do it all, especially if they plan to go to college. Workbooks, worksheets, grammar exercises, structured assignments will help them do it, we think, and do it faster and more efficiently. We have quantified and listed and prescribed. And we push our students to achieve these competencies at the point in their educations that they are expected to achieve them. We mean well, because we know the sad consequences of illiteracy. At the very least, we worry that our students will not make it in college. In the process, however, we may be teaching language or writing in ways that it cannot really be learned. How much real learning takes place if grammar or rhetorical formulae are taught isolated from the contexts of writing or speaking, or life, that give them meaning?

What I just said sounds beautiful. It sounds like something a college professor would say, off in the ivory tower, sitting comfortably in her padded chair and writing her article that she has lots of time to write because she has only one class to prepare, and only 20 students this semester. The methods of teaching writing that I use on the college level did work in the high school, but I would again be lying if I said that I had to make "only a few adjustments to accomodate the level of students I was working with and the context in which I was teaching." I wrote this phrase at first, but as soon as I wrote it, I knew it wasn't so.

I was a different teacher in the high school than I am in college. I was tired. I felt rushed and pushed and harassed. There was never enough time for anything. There was never time between classes to reflect on my teaching. There was never enough time to put the comments on rough drafts that I wanted to. There was never enough time in "conferences" (I even hesitate to use the word) to "allow the meaning to unfold" in my students' drafts, to allow them to discover their purpose, their voice, their focus. I was always hurrying them up. I felt like the impatient doctor standing ready with forceps to the child from her mother's womb. I despaired at the number of drafts I never saw because I had lost track of time and the bell rang too soon.

Nevertheless, my disappointments and frustrations are not the whole story either. My methods students will hear about how they must adjust their expectations and about how to accommodate the realities of the high school classroom. But they will also hear about how I did manage to teach writing using the process approach and create a student-centerd classroom in which language use is meaningful and enriching, perhaps not as well as I am able to do it on the college level, but good enough. Certainly better, I am convinced, than with grammar books, drill, and the five-paragraph theme.

While I never assign topics in Freshman English or Expository Writing at St. Olaf, Apple Valley curriculum required that I assign a topic in my composition classes, but the topic was broad enough—an autobiographical essay that the students had a great deal of room to make the topic their own. My prewriting activities were fairly structured, but while prewriting they were free to discover their own purpose and focus for their working drafts. Students wrote three short pieces about their most memorable objects, places, people as a means of collecting ideas and increasing their awareness of how they had come to be the people they were. Out of these pieces, some pulled material that they used to fashion working drafts. Others did not use any of the original material. In these cases, the prewriting activities had still been valuable as a means of jogging their memories and discovering a topic that they would finally focus on. Even though some of the activities were structured and monitored, students were not mindlessly adapting formulae or filling in the blanks. They were trying things out and making choices. They were making their topics and fashioning their drafts the way that "real" writers do.

I also met with students in "conference," that is, talked briefly with students about their essays while the rest of the class worked in small groups.Obviously, these "conferences" or talks were short, five minutes at most, and I could not meet with each student for every assignment. Nevertheless, I monitored each stage of every student's writing by requiring rough drafts that I put written comments on, although, again, my written responses were short—selective and to the point—because I had at least 80 drafts to look through each time I collected assignments. Finally, I taught grammar, though not in the traditional sense. I talked about "grammar" in the context of their own writing. Such grammar instruction was not thorough, but I wrestled with that particular angel a long time ago. That kind of thoroughness does not guarantee that our students will write well.

As much learning was taking place, naturally, during the unstructured times when the students least expected it. The whole environment was full of language. Students worked often in small groups. They gossipped, argued, teased. Sometimes they even got around to talking about the day's assignment or the essay they were working on. Actually, they were never completely off the track. At first when they got off the subject, I worried. Then, I listened

Kevin: What a dork, a durf. Dumb guy. Dope.

Scott: Another "d" word, yea, Kevin!

Kevin: Ded-i-ca-ted. I hafta admit, the guy was dedicated.

Kevin and Scott are jumping around like cheerleaders. I am sitting in another group eavesdropping on Kevin's group. They seem to be off the track. Kevin's also not being very nice. Should I say something?

Me: Who, Kevin?

Kevin: Mechanical Man. Mech Man. The mechanical manager at McDonalds. We worked there last summer.

Me: Why do you call him "mechanical"?

Kevin: Boy, he was stiff. He was a stiff.

Kevin stands up and imitates his walk and stiffly imitates someone making hamburger. He hands it to Scott, salutes, and then falls stiffly to the floor.He laughs, rolls over and sits cross-legged.

Kevin: He never laughed. Or even smiled. We would have worked harder for him if he had laughed once in a while.

What does all of this have to do with their assignment? Well, it does, in a way. The assignment is to talk in small groups about a person they recall from their past, a prewriting activity that will help them collect ideas for their autobiographical essays. I also "hafta" smile when I think of "Mech Man." Kevin's writing is usually as stiff as Mech Man's walk. When he fools around like this, Kevin has a great sense of humor and a clear voice. I wonder if he could get some of this into his prose.

Me: Are you going to write about him, Kevin? That's good stuff. Get it in there. Are you going to get him in your essay?

Kevin: Nah. His feelings would be hurt if he found out.

Kevin doesn't write about the mechanical manager. He eventually writes about making mischief in the second grade with his best friend Bobby. After he acts it out, of course, and after he discovers that it is 'OK' to "fool around" in his essay, too. In his final paper, he faithfully recaptures those times that he so obviously misses, even sounding seven years old when it is appropriate. His essay is funny and poignant as he reflects back, as a "wise" 16 year old, on his relationship with his friend and the "good ole days" that are gone. Has the linguistic play that I witnessed earlier been wasted?

My loosening up in class seems to have worked for Kevin. He took risks in his writing once he discovered it was OK to do so, once he discovered that each essay did not have to be five paragraphs long, that the thesis sentence did not absolutely have to be the last sentence of the first paragraph. He had used language every day, creatively, imaginatively, with his friends and brothers and sisters, in the cafeteria, in the halls, at the mall, and I began to affirm that use: "Get that in your essay, Kevin." His writing became a means of real self expression, then, once Kevin could see that it was connected to him and his life, once it was coming out of him, not distant and isolated on a

grammar worksheet or in a chapter on the structure of comparison-contrast essay. Kevin eventually did write a comparison-contrast essay. However, it was a form that the essay evolved into, that Kevin chose naturally, not a form that he imposed on the essay because I had required him to do so.

Having returned to methods classes after teaching at Apple Valley, I have told all of these stories, about Kevin and all the others, to my English Education students. All of the stories—the successes as well as the disappointments. My methods students learn more lessons, I think, from these stories than they ever learn from the methods textbooks. There is, of course, no substitute for doing it themselves, but I can now give them fresh and living applications of the theories and pedagogy we study. Their high school students will work in small groups, and the student-teachers will set up these groups with my concrete advice in mind. They will teach the writing process, but as they ask students to brainstorm and discover their topics, or try to meet with them in conference, they will understand the possibilities as well limitations of these methods.

Knowing the limits. Adjusting our expectations. Adjusting. Adapting. Flexibilty. These are all important in teaching. When my methods students read the textbooks, handouts, and my neatly typed sample lesson plans, they get the idea that there is one right way to teach, that if they follow what the book says, and do such and such on exactly this day in the term, they will be good teachers. (In this respect, they sound very much like novice writers.) Now I hand them my thick notebook in which I planned my lessons at Apple Valley. It is a mess. They see the changes, the Xed out pages, the revised schedules, the postponed and abandoned lessons, whole sections eliminated and new plans entered. Like writing, teaching is a process. We change and grow as writers. We change and grow as teachers. We are always becoming teachers. This is the most important lesson I have learned and that I hope my methods students will learn. My messy planning book is the visual proof of this lesson.

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A Linguistic-Gestalt Approach to English Compounds

by
Don L. F. Nilsen

PART I: PARTS OF SPEECH: Let's assume that there are approximately ten parts of speech, as follows: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs, Pronouns, Prepositions, Conjunctions, Expletives, Interjections, and Auxiliaries. Now Let's assume, as Charles Fries and others have done, that these ten parts of speech fall into two major classes: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs on one hand and everything else on the other hand, and let call the first set "Content Words," and the second set "Function Words," with there being five basic differences between these two master part-of-speech categories:

1). Content words are real-world based, while function words are not.

2). Content words cannot be guessed in a Cloze test, while function words can.

3). Content words are an open set, while function words are a closed set.

4). Content words can be inflected, while function words cannot.

5). Content words more characteristically receive stress than do function words.

6). Content words enter into compounds much more easily than do function words.

Because of their real-world grounding, content words are more concrete and more basic than are function words. Whereas content words are used to talk about the real world, function words are used merely as traffic signals to show how the content words are relating to each other. Therefore, a preposition shows the grammatical relationship between a noun and another noun; a conjunction shows the relationship between a clause and another clause (though sometimes these clauses can be truncated); an expletive marks the place of a grammatical subject and shows that the real subject has been linguistically postponed; etc.

It is the content words that carry the load of communication, and since communication is the major function of language, the content words are more important to the discourse than are the function words. This fact is supported by studies in first language acquisition, second-language acquisition, and delayed language acquisition. In first-language acquisition there is a stage called the telegraphic stage at which all of the

function words are systematically deleted while the content words are systematically retained. There is also evidence that with second-language acquisition communication is still more important than grammatical correctness, for in a number of articles in *Developmental Psycholinguistics:Theory and Applications*, it is shown that ESL learners tend to learn highly communicative structures before they learn lowly communicative structures regardless of the order in which these structures are taught. Notice also that pidgins around the world are very similar to the telegraphic stage of language development in dropping function words while retaining content words. And for everybody, whenever we must drop words to save money (as in a telegram), it is again the function words that are expendable. As Roger Brown puts it, the function words are "an intricate sort of ivy to grow up between and upon the major construction blocks, the nouns and verbs."(Brown, p. 249)

But it is not enough to say that content words are more concrete or basic than are function words. We can even rank the various classes of content words in terms of concreteness or basicness. When we do, we discover that Nouns are more basic than Verbs, which are more basic than Adjectives; which are more basic than Adverbs. Nouns are more basic than Verbs because an action or state of being is impossible without something to act or be. The same is true of modification. An Adjective must have a Noun for it to modify. The Adverb is the most abstract and least basic of the content classes because it modifies a Verb (which must be a predication of a Noun), or an Adjective (which must be a modification of a Noun), or another Adverb (which must be a modification of a predication of a Noun).

PART II: THE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH COMPOUNDS: One of the important features of the content words is that they freely enter into compounds with other content words. This is true of Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs. To show how productive this process is, please consider the following matrix in which each of the four content classes forms a compound with every other content class:

	NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
NOUN	shirt sleeve	boardwalk	carte blanche	salt away
VERB	open heart	makeshift	look sharp	run down
ADJECTIVE	greenhouse	freefall	bitter-sweet	blackout
ADVERB	overcoat	downpour	off-white	down and out

What is true of Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs is also true of Adjectives derived from Verbs (i.e. the Present and past participles):

	VERB + ING	VERB + EN
NOUN	soul-searching	house broken
VERB	riproaring	blindfolded
VERB + ING	crumbling building	reading-based
VERB + EN	closed meeting	broken hearted
ADJECTIVE	safe keeping	old-fashioned
ADVERB	undertaking	downtrodden

Expressions where the verbals come before the regular content classes can also be cited:

VERB + ING	VERB + EN	
NOUN	running battle	collapsed lung
VERB	flying leap	forced smile
ADJECTIVE	looking good	frozen stiff
ADVERB	coming-out	worn-out

The paradigmatic displays above give only part of the story. Suppose for example, a compound is formed by juxtaposing one Noun with another Noun. There must be some syntagmatic information provided in order to correctly analyze the compound. "Killer shark" is a Subject Complement followed by a Subject; it is derived from a sentence like "The shark is a killer." Now consider "rattle snake." This is a Direct Object followed by a Subject, the original sentence being something like "The snake has a rattle." The Subject and Direct Object could be in their more usual order, as in "knife wound" from "The knife made a wound." Another possibility for Noun + Noun compounds is Subject + Object of Preposition. "Ash tray" comes from "The tray is for ashes," but again the order can be reversed, since "chocolate bar" comes from "The bar is made of chocolate." It is even possible for Noun + Noun compounds to be derived from Direct objects and Objects of Prepositions (usually in reversed order). "Someone makes sauce from apples," and this gives us the compound "apple sauce."

PART III: PROBLEMS: But so far, I have painted an overly optomistic picture. The paradigms and suggestions for syntactic coupling above are presented as if there were no contrary examples. Furthermore they suggest that there is nothing more to be considered. This is just not the case. There are many so-called problems related to the formation of compounds in English. These are *so-called* problems because there is a good chance that they are not *problems* at all—only *surprises*. And when viewed as suprises, these so-called problems become not something to be dreaded or explained away, but rather become exciting little puzzles to activate the mind both in the process of generating compounds and in the process of analyzing compounds that are already generated.

Ambiguity: Consider first the "problem" of ambiguity. Children don't consider compound-ambiguity in any way a problem. On the contrary, they consider it a

delight. In *The Youth Market,*, Melvin Helitzer and Carl Heyel tell about a child who asks another child "Where do you have your hair cut?" The second child responds that he has his hair cut at a particular barber's shop and then the asker of the original question doubles up with laughter and says, "Oh, really, I have mine cut on my head." (Helitzer, p. 115)

Literalization: Charles Darwin once had an experience involving compound-ambiguity that illustrates a more sophisticatedof humor. Darwin was visiting the country home of a friend, and the two boys of the family decided they would play a practical joke on him. They went on an insect hunt, and found a centipede, a butterfly, a grasshopper, and a beetle, and they made a strange looking composite insect by gluing together the centipede's body, the butterfly's wings, the grasshopper's legs, and the beetle's head. After they had carefully glued all of these parts together they took it to Darwin and told him that they had caught it in the field, and they wanted to know what kind of a bug it was. Darwin thought for a moment and then asked the boys, "Did you notice whether it hummed when you caught it?" They answered that it did, and Darwin then said, "Then of course it is a humbug." Darwin was playing with the literal and productive compound formation, "hum bug," that is a bug that goes "hum"as contrasted with its homononymic figurative or idiomatic counterpart, "humbug," a form that because it is an idiom is not analyzable into its various parts any more than the boys' bug was. Like the boys' bug it was unique and idiomatic and therefore generalizations could not be drawn from its existence.

The Misinterpreted Compound-Gestalt: Most compounds are ambiguous for the same reason that most small children's sentences are ambiguous. In both cases (the compound or the one word holophrastic sentence) we have a complete sentence truncated into a shorter and simpler structure. But during the trunication process, important grammatical information is frequently lost. Of course we normally have in our heads rules of disambiguation based on cultural expectations that apply quickly and subconsciously so that we are seldom aware that any ambiguity ever existed; however, consider the person with not quite so much cultural awareness. Robin Williams as Mork is talking to a prisoner who says "I got caught shoplifting," to which Mork replies, "Wow, you must be strong."

In the work he is doing with Gestalt Linguistics, George Lakoff explains that our experiences do not allow us to interpret the expression "cement truck" as a "truck made out of cement," even though that interpretation is syntactically just as plausible as is "truck for carrying cement." Lakoff further explains that in order to understand such a simple compound as "topless legislation" we have to set up a series of linkings. "Topless legislation" is legislation which relates to districts which have bars which have dancers which have dresses which are topless. At each of the stages in this linking process there is a totally senseless expression if viewed in isolation—that is without taking the rest of the chain into account. Thus, "topless legislation" is NOT legislation without a title; a "topless district" is NOT a district under the cover of clouds or smog; a "topless bar" is

NOT a bar without a roof; and a "topless dancer" is CERTAINLY NOT a dancer without a top. If the chaining process were not taken into account, then we would have to change the name of most "topless dancers" to the superficially more accurate "top-FULL dancers." But the chaining process **IS** in effect. And it is a very important tool for communicating relationship making everything so dreadfully literal and explicit.

Let me give just one more example of a misleading analysis that results from not seeing enough links in the chain. In a particular "Mutt and Jeff" cartoon strip a person knocks on the door and says, "Is Mr. Mutt at home? I'm from the collection agency! I'm a bill collector." Jeff, who answers the door is completely unfluffed. "Oh, great! Come in. Have a seat. I'll be with you in a second!" he says. And when he returns, "Here's a whole bunch of them! Come back next month and I'll give you another batch." The "problem" with "bill collector" is the same as that of "topless legislation." A "bill collector" does NOT collect bills, as the surface structure of the compound would suggest; rather, he collects the *money* that is associated with the bills. A person who doesn't interact properly in our culture, like the alien Mork, or like the literal-minded Jeff, is going to misinterpret this compound. And he will also have difficulty figuring out the meaning of a "hot water heater," and a "boiling teakettle."

Domain Of Modification: Robert Orben explains that it's very easy to make a "baby buggy." All you have to do is "tickle its toes" (Orben, p. 9). G. G. Pocheptsov tells about a person who walked into some law offices, and asked, "I am looking for a criminal lawyer. Have you any here?" "Well, we're pretty sure we have" was the reply "but we can't prove it." In both of these cases, there is a problem with the domain of the modification. In the expression "How do you make a baby buggy?" it is possible that the headword is "buggy" and that the modifier is "baby" but that is not the only interpretation, for it is also that the headword is "baby" and the modifier is "buggy." Stress the word "baby" (the first word in the construction), then "baby" is nothing more than a modifier of "buggy." We stress "buggy" (the second word in the construction), then the direction of modification is reversed. With the expression "criminal lawyer," the direction of modification is again reversed by changing the stress pattern of the expression.

The "Problem" with Hyphens: In an article entitled "Damned Hyphen," Dwight Bolinger of Harvard University discusses the use of hyphens in longer compounds. He says, "Something has to be done. . . to retrain the sadists in our culture who reason that if an ice cream carton is a carton for ice cream, canned baby food ought to be food for canned babies" (Bolinger, pp. 297-299). Bolinger is suggesting that there is a difference in interpretation between "canned-baby food" and "canned baby-food." But more importantly, he's suggesting that rules of inference are necessary in interpreting a sentence, and anyone who thinks that baby food is food for canned babies is not using these rules of inference sensibly.

In his *On Language,* William Safire makes a similar observation about the ambiguity of longer compounds, as he quotes from Henry Fowler's *Modern English Usage* as follows: "A little used car is not necessarily the same as a little-used car." (Safire, p. 137) In newspaper headlines, the "problem with hyphens" is compounded (pun intended). Bob Beamesderfer, one of the students in my "Current English Usage Class" told me about a headline than ran in a local paper:

SQUAD HELPS DOG BITE VICTIM

A well-placed hyphen would have made this headline a little bit less ludicrous:

SQUAD HELPS DOG-BITE VICTIM

In reality, the hyphen is not the only punctuation device for showing concatination (or compounding) in English. The normal evolution of a compound would be as follows:

FIRST STAGE: ham and eggs

SECOND STAGE: ham-and-eggs

THIRD STAGE: hamandeggs

FOURTH STAGE: mnx (or something of the sort)

William Safire discusses the tendency in English of going from the first or second stage to the third stage. Safire discusses examples given by Emerson Stone of CBS News Radio which have entered this third stage: "anymore," "golfball," "awhile," "someday," "lifework," "everyday" (as an adverb), "alright," and "grassroots." Safire extrapolates to the future: "Where will it all end?" Are we headed toward collapsing all the 600,000-odd English words into one long word? Imnotsurethatsalltothegood." (Safire, p. 13)

Safire is making an important point—though he is overstating it a little. Some purists are already upset with various contractions we have in English. They don't like words like "don't," "doesn't," "haven't," "hasn't" "aren't," "isn't," and "weren't," and of course they are livid whenever they hear or see "ain't." But the contraction process in English speech has gone much further than this, and the same contraction process is also making intrusions into the writing system. The expressions "used to," "supposed to" "have to," and "has to" have all lost to the voicing at the end of the first word as this word assimilates to the closely concatinated last word. We now, therefore, see spellings like "hafta." The English modal system is undergoing a similar evolution:

FIRST STAGE: "would have"

SECOND STAGE: "would of"

THIRD STAGE: "would a"

FOURTH STAGE: "woulda"

This is a frequent construction, because it happens whenever we have *any* modal followed by a perfect construction.

Or consider the English paraphrastic future. Again we can see it in stages:

FIRST STAGE: "going to"

SECOND STAGE: "gonna"

THIRD STAGE: "onna"

Even the non-paraphrastic English future has stages of cohesion as "shall" and "will" are kept separate at the most formal stage; they are merged to "will" at a less formal stage, and become "'ll" at the even-more informal levels.

This portmanteau process of making a single word out of a of number of words is an important process in filling lexical gaps in English. Lewis Carroll used the process effectively in *Alice in Wonderland,* where "slithy" comes from "lithe" and "slimy;" "mimsy" is "flimsy" and "miserable," and "the wabe" is called that because it goes a long **way** before it and a long **way** behind it.

Priscilla Tyler points out that e. e. cummings also has some nice blends, such as "just-spring," "puddle-wonderful" and "mudlusious." In an article entitled "Linguistic Criticism and Literature in Four Centuries," she tells about a French girl studying English who came up with the phrase "bored as a stiff." Professor Tyler analyzes this formation as follows:

> This brilliant combination of "stiff as a board," and "bored stiff" and "bored to death" would go beyond the reach of most native English speakers, apart perhaps from children." (Tyler, p. 58)

But although Professor Tyler's insightful analysis of the French girl's idiom is powerful and poetic, I wonder if she hasn't underestimated the process for "most native English speakers." In an article entitled "Collegiate Slang: Aspects of Word Formation and Semantic Change," Richard Seymour notes some blends made up by native English speakers. He discusses "scuzzy," as in the expression "Your teeth are scuzzy." This expression appears to be made up of "fuzzy" and "scummy." He also talks about "gritch" means"grouchy female," as coming from "grouchy" and either "witch" or-"bitch" or both. He also discusses "scrummy" from "scumptious" "yummy," and "fantabulous" from "fantastic" "fabulous," and "twud"from "twit" and "stud." The

explanation for this last blend is that a "twit" is someone who thinks studying is important and doesn't date every often. The opposite of a "twit" is a "stud," an athlete who dates constantly. A "twud" therefore, is someone who is smart and studies a lot, but who nevertheless is an athlete and someone who parties a lot as well. A "twud" therefore is sort of the "Jack-Armstrong-the-All-American-boy" of the campus. (Seymour, pp. 13-21; Limpapath, 3-4 and 6)

Other Concatination Problems: A number of authors have expressed concern that the compounding process is using up words in idiom information and making them unusable elsewhere in the language. William Safire states the problem as follows:

> . . . certain adjectives have affixed themselves to institutions. The Ways and Means Committee is always "the powerful Ways and Means Committee," and the Chrysler Corporation is now "the ailing Chrysler Corporation." (For a time, "financially troubled Chrysler Corporation" had a fling, but the brisk "ailing" won out.) Children reared on TV and radio news think one auto manufacturer is named "Ayling-Chrysler." (Safire, p. 32)

Safire continues later in *On Language:*

> My own pet peeve is the phrase "pet peeve." Doesn't anybody have any other kind of peeve? Alliteration is dandy. . .but can't we try "favorite fury" or "preferred provocation"? One of these days, I'm going to get a dog and name him "Peeve," so I can introduce him to friends in the ecstasy of exasperation with "This is my pet, Peeve. (Safire, p. 203)

In "A Pretty Kettle of Cliches," Sydney Harris voices a similar concern with the process of idiomatization:

> I should like to read or hear, just once, about tacks that aren't brass, questions that aren't moot, coasts that aren't clear, fates that aren't worse than death, and a mean that isn't golden. And, just once, a null without a void, a might without a main, a far without a wide, a six of one without a half-dozen of the other, tooth without nail, and ways without means. And just once, an unfit fiddle, a warm cucumber, a young hill, a stupid owl, a hard impeachment, a black elephant, a sage's paradise, feet of gold, the pepper of the earth, an unbloated plutocrat, and a sad Lothario.

Then of course there's the leading critic of the cliche, Edwin Newman. In *Strictly Speaking*, he talks about marathon labor negotiations:

> If the employer representative finds the going hard, and is clearly winded, he may have to yield a whopping wage increase to get some rest. Whenever this happens, it raises one of the most intriguing questions in American journalism: When does an increase begin to whop?

In *Sharing Ideas,* Joel Goodman enters the idiomatization process at a different point—before the idiom has been formed. He suggests that speakers should be "tasteful" when talking to restauranteurs, "powerful" when speaking to electric companies, "primary" when speaking at elementary schools, "Doleful" when speaking to pineapple packers, and "guarded" when on the platform at a meeting of the Brinks organization (Goodman, p. 34).

PART IV: CONCLUSION: I hope that this article has demonstrated that the compounding process in English is a powerful process, that it is largely rule-governed, and that when there is not enough structure left after the rules of deletion have been applied, the rules of inference take on a major role in the interpretation process. I hope I have also shown that the rules of inference have important semantic constraints (in terms of chainings and other gestalts), and that they do not always result in complete closure. But then, only someone like Edwin Newman or William Safire or Sydney Harris would want complete closure anyway—and I even suspect that *these* authors have their tongues in their cheeks a great deal more often than most people realize.

So next time you encounter an enigma of English compound formation, like the structural difference between "maternity dress" and "paternity suit," do not dispair. (Hill, p. 497) Delight in the mystery. And assume the posture of Newton Minow, chairman of the FCC, who was asked if he agreed that television is a "vast wasteland." His response was simple and straightford: "It's not vast to me. I have a ten-inch screen."

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Relationship:
A Thematic Language Arts Curriculum for Adolescent Readers

by
Dr. Karla Smart Kadrmas

Connectedness is a condition of the human experience. We exist in relationship with self, with others, with animal and plant life, with ecological systems in the natural world, and with inventions and technologies. Relationship is critical in individual human lives and between large institutions, nations, and cultures.

As technologies expand, natural resources flag, and the meaning of our potential for nuclear annihilation is grasped, cross-cultural understandings and shared languages emerge under the heading of "survival skills." Empathetic regard for other persons and close attention to their linguistic meanings are whole and complex processes of relationship. They are often difficult and uncertain even between individuals who share culture — between family members and friends. They call for whole response of human thought and feeling. Empathetic regard and attention to meaning are respecters of human diversity and uniqueness while they are collectors of commonalities. They call for valuing connectedness, human universals, and deep threads of collective life story, parable, and memory.

Language and art are human processes for literal and symbolic expression. Art mirrors and imagines lives and relationships. Creating and appreciating art enables us to voice our themes and questions and to come to understandings. We can move closer to one another in the web that exchange of language weaves. Dialogue permits human expression and interplay of feeling, thoughts, memories, and needs. Relationship can be both furthered and held at bay by humans' use of language.

Ernest Boyer and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching hold language study as the first priority in secondary school curriculum. The disciplines of history and literature, for example, lend themselves to thought about language and to study of human stories and relationships through time and between cultures. Boyer describes as a goal in the study of literature that students come "to feel a relationship with the human family" (Boyer, 1983, p. 96). He recommends that "all students discover the

connectedness of the human experience and the richness of other cultures: (Boyer, 1983, p. 103).*

While human connectedness and relationship are critical throughout our life spans, the theme of relationship is particularly important in the lives of adolescents. Adolescence is a time of both being and becoming. An adolescent has his or her own life history and present everyday concerns and values. He or she lives shaping vision for a personal future and the changing world. Adolescents — like all persons — find themselves in relationship with self, with others, and with the natural world. Adolescents feel the fullness of support and challenge when relationships are healthy, imaginative, and growing. They create and face expectations. They pull toward independence while, ideally, flourishing in the safety of relationships in families, between peers, and with pets and animals. Adolescents are attentive to language. They are attracted to wordplay and idiomatic inventions with peers and attuned to popular culture and the language of music, television, advertisements, and film. An adolescent struggles to make himself or herself clear to self, to peers, and to adults. Outside of school settings adolescents often turn to personal letters, diaries, poems and lyrics as vehicles for expression.

A language arts curriculum developed around the theme of relationship can help school students encounter the meaning of connectedness in human lives. It can raise issues and questions around the concepts of human independence, dependence, and interdependence. The place of the individual in families, in communities based on particular beliefs or values, in geographic communities and on landscapes, and in nations and cultures can be considered. Specific themes emerge from the larger theme of relationship. For example: human relationship to work, to play, to art, and to the shaping of the future; relationship with the earth and human care for and use of animals, plants, and resources; the generations and human relationship to time and collective, historical memory; kinship and friendship in human lives; and, relationship to illness and death.

The general goals of a thematic language arts curriculum developed around the idea of relationship could include:

- —to facilitate understanding and valuing of connectedness in human lives
- —to raise what Elie Wiesel calls the "ancient questions," to voice the issues of relationship
- —to enhance openness to and empathetic regard for the diversity and universality of human experience
- —to facilitate attentiveness to language as a mode of expression and to the role of language in relationship

* Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983).

- —to engage with language as readers, speakers, and writers, to experience a range of literary genres, to attend to voice in literature from a range of eras and cultures, to open discussion to facilitate writing for varying audiences that expresses thoughts and feelings about language, literature, and emerging themes of relationship
- —to facilitate experience of class, community, collegiality and collaboration, and independence as learners

The bibliography of literature and film that follows portrays adolescents and young adults. The literature raises enduring human concerns and from it myriad themes emerge. It is literature of relationship. It portrays humans as having places and roles in a common world, as finding pleasure and security in relationship, as anguishing over troubled or absent relationship, as experiencing belonging and connectedness, rejection and isolation, as making moral choices and decisions, as exercising power and care.

Thematic headings are used to organize the bibliography and suggest an approach to particular selections. The headings are not absolutes nor are they meant to suggest narrow categories. Teachers and students will find themselves naming headings and themes, patterning and connecting the selections in their own ways. What is here is a beginning.

Language study, fastened to the texts and situations in the literature, could focus on dialogue between characters and voice in literature. A general question to be asked is: What is the role of language in human relationship? Study of dialect, idiolect, regionalisms, idioms, and the denotative and connotative qualities and usage of language could be traced in popular song lyrics or other medium of interest to students.

Writing activities could include journal entries around the theme of relationship, response to reading and discussion, and narration of students' own stories of connectedness or separation. Letter writing and folklore or oral history activities could establish or further relationships. Student letters to family or friends could be encouraged. Letters regarding issues related to the theme of relationship, such as animal protection, environmental safety, or nuclear disarmament, could be written and mailed to a diverse audience. Oral histories of families or communities could be gathered independently or as a cooperative learning activity. Study of the theme of relationship and use of language in contemporary magazine or television advertisements could be undertaken individually or collaboratively.

The suggested reading list for teachers that follows includes selections developing the concept of connectedness and relationship and describing curriculum philosophies and activities.

Annotated Bibliography
Literature and Film of Adolescence and the Theme of Relationship

Overview: Universals in Human Relationship and the Role of Art

Faulkner, William. "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature." 1950. Rpt. in *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*. Ed. James B. Meriweather. New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 119 - 121.

Faulkner describes general, human universals: "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." The essay provides a description of the human spirit, the human condition in the nuclear age, the tasks of writers, and the role of literature in human lives.

Nin, Anais. "My Turkish Grandmother." 1976. Rpt. in *Reading in English*. Eds. Dorothy Danielson, et. al. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980, pp. 15 - 17.

Nin describes a "universal" relationship that is temporary, born of need, existing without common language, crossing cultures and generations, and mutually satisfying. "Guarded by universal grandchildren, Turkish grandmothers always travel safely." (Nin).

Sandburg, Carl. "Prologue." In *The Family of Man." New York: Museum of Modern Art publication by Maco Magazine Corporation, 1955, pp. 2 - 3.*

Sandburg's essay is an introduction to the photographic exhibition The Family of Man. The writing describes human themes, passages, and conditions. It provides a description of art — the photographic story of human faces, "a drama of the grand canyon of humanity, an epic woven of fun, mystery and holiness" (Sandburg).

Family Membership and Relationships Between Adolescents and Adults

Armstrong, William H. *Sounder*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Parable-like, Armstrong's novel is a story of universals in human lives. The novel includes themes such as: an adolescent's early acceptance of adult responsibility, perspectives on justice, relationship to animals and to the soil, and an adolescent's relationship to self, to learning, and to work. (The novel is set in the contemporary rural South.)

Cacoyannis, Michael. dir. *Iphigenia*. With Irene Papas. Greek Film Center Production, 1977. (In Greek with English subtitles.)

The film is based on Euripides' play *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Agamemnon faces the threat of his army turning against him if he does not obey the oracle command to sacrifice his adolescent daughter, Iphigenia. A *New York Review of Books* film reviewer writes: "[The scenes] between father and daughter produce that almost unbearable pathos most tragic of the poets." (February 9, 1978.) Clytemmestra appeals for her daughter's life — for justice and family preservation. Iphigenia pleas for a future and for family. Agamemnon, father and military leader, realizes the winds to move the ships have begun to blow without the sacrifice. But, Iphigenia has gone, with dignity, to her death.

Laurence, Margaret. "A Bird in the House." In *A Bird in the House*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Limited, 1970, pp. 75 - 95.

Laurence's story portrays Vanessa's relationship with and memory of her father. Vanessa narrates as a young adult, recollecting adolescence and reflecting on her perspective emerging through time. The story includes themes such as: search for independence from parents, changing values and perspectives, and an adolescents realization of her father's human dreams and shortcomings. (The story is set in rural and small-town Canada during the 1930's.)

Mason, Bobbie Ann. "Graveyard Day." In *Shiloh and Other Stories*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982, pp. 165 - 178.

Mason's characters include Waldeen, her ten-year-old daughter, Holly, and Joe McClain whom Waldeen may marry. The family's ritual of clearing the leaves and trash away from McClain's great-great-grandfather's tombstone, and a picnic, are the activities for an afternoon of contemporary, everyday dialogue. Holly reads a Vikki Barr novel, and questions her mother "Don't you know *any* thing?" when Waldeen takes off her shoes and jumps in a pile of leaves.

Ortiz, Simon J. "The San Francisco Indians." In *The Man to Send Rain Clouds*. Ed. Kenneth Rosen. New York: Random House, Inc., 1975, pp. 9 - 13.

Ortiz's story portrays a grandfather who goes into the city to look for his young adult granddaughter. He has come to look because her

parents have not. He feels out of place and tired after a day of searching and returns home without her, believing she will be all right. The story includes the themes of family bond and the sharing of a vision for the future.

Ozu, Yasujiro. dir. *Tokyo Story*. With Chisu Ryu. 1953. (In Japanese with English subtitles.)

The film portrays the story of three generations in contemporary Japan. Grandparents come to visit their children and grandchildren. Their presence crowds the city apartment and disrupts the daily routine of working parents and studious children. They return home and the grandmother becomes ill and quietly dies. A *New Republic* film reviewer writes: "If I had to choose one word as the theme of *Tokyo Story*, it would be 'passage.' Time passing, life passing, with the ache and (if we admit it) the relief that this implies." (February 26, 1977.)

Roethke, Theodore. "Elegy for Jane." In *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950, p. 102.

Roethke's poem expresses a teacher's loss. It explores friendship and regard shared by an adult and an adolescent. It describes adolescent intensity and way of being in the world.

Shakespeare, William. "Romeo and Juliet." First Folio 1623. Rpt. in *Romeo and Juliet*. New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1964.

Shakespeare's play traces a tragedy of adolescent love in the context of ancient family hostility and rivalry. It portrays an adolescent relationship of belief, hope, love, and self-sacrifice. It portrays adult relationships of distrust and power. The play includes themes such as: adolescents' decision making and adults' learning forgiveness and acceptance.

Vivante, Arturo. "The Bell." In *Run to the Waterfall*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962, pp. 100 - 115.

Vivante's story portrays a young adult son's relationship with his ill and aged father. The son and family's old cook care for the father who rings his bedroom bell when he needs medicine or company. The son's impatience, the father's embarrassment and longing for company, and the cook's compassion are portrayed. The son moves from Italy to America and absent from his father's death, realizes the family cook had been the better caretaker and companion. (The story is set in Italy during the 1950's.)

Vivante, Arturo. "The Conversationalist." In *Run to the Waterfall*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962, pp. 7 - 14.

Vivante describes a family, each member recalled and portrayed. The story is narrated by an adult who recollects his youth. (The story is set in Italy during the 1950's.)

Everydayness and the Shaping of a Vision of the Future

Forche, Carolyn. "As Children Together." In *The Country Between Us*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981, pp. 39 - 41.

The poem describes an adolescent's dream for her future, her choices toward that dream, and her life's eventualities.

Frost, Robert. "Out, Out—." 1916. Rpt. in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*. Ed. Edward Connery Lathem. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, pp. 136 - 137.

The poem narrates a young boy's loss of a hand, his loss of physical image of himself as a whole person, and his loss of life.

Guest, Judith. *Ordinary People*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1976.

Guest's novel tells the story of Conrad Jarrett and his family. The work details everydayness, traumatic accident, and an adolescent's coping. It explores Conrad's relationship to self, to memory, to friends, and to parents. The novel includes themes such as: self-expectations and others' expectations, the shaping of self-acceptance, a will to live, and a vision of the future. (The novel is set in contemporary suburbia.)

Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960.

Knowles' novel portrays the story of friendship between adolescents, during the early years of World War II, at Devon School. Gene is quiet and bookish. Phineas is full of nerve and athletic. The novel includes themes such as: companionship, growth and questioning, the depth of bond of friendship, and passage into young adulthood and readiness for war.

Kurys, Diane, dir. *Peppermint Soda*. With Eleanore Klarwein, Odile Michel, and Anouk Ferjae. Gaumont/New Yorker Films Release, 1978. (In French with English subtitles.)

The film portrays the story of sisters, thirteen and fifteen years old, growing up in Paris in the early 60's. A *Newsweek* film reviewer writes: "It succeeds precisely because it is devoid of high drama and full of the exact rich details on the giddy *angst* of adolescence" (July 23, 1979). The film explores family relationships, school relationships, naivete and growing political awareness, and the importance of both a love letter and of a ban-the-bomb campaign.

Laurence, Margaret. "Horses of the Night." In *A Bird in the House*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Limited, 1970, pp. 109 - 132.

Laurence's story is a portrait of rural fifteen-year-old Chris narrated by Vanessa, his younger, small-town cousin. The story explores the dreams Chris holds for his future and Vanessa's belief in and hope for Chris. Its themes include: striving for education, relationship to self, others' expectations, and relationships to nature. Vanessa, now returned home from college, narrates her memory. (The story is set in rural and small-town Canada during the 1930's.)

Laurence, Margaret. "The Loons." In *A Bird in the House*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Limited, 1970, pp. 96 - 108.

Laurence's story describes the summer when thirteen-year-old Piguette joins Vanessa's family to rest from tuberculosis. Vanessa narrates her memory of the quiet half-Cree, half-French Piguette. The story traces the shaping of two adolescent lives. Vanessa's young adult perspective fills in blurry memory. Relationships to families are described. (The story is set in rural and small-town Canada during the 1930's.)

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. 1963. Rpt. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971.

Plath's novel is autobiographical fiction, the story of her twentieth year. It explores a young adult's creativity and scholastic success, unresolved emotions and memories of childhood, and struggle with self-expectations and others' expectations.

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945.

Salinger's novel is the story of sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield who leaves his prep school for three days spent underground in New York City. It explores Holden's school relationships with teachers and friends, and his relationships with strangers whose lives and values he encounters briefly but observes closely.

Toth, Susan Allen. "Nothing Happened." In *Blooming: A Small Town Childhood*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978, pp. 3 - 21.

Toth's story blends the voices of adolescent naivete and adult retrospective. It explores memories beginning with a child's question "What was it like in the old days?" The old days are the late 50's in Ames, Iowa. "Nothing Happened" describes the times, the town, the customs, and the people of the narrator's adolescence.

Truffaut, Francois, dir. *The Story of Adele H.* With Isabelle Adjani and Bruce Robinson. 1975. (In French with English subtitles.)

The film is biographical fiction based on the diaries of Adele Hugo, daughter of Victor Hugo. It portrays Adele's young adulthood, her obsessional love for Lt. Pinson, an Englishman who rejects her after a brief relationship while a guest in the Hugo household. A *Chairman's Choice* film reviewer writes: "In Truffaut's *The Story of Adele H.*, we are shown an identity crisis of early adulthood that ends in madness and resignation." (Spring, 1977.)

Adolescent Moral Choice, Decision Making, and Self-Reliance

Faulkner, William. "Barn Burning." 1939. Rpt. in *The American Short Story*. Ed. Calvin Skaggs. Volume 2. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1980, pp. 374 - 392.

Faulkner portrays an adolescent's conflict with his father and the selfhood he gains by betraying him. The story's themes include: the pull of family "blood," the shaping of an adolescent's own moral vision, and the struggle of choice and decision making.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "Bernice Bobs Her Hair." 1920. Rpt. in *The American Short Story*. Ed. Calvin Skaggs. Volume 1. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1977, pp. 151 - 175.

Fitzgerald's story portrays the adventure of an adolescent's social education at the hands of her popular cousin. Bernice ultimately comes into her own, confident, assertive, independent.

Sillitone, Alan. "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner." In *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959, pp. 7 - 47.

Sillitone portrays a rebellious, alienated youth sent to reform school. Colin resents being the schoolmaster's pawn, used as an athletic representative of the school and for the headmaster's glory.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" In *The Wheel of Love and Other Stories.* New York: Vanguard Press, 1970, pp. 34 - 54.

Fifteen-year-old Connie likes to listen to pop music, to make trips to the shopping mall and drive-in restaurant with her friends, and to check her face in mirrors. Connie daydreams. Images from the world around her and lyrics from music swirl in her head. Mental clutter keeps her from recognizing danger and what is actually happening to her when 40-year-old Arnold Friend comes to her door. Events move too fast for Connie's clear decision making.

Updike, John. "A & P." 1962. Rpt. in *The Art of Fiction.* Eds. R. F. Dietrich and Roger H. Sundell. 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974, pp. 240 - 245.

Updike portrays an adolescent responding to his store manager's ridiculous and obvious voice of authority. But the issue remains a question. Does the youth take a stand on a principle, or, does he sacrifice himself?

Adolescent Place in the World: learning, working, crossing cultures, membership in social circles, membership in political or religious community, exposure to war

Bolt, Robert. "A Man for all Seasons." New York: Random House, Inc., 1960.

Bolt's play is historical fiction. It presents the story of Sir Thomas More's trust in England's law and his refusal, as a Catholic, to sign approval of King Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine. The play includes portraits of young adults, Margaret, More's intellectual daughter, and Richard Rich, a legal clerk who, ascending to power, turns against More. Included are themes such as: family relationship, self-expectations and moral decision making, and relationship to church and state.

Borland, Hal. *When the Legends Die.* 1963. Rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

Borland's novel portrays a contemporary Native American, from boyhood to manhood, and his experience with Ute and white cultures. The novel includes themes such as: relationship to self, to others, and to nature, memory of the past, vision for the future, and moral choice and decision making.

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.* Introd. Eleanor Roosevelt. New York: Random House, 1952.

Anne's diary, kept from age thirteen to fifteen, is an account of her family's hiding from the Nazis in occupied Holland. It is a description of Anne herself growing physically and emotionally. "Written by a young girl — and the young are not afraid of telling the truth — it is one of the wisest and most moving commentaries on war and its impact on human beings that I have ever read." (Eleanor Roosevelt).

Miller, Arthur. "The Crucible." 1953. Rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1974.

Miller's play is historical fiction. It presents the story of a witch trial in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. It is Abigail, an adolescent, who, with her friends, "cries out" an accusation, initiating the fears and suspicions that mount into hysteria. The play includes themes such as: relationship to friends, relationship in community, adolescent choice and decision making, and questions of law and conscience.

Santoli, Al. *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It.* New York: Random House, 1981.

Santoli has collected stories from American young adults — men and women who were soldiers, medics, nurses, and clergy in Vietnam. From the preface: "It is often said that it is impossible for the uninitiated to understand war. But in our book we hope you will see what we saw, do what we did, feel what we felt." The stories are short, one to seven pages. The work traces how individuals came to find themselves in uniform and in war.

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. "The School for Scandal." 1777. Rpt. in *Sheridan Plays.* Ed. Cecil Price. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 217 - 300.

Sheridan's play is an 18th-century comedy of manners. Gossipy characters combine friendship with character assassination. Names include: Teagle, Surface, Back-bite, Sneewell, Candour, and Snake. The play presents a humorous view of malicious social competitiveness in friendship. (Several recordings of stage productions are available. Hearing the lilt and cadence of dialogue enhances humor in characters' wordplay.) Although there are no adolescent characters, the changing rhythms of friendship, as Sheridan satirizes them, are universally descriptive of adolescents and adults.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* 1885. Rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967.

An adolescent — Huck — narrates. The novel explores family relationships, friendships, and adventures. Huck shapes a view of the world and makes choices and decisions toward his future.

Suggested Reading List for Teachers

Berman, Louise M. *New Priorities in the Curriculum.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1968.

Basic to Berman's thinking is a principle associated with John Dewey: education of benefit to growing individuals is education of benefit to society. Berman begins with a view of man as a process-oriented being. Human processes (perceiving, communicating, loving, knowing, decision making, patterning, creating, and valuing) are defined and described.

Boyer, Ernest L. *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983.

Boyer's report includes description of language and its priority in curriculum, general goals for the study of literature, and a view of human relationship and the necessity for connectedness.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.

Buber finds meaning in active regard between beings. The I - Thou relationship, rather than the I - it relationship, is one of connectedness. I - Thou extends to human relationships with the natural world.

"From Snakehill to Spring Bank: A Classroom Publishing Project." National Writing Project. Berkeley: University of California, 1980.

A videotape presentation of Marian Mohr's Fairfax County Public Schools foxfire project. Teachers and students are shown interviewing local residents, transcribing recordings and writing oral histories, organizing for publication and distribution in the community. Cooperative learning is illustrated.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Gilligan's study describes patterns in male and female voices. She explores the role of reasoning and separation in men's relationships and the role of emotion and connection in women's relationships. The moral necessity for integration of these human strands and capacities is described.

Johnson, David W., et. al. *Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1984.

The study presents a description of "the importance of relationships with other children and adolescents for *constructive* socialization and healthy cognitive and social development" (p. 6). Differences between traditional group work in schools and cooperative learning are explored. Suggestions for facilitating cooperative learning are included.

Rogers, Carl. *A Way of Being.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980.

Rogers presents issues in humanistic psychology and humanistic education. Person-centeredness and themes of relationship are valued.

"Spirit of Place: American Writers Look at People and Places." Sixth Annual University of North Dakota Writers Conference, Department of English. Grand Forks, North Dakota: University of North Dakota, 1975.

The videotape presentation explores the concept of human relationship to setting and landscape. Writers both read and discuss their work.

Book Review

Twayne's Young Adult Authors Series

Patricia J. Campbell. *Presenting Robert Cormier* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1985)

Alleen Pace Nilsen. *Presenting M. E. Kerr* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1986)

Jay Daly. *Presenting S. E. Hinton* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1987)

Sally Holmes Holtze. *Presenting Norma Fox Mazer* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1987)

by

Kay Hoyle Nelson

At last. Introductions to authors our young adults are reading. No more paging through journals for a few details about the life and art of these fine writers. A series is under way. With the successful Cormier and Kerr texts already on many library shelves, with recently issued Hinton and Mazor studies now under scrutiny, and promised volumes on Norma Klein and Paul Zindel available this fall, the rapidly growing series demands our attention, and our praise. Those new to the field of young adult literaturer will profit handsomely. As an index alone, each text warrants the modest investment for its brief but comprehensive look at the life and art of the writer. In format, all share features. Each starts with a short chronological listing of important dates (birth, schooling, marriage, children, publications), and opens with a chapter providing fuller biographical details. Each volume examines all works—offering summaries, interpretations, evaluations; and providing, where appropriate, appendices with information on film versions of the works. Each also concludes with bibliography of articles, interviews and fictions of the author as well as selected book reviews, journal studies, and other secondary materials.

But this series offers much, much more. For teachers of English, like, myself, these texts bring new voices and new perspectives to the conversation about literature for adolescents since contributors come from many fields — some are teachers, but others are editors, librarians, critics, or authors in their own right. For those wanting a fuller look at young adult authors, the texts "present" writers in highly accessible formats,

these designed to appeal to a younger audience as well as the more mature. The first four volumes illustrate a welcome variety in approach: Campbell's initial work targets the young reader in its call to join her and embark on an intimate, personal, chatty trip into Cormier territory — first into his home for a peek at his life and a talk about his art, then into his stories for a discussion of how they work; Nilsen's study of Kerr cultivates a more academic approach with concentration on appeals to the adolescent, drawing out the ways in which the life of the reader and the life of the art intersect; Daly, in a third volume, conducts a formal analysis of the artist working within a tradition, and in the process gives an interpretative reading and evaluative commentary on the development of Hinton's art. Holtze, in the fourth text, focuses on Mazer's working class background as the primary influence on material and message. Even a cursory review will confirm that these volumes perform a variety of services: informing, explaining, interpreting, evaluating, and always inspiring a reading and re-reading of the fictions they present.

More than the others, Patricia J. Campbell's treatment strives to bring the young adult in the conversation. At the outset, she devises a simple, but appealing method of inclusion by inviting the reader to join her in a bicycle ride to Robert Cormier's house, imitating a scene out of one of his novels but with no mention—a pleasure to those who recognize the tactic, and a suprise in store for those who do not. A homey narrative takes us on a wintery day's tour, circling through two small Massachusetts mill towns that become settings for the fiction, where our guide sees and hears echoes of the works. Venturing toward the unknown, slightly awesome world of an unmet, author, she hunts for clues to his personality, and models the investigative techniques she hopes her young reader will eventually imitate. Her understandable apprehensiveness at a pre-arranged meeting with the writer famed for his ability to bring us face to face with the monstrous evils within others and ourselves dissipates, however, with a front door opening on a modest household and the man, slight, smiling, welcoming with an offer of hot chocolate.

Campbell has a comfortable, familiar way of linking Cormier with the world of the younger reader, and she spares no effort to explain her Clark Kent of young adult fiction, seeking to unfold the mystery of the man with kindly eyes and endearing ears (comic features of the artist who controls sight and sound, we guess), a man who can change into an all-powerful, all-terrifying creator of good and evil. From his personal life, she culls details to soften and humanize—how, for instance, he pronounces his name one way while agreeing to any vocalization others happen to give it; how he has overcome a crippling fear of elevators to claim victory in a trip to the top of Sears Tower. Campbell concentrates on this writer's obvious accessibility: ensured for his family by a living room office with no door, and established for his readers through mailings with answers to commonly posed questions about the novels, personal responses to special queries, and amazingly—with some telephone number published in one of the works.

Having maneuvered us into a curiosity sympathetic with her own, Campbell then lets Cormier speak for himself in a chapter largely composed of quotations — providing notes on his nocturnal habits, the discipline and concentration developed as a newspaper writer, his view of writing as a process of discovery, his own curiosity about characters who spring to life with idiosyncratic strength and potential, his desire to communicate on an emotional level, his willingness to cut and paste in order to shape and reshape the fictive world, his love of words, the influence of other writers, his wish to be considered seriously, his delight in his audience, his philosophical and moral commitment.

Seven chapters take up the works in order of their ability to generate admiration and controversy, and vary in analysis so that the younger reader (and the older) will not suffer the tedium of a similar treatment for all. Staring with Cormier's best known, and perhaps best work, *The Chocolate War,* Campbell launches into a description of its cinematic style, roving omiscient narration, literary allusion, and omnipresent religious symbolism — weaving all into a portrayal of Cormier's overpowering themes of innocence and evil. And while she manages a conventional analysis, she slowly reveals the way in which the literary work is a construct, and convinces that it does not materialize magically, easily, and unalterably.

Her demonstration that a novel results from careful crafting—with some parts retained, others omitted—leads appropriately into a discussion of two vital corollaries of the reading experience: interpretation and evaluation. Campbell, ever conscious of a potentially young and untutored charge, confirms that intelligent and perceptive people may have divergent opinions about the meaning, significance and value of a work. Her fifth chapter considers the process of selection and emphasis, then addresses the problem of censorship, always an issue touching young adult literature. Illustrating with Cormier's own deliberations over fare suitable for his young readers, his wrestlings with editorial suggestions on what is or is not appropriate for his audience, she applauds his insistence on an integrity of vision that wins artistically and humanely.

To consider another aspect of the reading experience, Campbell looks at the extraordinary *I Am the Cheese.* Its fragmented interwoven sections lend themselves to a lesson on the pleasures of multiple readings: the flush of a first joy emerging as each piece of the puzzle comes into play and we see the unfolding picture; then a second delight where, with curiosity satisfied, we discover the aesthetic experience of the well-conceived piece. For the younger contemporary audience with so little time or inclina-

tion to read a work more than once, attention to additional readings produces another, not inappropriate, side benefit: her point supports Cormier's own thematic insistence that we need to take a second look at what we do.

Toward the end of the study, Campbell surveys the materials and devices that are hallmarks of Cormier's works. The complex structure of *After the First Death* prompts a review of doublings, parallels, clues, riddles, threads, masks—all means to explore persistent themes of trust and duplicity, innocence and evil, patriotism and fanaticism. This seventh chapter, along with the eighth on his autobiographical short story collection, offers students ample material for exploration of the artistry, and prepares for the ongoing fascination with questions of what happens once the novel ends. Cormier's most recent *Beyond the Chocolate War* responds to inquiries from readers but also to his own perpetual What If? Campbell considers this novel not a sequel but another transformation, one more magic act with familiar materials—adolescents in a boys' school exploring friendship,sexuality, power, honor, and showmanship—to create terrifying worlds that momentarily become real places.

Then finally, as a concluding gesture toward her early promise to take us to the center of this mysterious creative power, Campbell finds herself turning to Cormier's wife of 23 years who, once after typing some of his manuscript, looked at him and spoke for us all:

"Who are you?" she said after a long moment. "We've been together all these years, but sometimes I wonder." (125)

If the first book in this series wins over the student curious about the writer behind the works, the second will assuredly win over the teacher. Alleen Pace Nilsen provides an exceptionally fine discussion of the prolific and popular M. E. Kerr (Marijane Meaker a.k.a. Laura Winston, Vin Packer and Ann Aldrich in that other literary world of adult fiction). Organizing chapters into specific roles—the person, storyteller, writer, and teacher—Nilsen draws a picture guaranteed to inspire our bringing Kerr into the reading lives of your adults. And she deftly reveals why we will meet no resistance when she describes how Kerr "breezes into teenagers" lives like an Auntie Mame—more experienced and worldly than their friends and less uptight and protective than their parents . . . treats them as though they are respected party guests worthy of her best efforts at charm and wit" (99).

Nilsen enjoys setting this writer apart from her peers, establishing how she clearly does not fit the profile of the author for young adults—Kerr was never a high school teacher, she has no teenage children, and she does not write books for

adolescents because of her own frustrations as a teenager. Relying heavily on the autobiographical collection *ME ME ME ME ME: Not a Novel* to establish biographical facts, Nilsen underscores Kerr's natural affinity for writing, duly demonstrating her point that we can find more Kerr in written form than in spoken. Nilsen sketches a young woman's years growing up in Auburn, New York, taking special note of a father's figure—eccentric bicycle rider sporting a WWI French beret as be supports the WWII effort by exchanging his job in mayonnaise manufacturing for one dehydrating onions for field rations, a man who leaves a strong imprint on this writer's ideas and images. The familiar situations abound, of course—boyfriends or lack of them, negotiations with family and friends to establish position, going away to school, traumas in personal identity, conflicts with authority, glimmerings of a writing career, college life with sororities and romances. Nilsen reviews this particular text at length, not because young adults are reading it (though she recommends they might) but because in it so much Kerr personality dwells. Interviews with the author simply confirm the life/art link—that fictional Cayuta is her hometown of Auburn just as Seaview is a modified East Hampton, that her fascination with life style develops out off these formative years. Nilsen makes it clear that Kerr's early career writing adult suspense stories prepared her for adolescents with no time for long drawn-out descriptive passage, no tolerance for didactic messages, and no application for situations that do not also entertain.

Rather than devoting specific chapters to each of the twelve novels, Nilsen quickly sketches main story lines while highlighting relevant characteristics of Kerr's storytelling. *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!* illustrates a love of contrasting characters who represent alternatives and options. *If I Love You, Am I Trapped forever?* with its broad range of characters establishes her understanding that while readers may come from the great mid-section of our society they will be intrigued by those at the extremes. Though an undeniable Kerr fan, Nilsen seeks accuracy in crediting artistic accomplishment. She cites character inconsistencies, overabundant literary references, and apparent rigging of events that can aggravate attentive readers; however, she is equally quick to explain that fans easily forgive a too-clever repartee like one finds in *The Son of Someone Famous* because it gives so much pleasure. Kerr, we learn, has an unerring ability to capture the pain of growing up: *Is That You, Miss Blue?* appeals to the reader beginning to separate from parents, and demonstrates this writer's sensitivity to the loneliness, apprehensiveness, questions and challenges a wider world will bring. Nilsen continually examines Kerr's work in light of this empathy. *Little Little*, for instance, while one of her funniest remains serious in its treatment of individual differences—offering levity to counter the more distressing experiences of those different in body but not in hopes, dreams, need and aspiration. Nilsen continually makes a case for bringing these books to our readers, finding *What I Really Think of You* and *Him She Loves?* attractive because they raise questions rather than give answers. Certainly, Kerr has not

had unqualified success: *Love Is a Missing Person* has generated mixed response. Still successes do outnumber: *Gentlehands* has become an often-assigned novel because it integrates so well two seemingly incompatible story lines—here the lighter teen romance at a resort merges with a more serious, problematic hunt for a Nazi war criminal. As an educator, Nilsen values Kerr's reader-based approach which starts with the familiar and readily understood personal situation then slowly advances to more complex social issues. She even hints that Kerr's latest cross-generational *I Stay Near You* may herald, in a comparable fashion, a new direction as it experiments with leading young adults beyond their own immediate present and into their spheres of influence.

Nilsen concludes with a shift back to the author's personality and its ramification for readers. Systematically she establishes the picture of a complex and identifiable individual, a writer who seeks recognition and understands her competition, a person who knows the importance and limits of the adolescent's world, a word wizard who can engage in verbal play yet remain deadly serious in her aim. In fact, Nilsen's final chapter on Kerr's goals for her audience could easily double as a rationale for inclusion of these works in the school curriculum, for it sets out the writer's ever—present and worthwhile preoccupations: development of intellectual curiosity, appreciation of language, cultivation of a love of reading and writing, and understanding of human motivation, roles and relationships. Nilsen concludes by typing Kerr's work with that of television's sit-com, her chief rival, and by illuminating the crucial difference in commitment to improving the human condition.

In contrast to the earlier studies, Jay Daly's *Presenting S. E. Hinton* shifts to artistic considerations, and seeks to evaluate the writer of adolsecent literature in light of a tradition of American letters. A very brief background chapter confirms and exploits the myth of the reclusive, self—protective, isolated individual—the outsider—for it discloses scant information about Susan Eloise Hinton, the young author from Tulsa who remains hidden behind adolescent male protagonists probing fragmented contemporary American landscapes and touching our history and heritage.

Daly's formal and directive approach to this writer's artistic competence may appeal more to those who like a positioned view. But even for those who prefer a criticism that opens a text to multiple interpretations, his approach is not without merit in that it erects a field of question and challenge. Each of the four main chapters offers a summary of the story under discussion, an evaluation of critical reception in journals and newspapers, and a personal reading of the work. At the outset, Daly finds promise in *The Outsiders*, for here is the passionate outpouring of a seventeen-year-old girl who witnessed a street gang confrontation that ended in murder, and wrote about it even as

her own father lay dying in a hospital. To measure her artistic achievement, he ushers in Fitzgerald's ACTION IS CHARACTER, and uses this standard to examine her street/rogues' gallery which ranges from the popular fourteen—year—old Ponyboy Curtis to his slightly older, more perplexing mentor Daly. Daly does not dwell on the milieu of street violence and gang warfare where factious Socs and Greasers continually flirt with the rumble, but instead gravitates toward themes that have a literary tradition; he names three — Communion or Sunsets, Society of Orphans, and Staying Gold — as concerns central to Hinton's larger vision of our common experience, separation, and loss of innocence.

If, for Daly, the first novel suffers in its uncontrolled zeal, the second fails from an overzealous control. Looking again to the motivating moment as a key to the final product, he questions the value of a work that developed as an exercise to overcome writer's block. The two-pages-a-day generated by dutiful typing yielded *That Was Then, This is Now*, a competent technical advance but one lacking inspired movement. While granting an appeal in its themes of time, change, and friendship — again with young men crossing into and out of street gang culture — Daly finds this novel significant merely as an exercise to hone skills, a way to experiment with narrative devices, myth and legend. Thus, in his own analysis, there is less time on the relationship of Mark and Byron, and lure and allure of their potent worlds, the evolving separation, and more on themes and images — less on what does appear and more on what might.

In *Rumble Fish*, however, Daly finds the mythmaking art he seeks. This next short novel of passion, grace and technical mastery traces a street fighter's slow remembering of a personal and mythic past. Once more, Daly locks into the precipitating event—this time Hinton's fascination with a picture of a boy and a motorcycle clipped and carried without clear understanding of why. Daly praises this narrative which Hinton developed from a story first published in her university alumni magazine. He admits that readers have been at odds over the value of this work, but speculates that some disagreement may have been spawned by a poor film handling (All Hinton's works have been turned into films, and Daly discusses these in the appendix). Daly genuinely admires this cameo of a young, sensitive street hoodlum recalling, recounting and delicately recognizing his inability to control his fate; he pinpoints pivotal images in a world colored by perception—watching Rusty-Jones, lover of street fights and street lights, move toward his brother/hero Motorcycle Boy and into contact with the colorless, intellectualized, deflated and defeated life of the classical hero and medieval knight—with themes of destiny, isolation, and awareness conspiring to blur vision.

No such lavish praise develops for the later *Tex* even though Daly deems it mature storytelling—straightforward, realistic, integrated—with traces of writer removed.

Returning, once more, to criteria in the character/action matrix, he exposes a Hinton orphan rooted in the timely, not the timeless, a protagonist oddly disappointing despite an uncompromising honesty, integrity, responsibility, generosity and hope. Although seeing here the continuation of concern with familial, social and economic survival raised in earlier works he loses interest in a world which he believes has been aptly described by one reviewer as that of "unexpected contentment" (91). The most recent work disappoints because it fails to meet Daly's standard for an art that "explodes into an awareness that is truly subversive, that shakes the foundations of the reader's version of comfortable reality" (94). Perhaps, if we accept Daly's version, *Tex* is too mature.

Anyone who reads all volumes in this new series will soon appreciate the individual styles, both strengths and weaknesses. Sally Holmes Holtze would lay claim to special challenge in *Presenting Norma Fox Mazer,* as she faces a writer whose growing body of works defies neat classification. Holtze looks for a partial explanation in this writer's personal and literary roots. The first chapter, replete with pictures spanning childhood to motherhood brings us a writer with poor European immigrant relations, parents forced to leave school in the eighth grade, a blue collar household—all materials for novels exploring working class economic viability. Yet literacy of the family also comes into play, for Mazer taught herself to read before entering school. And Holtze, it seems, would connect personal history with literary by noting slow changes in the young adult genre as Mazer was growing up: in the 1930-40's female protagonists on society's fringes were beginning to face complex social and economic issues; then in the 1950-60s realistic voices of young protagonists were beginning to sound, with Salinger early, Hinton and Head later. Into that world comes young Mazer, starting to write, making up stories about imaginary triplet brothers—a girl pre-occupied with a desire to look into the lives of others (her safe voyeurism) and a need to share what she sees.

Holtze's promise to trace the evolution of the artist nearly stalls at the first and biggest hurdle. Most troublesome is the one short chapter determined to provide a chronological overview of thirteen novels which elude easy description and categorization. Holtze attempts to offset the litany-like survey with attention to distinctive features. She outlines in *I Trissy,* the many narrative devices often found in Mazer since these can range from the more private and personal diary entries to imagined public newspaper articles. Holtze wrestles with the distracting and disconcerting nature of a shifting narrative voice which undermines any sense of unity in the protagonist. Later she surveys elements of style and concludes that Mazer writes more appropriately for young adults when she moves away from descriptive passages, like those in *A figure of Speech,* and develops dialogue that can simultaneously move action and reveal character, citing an example in *Taking Terri.* Though unable to praise Mazer's on-going

stylistic experimentation, Holtze does grant some genuine successes: *Mrs. Fish, Ape, and Me, The Dump Queen,* a novel perhaps more suited to earliest adolescence, exemplifies an exceptionally fine handling in Mazer's special niche of the relationships between women; and the more recent *Three Sisters* offers a story with a protagonist Holtze praises as wonderfully believable and passionate.

Holtze actually finds more comfort in the short stories. Holding Poe's recommendations for brevity and single effect as criteria compatible with her own, she examines Mazer's two collections, outlining subject matter, recurring themes, characters, action, and setting. She recommends the first grouping as the more satisfying in that it seems to have an overarching unity that is missing in the second. Again, Holtze gives ample attention to narrative devices, but does not address, as we might hope, the "effect." Rather, she turns in a subseguent chapter to point out this writer's simple, heartening messages to the young.

Praising Mazer's ability to side-step the didactic yet remain inspirational and thought-provoking, Holtze describes those ethical dilemmas and unique challenges that arise within the context of the teenager's world. At times the situations are surprisingly simple (even simplistic when Holtze holds that one of the most difficult and courageous things teenagers can do is to tell parents they intend to disobey). Generally, the ensuing message justifies the fictive circumstances. And Holtze tags some of those brief messages she finds central: life is not easy, don't despair; other views and perspectives do exist; independence, self-reliance, responsibility and control provide steps into adulthood; relationships between individuals (whether male or female) require honesty, not hypocrisy and deception.

She emphasizes Mazer's insistence on behavior modelling as instrumental in bringing young readers to question, examine, and learn. Holtze herself believes that readers of young adult fiction must be able to identify with the action, character and setting of the works. She concludes that Mazer's art succeeds particularly well when she writes about her own background, and she indicates that some success may be due to the fact that this author writes the kinds of books that she herself would like to read. As a confirmation of Mazer's popularity with the adolescent reader, Holtze closes with a brief anecdote about the time the author managed to trade a fresh copy of *Dear Bill, Remember Me?* for the one she had been asked to autograph — the proffered book was incredibly dog-earred because it had been read by 57 kids.

For those of you who are still not as certain about the new Twayne series as the 57 about Mazer, I recommend the following. Approach it as a fantastic party, a gathering of folk who have as common ground an enjoyment of young adults and their literature.

There you'll meet a variety of writers talking about authors with whom they've spent a great deal of time. Some of these writers you'll surely like, some you won't; some you'll agree with instantly, others you may reject. One person will charm you while another will raise your ire. You can find the polished speaker as well as the careless. Many you'll want to meet again or recommend to friends; one or two you might lay gently on a back shelf. Nevertheless, you should find excitement in this new gathering. And if not, there will always be the anticipation of the next, new entrant—precisely the one you've waited for.

Book Review

Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field

Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook. 1987

by

Hildy Miller

Many of us, teachers and researchers, want to expand our thinking about composition by reading varied research, but find ourselves feeling intrigued yet overwhelmed by the array of research methods in the reading. Currently, several studies compare some of the multiple modes of inquiry being used simultaneously throughout the field of composition. Most often the focus is primarily on the relative merits of experimental and naturalistic research, thus preserving the assumption that only methods derived from the social sciences are appropriate ones and preserving the notion that teachers, or practitioners, as North calls them, are recipients not makers of knowledge in the field. Stephen North's book is one of this genre — yet it is also significantly different: Rather than taking a comparative stance, asking proponents of different approaches to make their cases, he enters into the worlds of the many modes on inquiry himself, presenting a comprehensive view.

His purpose is to make sense of the "methodological landrush," as he calls it, that started in the 1960s, and since has proliferated into so many modes of inquiry that they vie for our attention and compete with one another in contests of validity and appropriateness for the study of writing. Composition is still a new field, thus North feels such methodological diversity, though it enriches the field, can strengthen it only if we are informed about the different methods and can bring about a rapprochement among them. Otherwise, he warns, this diversity will splinter the field (itself a splinter), leaving its fragments in other disciplines.

North accounts for these many modes of inquiry by grouping the methodological communities that use them into three major categories: practitioners, scholars, and researchers. The section on Practitioners recognizes that much knowledge has been and continues to be generated by teachers and transmitted mainly by oral means into a considerable body of lore: The other two major categories account for the dual position of composition in both the humanities and social sciences. The section on scholars

discusses the methods of knowledge-making traditionally associated with the humanities: historians chart where we are now by looking longitudinally at where we've been. Philosophers explore our premises, logic, and conclusions. Critics examine texts, using perhaps a hermeneutical method to probe the consciousness of a given writer: The corresponding section on researchers contains methods associated with social sciences. Experimentalists look for relationships between isolated variables in order to infer universal principles. Clinicians study writers doing preset tasks in restricted settings. Formalists build models. And finally, ethnographers try to understand the "imaginative universe" of a particular social context, such as the classroom.

For each research approach he outlines the typical procedure used to investigate a problem, provides detailed analyses of research or scholarship exemplifying it, and comments on its strenghs and weaknesses: though he provides steps in the investigative strategy of each ("First, identify the problem. . "), this elaboration never appears to be a lock-step account of method so much as a means of inviting us to compare different modes of inquiry. Such detail encourages us to move beyond oversimplified maxims of comparison, such as distinguishing experimentalism from ethnography by characterizing the former as hypothesis-testing and the latter as hypothesis-generating. Similarily, instead of presenting the methods as if they developed in isolation, he shows the cross-influences of the research methods on one another. He calls into question, for example, whether ethnography really needs corroborating evidence from "triangulation," asking whether this is perhaps a quasi-experimental notion we have imposed on it. So throughout each discussion of method we see both its characteristics and its cross-influences.

While he provides thoughtful discussions of the individual modes of inquiry and their interconnections, he also explores the implications of each kind of knowledge-making for the field as a whole. Always, scholarly/research/practitioner questions are placed within the context of current political influences. He asserts, for example, that we tend to scapegoat practitioners, holding this group responsible for literacy problems, and he also suggests that the predominance of the experimental method encourages us to regard other modes of inquiry as less valid.

This book has some notable strengths that set it apart from similar reviews of inquiry methods. He recognizes the primacy of practitioners and the pervasiveness of knowledge this group generates: As he humorously puts it, like members of a colonized territory it refuses to abandon its religion. And he acknowledges that our field has roots deep in the humanities and shows the value of such scholarship: in particular, the section on hermeneutic inquiry, exemplified by North's own work, is a useful account of a method of making knowledge new to our field.

Of course the book also has its shortcomings. In producing a work of this breadth he often sacrifices depth. While he carefully analyzes and exemplifies pertinent research, her uncovers little of the *roots* of the different modes of inquiry before we adopt them from other disciplines. This omission is particularly evident in his section on the hermeneutic method: in it he ascribes its origins to literary studies. Yet this shallow account distorts the method, since it mentions nothing of its roots in the philosophy of phenomenology and the serious consideration it is currently being given in the social sciences (see *American Psychologist*, October 1985, and others). Similarly, in his discussion of the philosophical approach in general, and the work of Ann Berthoff in particular, he regards philosophical scholarship as "foraging" ideas from other fields, failing to see that philosophical perspective underlies and orients our work in both research and practice.

Still, his work succeeds in comprehensively examining the many ways of making knowledge in Composition, noting how these ways effect one another and the field as a whole. It is an intelligent book directed towards an informed audience of both researchers and teachers—all of us wandering in the thicket of competing methodologies—and his conclusions never lapse into cliché. In a tone often informal and sometimes frankly opinionated, he interweaves formal analyses of pieces of research with illustrative anecdotes. And he writes with a consciousess awareness that composition is a field in flux. At a time when our field is taking stock of its modes of inquiry, this book recommends our attention.

Book Review

The Bedford Guide to the Research Process,

Jean Johnson

(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987, 380 pages).

by
Nancy MacKenzie

The Bedford Guide to the Research Process does what no other research guide I have used does: it presents research as an exciting process of exploration and discovery. The preface sets the tone by referring to research as a quest, likening it to Sir Galahad's search for the Holy Grail and Ahab's for Moby Dick.

Then the first chapter provides an overview of the searching, re-searching, and writing process with emphasis on keeping two kinds of records: source notes (the usual notecard material) and search notes — a journal recording where the researcher has looked, what has been discovered, and who was interviewed, along with the problems encountered and successful strategies.

Ideally suited to its intended audience, undergraduates in any discipline, this book would serve well as the main text in a writing course which focused primarily on teaching the research paper. Or, with its cross-curricular focus, it would serve equally well as an auxiliary text in any other college course which required students to write a research report. There are four full-length examples of student papers using three different documentation systems, along with an annotated bibliography of basic resources in over 25 different subject areas.

Professor Johnson produces a uniquely up-to-date research guide by dealing with three areas in particular: use of computers and databases, non-library sources, and graphic aids.

Word processing is presented as a tool for locating and gathering information as well as writing and revising the paper. The author explains the advantages of using an on-line database and provides an extensive example. She even includes a guide for the student to follow when consulting a librarian to do the actual search.

The author explains that the library houses mainly information about the past, and that for the most current information researchers must move outside the library to conduct interviews and written surveys; look through government records as well as letters, diaries, and journals; and possibly

conduct experiments themselves. The book includes tips on preparing for, conducting, and following up on the interview; there are also tips and cautions on designing a survey questionnaire; and the author tells the student who to see at the courthouse when looking through public records. In this section on primary sources it is particularly evident that Professor Johnson has conscientiously written this book with the inexperienced student's needs in mind.

The feature which most strikingly sets this research guide apart from others is its treatment of graphic aids. Students are encouraged to use them for any paper, not just those in science or engineering where graphic aids are most common. The text explains how information lends itself to presentation in the various forms: tables, charts, graphs, diagrams, and photographs; seven sample figures are provided.

In addition to these areas which other research guides fail to deal with adequately, *The Bedford Guide* does a better job than others of addressing three areas of special difficulty my students always seem to face: finding a topic, planning their time, and avoiding plagiarism while integrating information from secondary sources with their own ideas and interpretations. In discussing topic selection, Professor Johnson emphasizes the evolutionary process of choosing a topic, including adjusting to the various constraints (such as time and available resources) that all researchers struggle with. Students are shown how to come up with a topic that they are interested in — even when the subject is assigned. And the importance of making a timetable is emphasized, with examples provided so students have some assistance in estimating how long each stage of the process is likely to require. This text also skillfully uses examples to define plagiarism and teach students how to use and acknowledge sources properly so as to avoid inadvertent plagiarism.

Given everything the book covers, one might expect it to be unwieldy, but that is not the case. The book is only 380 pages long with an attractive cover, and its size (6" x 9") makes it easy to handle.

So much is packed into a relatively small space because the author doesn't waste any words. Because the book is succinctly written, the user does have to pay close attention when reading. Yet it's eminently readable because of Professor Johnson's tone, which reflects respect for her reader and enthusiasm for her subject. I recommend the *The Bedford Guide to the Research Process* for use in any college class which requires the student to produce a research paper.

Notes on Contributors

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Announcements

1.

Seeking Editor for the *Minnesota English Journal.* The position of Editor of the *Minnesota English Journal* will be vacant as of May 1, 1989, when the current editor completes his term. Members of the English profession in Minnesota who are interested in editing the *Minnesota English Journal* should send a letter of interest and a *vita* to the following address. Editing the journal requires service on the MCTE Advisory Board and the MCTE Publications Board. The deadline for applications is February 15, 1989. Please send applications to Richard Dillman, Editor, *Minnesota English Journal,* English Department, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301.

2.

MCTE Spring Conference. The MCTE annual spring conference will be held April 14 and 15, 1989 at the Sunwood Inn Motel and Convention Center,St. Cloud, Minnesota. MCTE invites proposals for twenty-five minute presentations, for sessions of three related presentations, or for workshops. Please send a brief description of your proposed paper, session, or workshop to the appropriate section chair by January 30, 1989.

1.	Elementary Sessions	Joan Thames, Chair Groveland Park Elementary 2045 St. Clair Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105 (612) 293-8760
2.	Secondary Sessions	Bill Sullivan, Chair John F. Kennedy High School 9701 Nicollet Avenue South Bloomington, MN 55420 (612) 884-9571
3.	College Literature	Mark Ludwig, Chair English Department St. Cloud State University St. Cloud, MN 56301 (612) 255-4297
4.	Community College	Judy Harris, Chair 2819 34th Avenue South East Rochester, MN 55904 (507) 289-6450

5. College Composition — John Schifsky, Chair
Department of Language and Literature
College of St. Scholastica
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(218) 723-6096

Confence speakers include Lillian Bridwell Bowles, Gary Paulsen, and Marjorie Dorner.

3. **Minnesota English Journal Awards for Best Articles.** Two cash prizes $75.00 each will be awarded for the two best articles of 1988-89. These awards will be presented at the annual spring conference. Authors should follow the standard *Minnesota English Journal* submission rules. All articles published in MEJ will be considered eligible,though the publications board reserves the right not to grant an award if, in its judgement, none of the published articles meet the Publication Board's criteria or its standard of excellence.

4. **Announcing the Journal *Reader:*** *Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy*. Topics for forthcoming issues of *Reader* will include the following: The work of Louise Rosenblatt; relationships between reading and rhetoric; and reading and the theory of Roland Barthes. Reader is a semiannual publication aiming to generate discussion on reader-response theory, criticism, and teaching. Subscriptions are $8.00 a year for individuals and $10.00 a year for institutions (add $2.00 for subscriptions outside the United States). For further information, contact Elizabeth A. Flynn, editor, Department of Humanities, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan 49931.

5. **Call for Papers for Children's Literature Association Conference.** The 1989 Children's Literature Association Conference to be held May 12-14 at Mankato State University in Mankato, Minnesota, will consider the theme, "Where Rivers Meet: Confluence and Currents." The conference committee encourages members and non-members to submit papers or proposals for workshops and panel discussions. Aspects of the conference theme include water themes or use of bodies of water in children's literature, collaborations by authors or authors and illustrators, textual collaborations such as friendships or important meetings, and origins of works of literature for children. All projects that approach children's literature from a serious critical standpoint will receive consideration, with preference given to those that relate to the theme.

Papers should be 8-10 pages double-spaced (20 minutes reading time) and should conform to the new MLA citation format. They should not have been read or published elsewhere. The author's name and address along with a brief abstract of the paper should appear only on the cover sheet, which will be removed for judging. Three copies of the paper and a SASE should be submitted.

Workshop and panel proposals should include a brief discussion of the topic and intended audience as well as a list of participants and their affiliations. Three copies of the proposal should be sent.

Papers and proposals will be accepted through January 20, 1989. They should be sent to Kathy Piehl, Box 19, Memorial Library, Mankato State University, Mankato, MN 56001.

Editorial Policy: *Minnesota English Journal*

The *Minnesota English Journal* is an official organ of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English. It ordinarily appears twice a year, Fall and Winter/Spring. The *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 English profession in Minnesota. Manuscripts from Minnesota teachers are preferred. The *Journal* is distributed free-of-charge to the membership. Individual issues can be ordered for $3.50 a copy.

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.

Please consult the calls for papers that appear in each issue. At times, special issues will focus on specific themes announced in the *Journal* and posted at the *Minnesota English Journal* booth during the annual MCTE spring convention.

The editor will make every effort to acknowledge receipt of a manuscript within two 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, and the editor may make minor changes in the manuscript without consulting the contributor.