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**THE DYNAMICS  
OF INSTRUCTION**  
Grades 7-12



RANDOM HOUSE | NEW YORK

CONSULTING EDITOR **Paul Nash** BOSTON UNIVERSITY

to Our Students

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past, secondary school administrators, supervisors of English in the schools, and even some university instructors of English teachers seem to have viewed the English teacher as one who conveys what is in English textbooks. The efforts of administrators and supervisors in in-service training programs have been directed at familiarizing teachers with the content of the literature anthology and grammar book used at each grade level. The methods course has aimed at how to teach "a poem," "a novel," or *Macheth*. Everyone involved has assumed that the English teacher's chore is that of a middleman who is supposed to convey knowledge from textbook to student. As a result, the English teacher has frequently been no more than a cafeteria attendant dumping equal amounts of the same food on each student's tray, regardless of the student's appetite or inclination.

Fortunately, this stultifying view of the English teacher's role is changing. In the more exciting schools at least, curriculum work is no longer consigned to a small committee that meets one hour a week during the course of a semester in order to choose one or two texts to be used by all students. The more imaginative administrators encourage their teachers to use a wide variety of materials and activities appropriate to a wide range of student needs. Even the unimaginative administrators give lip service to the concept. In many schools department chairman and supervisors involve their teachers in planning new curricula. A few school systems encourage that effort by providing blocks of time each week to be spent on planning in addition to the teacher's traditional "prep" period. The old order changes, even in the public schools.

This book is concerned with the new order, slow though it may be in coming. The book's basic principle is that an English teacher must *plan* his curricula and not simply and arbitrarily assign a story, a composition, or a book report. There is much more to teaching English than making assignments. Assigning tasks is appropri-

are only when the students already know how to do those tasks. And if the students already know how to do them, what is the point in requiring the performance for its own sake? The real question is how can we teach so that the students learn *how* to do the tasks they cannot already do. How can the English teacher create an environment and a sequence of experiences in which the student becomes increasingly sophisticated as reader, writer, listener, speaker, and, above all, thinker? In other words, how can he create a curriculum that will enable the student to write forcefully and clearly without the aid of his English teacher's red pencil and to comprehend a poem without the benefit of the teacher's interpretation?

This question subsumes several other important questions. First, how can a teacher know where to begin with the particular students in his classes? The fact that students have been labeled twelfth graders is no reason to believe that the twelfth-grade literature anthology represents the most appropriate curriculum for them. Second, once the teacher knows what his students can do when they enter his class, how does he decide what to teach them next? The textbook is not likely to provide a useful answer. Yet the answer is crucial. Since any given class will represent a wide range of skill and background, the teacher must answer a third question: How can he organize his teaching so that it is appropriate to each of his students? Finally, how can he evaluate the effectiveness of his instruction? Most teachers concern themselves only with evaluating the students—that is, assigning them grades—as though the teachers themselves and what they do in the classroom were above evaluation. Clearly, the difference between evaluating students and determining the effectiveness of instruction is significant.

These questions and related ones are the province of this book. They must be answered if English instruction is to be dynamic rather than static. If we (prospective and experienced teachers) face the questions squarely and attempt to answer them, perhaps the old order will pass entirely. Perhaps the image of the English teacher as a cafeteria attendant will disappear.

#### **Arriving at Answers**

One can derive answers to the questions cited above through intuition, the experimental trial of alternatives, various kinds of theories, or through some combination of these approaches.

#### **Intuition**

Intuition might be defined as knowing something without knowing how we came to learn it. It is governed, in part, by the workings of the unconscious mind and, in part, by experience. Everyone possesses intuition. For some it is a very powerful tool, for others it only seems powerful. What is intuitively

obvious to some is often obscure to others. Some people get good results by following their intuition. But for others, following intuition may result in catastrophe.

If a teacher likes Poe and feels his class will like Poe, he might teach a unit on Poe in an unstructured way and have great success, doing things mainly by feel. But because he is unable to pass on his personal insights, his experience is not generally useful to his colleagues.

On the other hand, faulty intuition has led many a teacher astray. A teacher who notices that his students make many mistakes in their use of pronouns may, intuitively, reach for the school grammar and teach a series of lessons on pronouns. Some individual teachers may have met with some success using this intuitive procedure, but many more have not. Their sad experiences are documented extensively in educational research.

Intuition cannot be disregarded. Many aspects of experimental design are intuitive—for example, determining what to experiment on in the first place. The selection of elements in a theory rests on intuition about what is central and important in experience. A large part of philosophical thought deals with how to make intuitions objective—in the basic area of formulating definitions, for example. The problem is that although intuition may be reliable for some, it is not generally reliable for most. Still, good intuitions are to be cherished rather than scorned.

#### **Experiment**

Intuitions are subjective and internal whereas experiments are objective and external. Ideally, experiment should produce the best curricula. In a carefully worked out experimental design, there will be no guesswork. Empirical investigation relies upon a critical appraisal of evidence of the senses in which the results are derived by only such thinking as the mathematical kind. Such methods minimize the chance of failure from "human" causes: subjective, qualitative judgments and the like. Unfortunately, empirical methods don't eliminate failure.

Although systematic experiment may be the soundest way to develop curricula, few curricula are based on experimental findings to any significant degree. The trouble is that with any teaching-learning problem beyond the level of teaching pigeons to open doors or peck at circles the variables involved are impossible to control. Think of the difficulties involved in experimenting to determine the most efficient method of teaching students to write a relatively simple verse form like the limerick. First, is it more efficient to lecture on the characteristics of the form or to have the students discover them inductively for themselves? The experimenter will need two matched groups of students to control that condition. Second, should the students examine a model limerick or not? To control for that condition, the number of matched groups must be increased to three: one lecture with a model, one

lecture without a model, and one inductive group with a model. (By definition, an inductive group without a model is impossible.) A third important question is whether the students should learn about rhyme in the same lesson or in a previous lesson. To introduce that condition doubles the number of matched groups to six. There are many other necessary learnings to consider: scansion, the humorous effects, and so on. Every condition introduced doubles the number of matched groups, so that two more conditions would require a total of twenty-four matched groups.

There are many reasons to explain why curricula are rarely, if ever, developed through rigorous empirical methods:

1. Many of the learnings that might constitute the curriculum content are extremely complex, unlike the limerick, which is relatively trivial and easy to describe. As the task increases in complexity, it becomes extremely difficult to describe the desired learning in a rigorous way.
  2. As the learning task increases in complexity, the number of alternative conditions increases. Matching the required groups in a rigorous way is extremely difficult. With even a small number of alternative conditions, many schools or school systems would not find enough groups available. In situations where *homogeneous groupings* are used, another condition is added to the problem. Which conditions pertain directly to groups of different types?
  3. Introducing such variables as alternative texts used as central materials complicates things tremendously. In dealing with learning to write any prose form, for example, consider the number of available models alone, not to speak of the critical texts that discuss the models.
  4. It takes a great deal of time to prepare and evaluate experiments. Meanwhile, school does not stop. It is necessary to have some kind of program going while the experiments are being designed, carried out, and evaluated.
  5. Finally, the teacher variable must be considered. Operationally, teacher comfort in the use of any methods or materials can make a great difference in results. Thus, it is necessary to match not only students but teachers.
- Of course, all this is not to say that the English teacher should ignore research in general. When adequate research is available, he should make use of it in his formulation of curricula—for example, the research on the teaching of vocabulary and on the relationship between knowledge of grammar and ability to write. The point here is that the experimental trial of alternatives as a means of developing curricula is almost hopelessly complex and time-consuming.

### Theory

The third general method of curriculum development is to base curriculum practice on one or more theories. The term "theory" is used here in its technical sense. It does not mean nebulous thinking or guesswork. Rather, it means rigorously developed and stated formulations that begin in experience

—that is, in the careful, often experimental, examination of experiences, which are treated as data in a scientific way.

These data are then analyzed, and a hypothesis is formed. The statement of the hypothesis is a rather general and abstract one about the fundamental characteristics of the data and the relationships that exist among them. Furthermore, if the hypothesis is applied to new data, it should predict the characteristics of the new data and the kinds of relationships existing among them.

When the hypothesis has been repeatedly tested against new observations and is found to predict accurately the characteristics and relationships, it is at last promoted to the rank of theory. If later observations are made that seem to contradict the theory, *they* are at first thought to be suspect, not the theory. Theory is not a euphemism for guesswork.

Today, when the English teacher faces a number of competing theories on English curricula he may select for his guidance the one that he finds to be the most satisfactory. In making the selection, a model for theory evaluation is useful:

1. Any educational theory must have comprehensive explanatory power. For example, since much of learning is internal, the theory must deal with internalizations in some way. If the theory states that internalizations are unimportant or only hypothetical—or even nonexistent—this qualification has been fulfilled. If the theory ignores internalizations, it lacks explanatory power, by definition. In addition to discussing internalizations in some way, it must discuss empirically observable behaviors and the results of such behaviors (such as finished compositions).
2. A theory must be applicable to every observation of any datum. A theory of reading, for example, must discuss all kinds of reading: looking up numbers in a telephone book as well as reading E. E. Cummings' poetry, James Joyce's prose, and stock market reports.
3. The theory must be able to predict the character of data as yet undisclosed. A theory of spelling, for example, must state how words not yet in the language will be spelled when they are introduced into the language. Ideally, the theory will predict what cannot occur as well as what may occur.
4. The structure of the theory is important. If it is constructed in terms of levels, all the elements at a given level must be conceptual parallels. For a capricious but clear example, imagine a theory of "house architecture": Windows and doors could occur on the same level because they are conceptual parallels; wallpaper and roof timbers, not being conceptual parallels, could not occur on the same level.
5. When a number of theories appear to satisfy the foregoing criteria equally well and when the teacher must make a priority decision, he should choose the simplest one for his guidance. At one point in history, astronomers were faced with such a choice in dealing with "cosmological" theories presented by the Ptolemaic and Copernican schools of astronomy. Reliance on the simplicity criterion would have resulted in the better choice—the



the manuscript and his extremely perceptive comments have been invaluable. He has saved us from many grievous blunders. Any that remain should be attributed to the authors.

In addition to their patient listening to long discussions about the teaching of English, their typing and proofreading, and their comments on the manuscript, our wives have played a special role in the production of this book. They have been patient when we were grouchy, understanding when we were discouraged, and nagging when we were lazy. What can we say but thanks?

We owe special thanks to the many teachers who worked with us over the years as the theories and materials that constitute this book were developed and evaluated and to the great number around the country who adapted the ideas and materials for use in their classrooms and reported the results to us. One group must be singled out: the teachers who helped in developing materials used at the Project English Demonstration Center at Euclid Central School in Euclid, Ohio, and Case-Western Reserve University, especially Miss Jane Barber, Mr. Michael C. Flanigan, Mr. Jack L. Granfield, Mr. John C. Ingersoll, and Mrs. Betty Lou Miller; and Mr. Gary Elliot of Newton, Massachusetts.

In a very real sense, however, this book does not belong to us. It belongs to our students at every level from whom we have learned a great deal, sometimes at their expense, about the dynamics of English instruction.

# PART ONE

## Elements of Instruction

In order to do his most effective classroom teaching, a teacher must plan his work carefully. Before he can begin planning, he must have given thought to the character of the discipline of English as a field of study, and he must have precise information about his students.

The first chapter of this section begins by examining the discipline of English in terms of traditional teaching styles and the instructional viewpoint implied by each style, and then sets limits to the field of English studies.

The second chapter discusses the methods that the teacher uses in getting information about his students' attitudes, skills and knowledge. The most useful method of getting this information is through employing inventories that he develops.

When he characterizes his students in terms of individual attitudes, skills, and knowledge, he will find that there are many differences among them. The third chapter presents a number of techniques that may be used in differentiating instruction.

The fourth chapter analyzes the components of the formal planning of individual lessons and longer units of instruction, specifying the distinctions between the teacher's purposes, subject matter concepts, and the students' objectives in learning.

Chapter 5 describes inductive teaching, demonstrating techniques of questioning, leading discussions, and encouraging interaction among students and teachers.

The final chapter of the section considers the many kinds of evaluation the teacher must make including test development, the assessment of affective responses to the instruction, and the broader appraisal of the course content.

## English As a Subject: Structure and Process

Before an English teacher can determine what his students are like in relation to his subject, and before he can decide how to teach them, he must answer an important question. What is the subject of English? Many teachers never answer the question in an explicit, coherent fashion. Many simply accept the dictates of tradition, a fad of the moment, or a particular personal bias. But the question should be answered for the benefit of both teacher and student. The school principals of the world will not obtain materials for teachers without at least a superficial answer. And if a faculty has not answered the question, the students in their school may have an English program with almost no continuity at all. If you were to spend your professional leave day visiting Point Tipia High School, you would be likely to see a number of approaches to English teaching, each based upon a different philosophy of English. The word "philosophy" is used loosely. The bases for many approaches are more appropriately described as a set of beliefs collected from a variety of sources.

Begin at one end of the English corridor in Point Tipia High School and observe some of the teachers. First in line is Miss Soma, who teaches ninth graders and believes that nothing is more important than that the youngsters enjoy their work. Reading, she believes, should be fun. Her students recently studied *Treasure Island*, and Miss Soma feels they enjoyed it very much. Before they had even read the book, she told them that *Treasure Island* was about a hidden treasure and asked what they knew about pirates. A brief dialogue ensued in which the students talked freely of the films they had seen. Next, Miss Soma announced that the class would have a treasure hunt. The students elected a pirate committee to hide the treasure (candy bars) and make maps providing clues. Highly motivated, the committee spent a good deal of time in these activities, and after they were completed, the rest of the class spent three periods seeking the treasure.

According to Miss Soma, the whole activity was very successful. Then the class began reading *Treasure Island*. As they read, they periodically answered such questions as the following: What do you think of Long John Silver? What was the black spot? Why were the pirates so superstitious? When they had completed their reading, they worked on various projects, such as making elaborate treasure maps, writing out a ship's log for the voyage, and building model ships and stockades.

Miss Soma is presently planning a unit on mythology in which the students will collect words and trade names in current use that come from mythological sources. They will also make posters of the gods and scenes of Olympus. At the end of the unit they will have a party, with each student dressing as some mythical figure.

Mrs. Baugh, who teaches tenth graders, believes that literature is of little value if it is not relevant to the lives of the students. *Treasure Island* she would not touch with a ten-foot pole. She begins the year by getting students to list and then to examine their problems, a process that takes anywhere from one to four weeks. The students then decide which problems they would most like to investigate. The favorites have always been grades, dope addiction, dating, sex, juvenile delinquency, segregation, and, most recently, psychedelics. Once the students have chosen their first topic, they go to the library and begin doing research with the *Reader's Guide* and other research tools. Meantime, Mrs. Baugh seeks out relevant stories, poem, novels, and biographical materials. The topic of delinquency, for example, turns up such perennial favorites as *Hot Rod*, *Road Rucker*, and *West Side Story*. For dating she finds plenty of adolescent books, especially for girls. Sex offers certain problems as a topic for study.

The students enjoy the approach, and once they get going, they talk volubly about their own experiences and those of their friends. Each unit is capped off by group reports, panels, and so on.

Mr. Roper is a tenth- and twelfth-grade teacher. It has been his belief for years that students need to be exposed to the great literary works of our culture. He believes that if they don't get them in high school, they may never have another opportunity. Therefore, in the tenth grade he teaches *Ivanhoe* and *Julius Caesar* and in the twelfth grade *The Return of the Native* and *Macbeth*, and he includes as many other great works as possible. Although a few students—those who are the best all-around students in school—seem to appreciate the materials, there are times when most of them do not. Mr. Roper is convinced, however, that someday all will thank him. Someday they will recall the great moments of literature and that knowledge may give them strength in moments of crisis. If they do not like Shakespeare now, they will later.

Because the students frequently do not read their assignments, Mr. Roper makes a practice of giving weekly quizzes—sometimes even two or three in one week. They are usually short-answer quizzes, which are intended to keep

students on their toes. To be absolutely sure that students read the assignments, Mr. Roper covers them in class after each quiz, sometimes with each student reading a paragraph aloud until the end of the hour.

At the twelfth-grade level, the emphasis is on English literature. Mr. Roper explains each author's life and times, and the students read three or four selections from that author. They receive what he believes to be a thorough coverage of English literature from *Beowulf* (of which they read a brief passage) to World War I. By the end of the year, he expects them to know who Chaucer, Wordsworth, Keats, and the other authors were, what they wrote, and when they lived. He also expects them to be able to recall, in full, certain passages that he has assigned for memorization. This approach, he believes, prepares students not only for college but for life.

Miss Grimis, who has taught the tenth and twelfth grades for years, emphatically believes that students need to learn to use their language, not simply adequately, but forcefully and gracefully. Yet she has a fear that she is failing despite her long and strenuous labor. She notes with dismay that each day radio announcers, TV personalities, newspaper and magazine writers, not to mention the common workman, continue to degrade the language. She is determined, however, that her students will learn better. Even if they fail to carry what they have learned beyond the walls of the classroom, at least her classroom itself will remain a sanctuary for the language as it should be. So her tenth graders labor for half the school year over such niceties as the correct past tense form of "the," the split infinitive, and the agreement of pronouns with such antecedents as "everyone" and "somebody." They fill page after page of notebook paper with sentence diagrams in order to rid their compositions of the despised pair: run-on sentences and fragments of sentences.

One of Miss Grimis' special pleasures is watching her students improve in this respect. Though not many eliminate run-ons and fragments completely, at least such atrocities become somewhat rarer during the course of the school year. However, she does not ordinarily recognize the corresponding change that comes in reduced sentence length and complexity. But if she did, she would argue that students should not be allowed to write long sentences unless they can write them correctly. It is quite obvious to her that one cannot really communicate without the fundamental skills she teaches in tenth-grade grammar.

Despite what the research says, Miss Grimis is confident that she is using the right approach. What she finds rather frustrating, however, is having to teach so much grammar all over again to the same students in the twelfth grade. She has a rather strong suspicion that certain of the other tenth-grade teachers do not know grammar themselves—or at least they don't use it correctly. But she knows, in fact, that Mr. Slide and Mr. Goodrich have admitted quite publicly in the teacher's lounge that they teach no grammar at all.

Although Miss Grimis is quite right about Mr. Goodrich, she has misunderstood Mr. Slide's position. He believes heartily in what he calls "practical English" or sometimes "everyday English." He knows from experience that students abhor grammar of the diagram and fill-in-the-blank-with-the-correct-form varieties. He knows too that they are bored by most American literature in the anthology as well as by *The Scarlet Letter* and other "nineteenth-century stuff" that most eleventh graders are expected to read. He admits that there are a few who can handle it, but they are exceptional, indeed. He argues the importance of English in everyday life and builds his course to teach his students the essentials of reading and writing. They learn to fill out job applications and to write business letters and letters to the editors of nonexistent newspapers. They write short reports on hobbies and mechanical processes—in short, they do writing that is calculated to be useful in everyday situations.

Mr. Slide's treatment of grammar is essentially practical. When his students make a certain kind of error, he selects several compositions that illustrate the error, makes transparencies for projection, and throws them upon the screen for the students to examine. To Mr. Slide it seems to be a perfectly logical technique. Show the students the error in their own work so that they won't make it anymore. He finds it frustrating, however, that students apparently don't pay attention, that some who didn't make the error before make it afterward and that those whose papers were the actual subjects of criticism continue to make the same errors.

The class's reading comes largely from magazines and newspapers. As for fiction, Mr. Slide feels that boys far prefer *The Bridge over the River Kwai* to *The Scarlet Letter*. He devotes little time to poetry, although when he can find them, he uses poems about sports and adventure. Mr. Slide contends that poetry is not practical for these students who will later work a forty-hour week and spend their leisure at the corner tavern or in front of the TV set.

Mr. Goodrich, who teaches tenth and eleventh grade English, although he agrees with Mr. Slide on some issues, disagrees rather strongly on others. One of his favorite remarks is that human beings are more important than the aesthetic structure of a poem or grammatical formalities. He holds that literature, because of what it reveals about the human condition, must be the heart of an English program. His concern is with people—both his students and the people in the books they read. He feels, for instance, that his students need to understand the problems of American society. Therefore, he builds his units of instruction around such motifs or themes as the black power movement. Feeling that there are certain values that his students ought to have, he presents them through the medium of literature. Of course, it is always difficult to tell whether student values and attitudes actually change, but Mr. Goodrich assumes that they should be changed and hopes that his teaching will help to accomplish this.

The compositions that Mr. Goodrich's students write grow out of the prob-



lems they have been reading about. The assignment he regards as most successful is the one that the students write in response to the question, What would happen if a Negro family moved into your neighborhood? In telling colleagues about this topic, he notes that the students always have something to say about it, and what they have to say, of course, is his primary concern. He ignores errors in grammar and spelling, for he has found that marking the errors frequently results in far less sophisticated expression. As he takes a certain pleasure in observing in front of Miss Grimis, "There is really no point in emphasizing grammar in the eleventh grade. Kids who write grammatically correct papers, usually have nothing to say, and their expression is weak. Besides, if they haven't learned it by the end of the tenth grade, how can I teach it to them in a single year?"

Perhaps this profile of an English faculty is a bit exaggerated. Perhaps not each of the stereotypes would exist in a single school. But within many a school system, we can find them all and more. The group obviously has little in common, except that each member calls himself an English teacher. Although each teacher's instruction has some clearly admirable characteristics, the differences are so fundamental that no one of them can be considered completely adequate.

Miss Soma's desire to have all the students enjoy their work is clearly commendable, but whether her students do, in fact, enjoy the games they play or the materials they read is not so clear. Further, her objective is to have the students read individual works and know their content rather than to structure the lessons in such a way that the students learn more about how to read literature.

Mrs. Baugh is also concerned that her students be interested in what they read—that the materials be directly relevant to their personal lives—and for many students this is very important. But she ignores one important aspect of literature, its ability to take the reader out of his immediate confines and expand and intensify his sensitivity to the human situation. Again, as with Miss Soma, there is a question as to whether her choice and arrangement of materials enable the students to learn how to read literature. Although her students read *Hot Rod* and *Seventeenth Summer* with interest, many had read them or similar books years before with the same interest and understanding. In mathematics a similar technique would be patently absurd—that duplication problem that they had already learned to do adequately. Instead, he would take them on to a more difficult kind of multiplication or to division. It would be possible to ask some sophisticated questions about the rhetoric, structure, or aesthetic value of *Seventeenth Summer*, but Mrs. Baugh does not appear to have considered that possibility.

Mr. Roper, on the other hand, has very little concern for student interest. His motivating devices are tests and grades. Although he is aware of the humanistic values of literature, his arbitrary ordering of materials has little to

do with the human beings in his classes. If he were asked to define his curriculum, he would list the authors or works he requires his students to read and explain that the arrangement is designed to reflect what he calls the "development of English literature," an arrangement that places some of the most difficult material (John Donne, for example) early in the year and the easier material (Somerset Maugham) later in the year. He realizes that many of his students have difficulty in getting even the literal meanings of the works he assigns; they get low grades. Many others are not capable of interpreting what they read. "Still," he says confidently, "if they pay attention to class discussion and to what I say, they will pass the exams." If anyone asked, Mr. Roper would certainly say he wanted his students to read and interpret literature without his help, but his methods and his exams suggest his real concern: that his students display an understanding of the works he assigns and discusses. If and when he accomplishes this, he believes his duty to preserve the students' cultural heritage is complete. When he fails, as he does with many students, he attributes it to their stupidity.

No English teacher would argue with Miss Grimis' stated goal for her students: to use the language forcefully and gracefully. But what she means by the words "forcefully" and "gracefully" is certainly open to question. Whatever she may mean ideally, her practice reveals that, for her, language can be neither graceful nor forceful if it is not first "correct," correct in the sense that it uses the forms prescribed by the grammar book. Yet we cannot escape the fact that the language of a nonstandard dialect can be forceful in inciting to riot, that the dialect of an illiterate can be poignant and graceful in lamenting the death of a child. But even if her premises were right, her methodology cannot change dialect patterns in oral language. And if it brings the prescribed forms to written language, a concomitant effect is a change to oversimplicity in the effort to be "correct."

Mr. Slide's goal—meeting the vocational needs of his students—is certainly important. Unfortunately, because it is his only goal, English becomes merely another job-training class and loses its traditional liberalizing function. The reading of books becomes perfunctory, the writing of compositions simply utilitarian. The students read what they enjoy reading—what they can probably already read with little effort—and no real instruction takes place. The "practical" goal that Mr. Slide has established embodies a widespread belief that a certain breed of student is capable of, and interested in, little else than vocational training. But what can we expect of those students when the alternatives they most frequently encounter are those offered by Mr. Roper and Miss Grimis?

Mr. Goodrich's course is based on his conviction that literature has a liberalizing value and that it therefore should be used to develop values and change attitudes. Unquestionably, literature does have the power to develop and change attitudes, to give insight into aspects of the human condition, and to help us know how it feels to be someone else. In making use of this power,

however, Mr. Goodrich assumes that his students have the facility to gain from a book or poem whatever is there to be gained. If they do not, he assumes they can get it from class discussion, an assumption that both he and Mr. Roper hold. Further, he ignores the necessity for a critical and aesthetic evaluation of what his students read. The particular works that they read were chosen because he believes that they should approve the underlying ideologies. In short, Mr. Goodrich, like many other teachers, is not vitally and specifically concerned with helping his students to become sophisticated, independent readers who are capable of making their own judgments about the values reflected in what they read.

Many teachers assume either that their students are already competent readers or that they simply need to read books, poems, and other works in some order—chronological, interest-oriented, theme-oriented, and so on—in order to become competent. Very seldom is the order of the assigned reading related directly to either the ability of the students or a careful analysis of how literature has meaning.

The same is true of composition. Too many teachers assume that learning to write is simply a function of learning grammar of one kind or another and writing compositions every week or two. The only instruction in these cases consists of assigning, collecting, and correcting. Ordinarily, the teacher has made no analysis of the composing process as a whole, from the urge to write to the final product. Without an analysis of what composition is, Miss Grimis ignores the voluminous research that demonstrates the negligible effect a knowledge of traditional school grammar has on writing ability. Although the overhead projector can be a very effective tool for teaching, the projection of errors is better suited to teaching the error than eliminating it.

Clearly, a list of works or authors with composition assignments is an inadequate description of what English teaching is all about. Nor is a list comprised of work-attack skills, dictionary skills, usage items, and writing conventions an adequate basis for instruction. If we are to construct a curriculum for English, and every English teacher must do so for each of his classes, we must ask and attempt to answer a very basic question: What should our instruction attempt to do for each student?

Even though our six teachers are so much at variance in their approaches to teaching English, they would probably say they were concerned with the apprehension and interpretation of values as conveyed in language. Certainly each examines with his classes the values and ideas reflected in what they read, and occasionally in what they hear. Ultimately, this may be what the teaching of English is all about.

In the context of solar history, perhaps our moment is even more brief than Shakespeare supposed it to be. But our lives are real. We do endure for a measurable space of time, and most of us must believe that we have some significance, at least in terms of our relationships with others. Our values and ideas shape our lives out of animal existences, influence our attitudes toward

ourselves and our perceptions of the world, and determine the happiness, integrity, and even the humanity of others. To English teachers, the problem of values has a special significance. They are the experts on language in our culture; and language is the subtle shaper and inescapable vehicle of value systems.

History affords ample instances of how well-chosen language can program the values of the few into the many—the many who cannot control the language and who are unable to determine its effects. In a technological society, which is closer to 1984 than we might wish to believe, the necessity for a clear understanding of language is amplified a thousandfold.

To a certain degree, each man unavoidably sees himself as the center of existence. His language is a primary means of gaining perspective on his egocentricity and insight into the existence of others. Accordingly, language develops and shifts values.

From before the time of the cave paintings and petroglyphs, man has communicated through nonverbal means. In this century electronic media have made much of nonverbal aspects of communication. Still, it remains for language to translate and interpret the meanings conveyed by nonverbal means. Language is still our most significant means of understanding, of thinking, of organizing our perceptions, of being and becoming men.

### **The Structure of the Subject**

It is not the responsibility of the English teacher to impose ideas and values but to help his students understand how language works, cognitively, affectively, and aesthetically so that they can examine the values that are conveyed and shaped by language and can use language to formulate, synthesize, and evaluate their own values.

The first step in planning to reach this goal is to consider how people use language. Each normal person is both a receiver and an originator of language. In order to perform either function well, he must also be an interpreter of language meanings. As a receiver, he is both listener and reader; as an originator, he is both speaker and writer. All four of these functions are concerned with language that is external. The fifth function, that of interpretation or analysis, is primarily internal, working with language that has been received and designing language that will be expressed.

Obviously, neither the reception nor the production of language is simply a mechanical process. Philip Wylie once defined the American school as an "organism which teaches reading and writing . . . so that the pupil can communicate." To this he added the admonition that "these accomplishments should also be taught so that the pupil can think. . . ." Whatever else we might think about Wylie, we must applaud this distinction, though we might prefer a different phrasing: Reading, writing, listening, and speaking *must* be

taught in conjunction with thinking. We cannot afford the mechanical production or reception of ideas. This internal function of language—the thinking process—should be of pressing concern to the English teacher. In our culture, thinking cannot be divorced from language except momentarily and in minor ways. Thus, the English teacher, as an expert on language, cannot confine himself to the traditional quadrivium of language arts skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking); he must be dynamically concerned with the thinking processes that lie beneath them, with the identification and validation of ideas and value systems. At the same time these internal processes present the greatest difficulty and frustration, for *there is absolutely no way to observe the processes themselves*. The best we can do is to examine the external language that the student receives or produces. From this evidence and the evidence of our own experience, we can infer the internal processes of thinking.

Our examination of this evidence must attempt to answer two important questions: (1) *How does language convey meaning, cognitively, affectively, and aesthetically to the reader or listener?* and (2) *What aspects of the composing process and product must the writer or speaker be aware of and make use of? The answers to these questions lend structure to the subject matter.* Without them we cannot define, except vaguely, the goals of English instruction and must confine our teaching to random reading and writing assignments that are ordered by the seasons of the year, chronology, what the teacher hopes are the students' interests, or perhaps by nothing at all. Moreover, we cannot make instruction appropriate to both subject and student, for we have no way of determining what he already knows of the subject and no basis for deciding what to teach him next. But once we have determined the structure of the subject, we can help the student to understand how the language works and how to use it.

Thinking signifies conscious processes, and one clear reason for studying English in a formal setting is to bring external language under conscious control. In a democratic society we cannot justify teaching students to react to language unconsciously or to produce it unconsciously. This does *not* mean, however, that we must eliminate subconsciously derived reactions to, or expressions of, language but rather that we must help students to examine their reactions and ideas consciously. Readers often badly misinterpret what they read or hear because of some subconscious reaction that they assume is adequate. For example, it is common to hear adults dismiss movies or books with a pejorative comment or two that, too frequently, are the result of automatic, unexamined reactions. On the other hand, readers frequently have brilliant insights into the meaning or structure of a poem through a process that can only be called intuition. Certainly, such an intuition is worthy of conscious analysis and examination. A poet may have a compulsion to write a line, a stanza, or a whole poem, but, once written, he typically does not leave it unexamined and unrevised. The compulsive and intuitive, those understand-

pejorative

ings that emerge mysteriously from the subconscious, cannot and should not be disregarded.

The challenge for the English teacher is to give his students a solid understanding of the structure and meaning of language and, at the same time, to enable them to make the most sophisticated use of their intuitions by examining and evaluating them against that background. The intuition of a student who has the background to approach a language experience at all its levels of significance will be far more relevant, meaningful, and extensive than that of one who is unaware of all but the most obvious aspects of his language experience.

#### **Students, Goals, and Process**

One immense stumbling block in teaching English is the conflict between liberal and vocational goals, the conflict existing between the philosophy of a Mr. Roper who forces the same literature upon everyone and that of a Mr. Slide who uses literature to train his students in vocational skills. To some extent the conflict exists in every English teacher. On the one hand, he wants his students to have the skills necessary for survival and advancement in the workaday world; on the other, he wants them to enjoy literature and benefit from its liberalizing capabilities. The conflict, however, exists more in the mind of the teacher than it does in the needs of the students. It arises ordinarily because a teacher views the study of literature as distinct from the more basic skills of simple literacy, when, in fact, they are both part of the same process.

Although a degree of literacy may not be essential for physical survival in our culture, most nonliterate tend to live at a subsistence level compared to what we have come to believe is an acceptable standard. Their families disintegrate, their life expectancy is short, their children can have little hope for the future. Think of their limitations. They cannot read the labels of food packages and therefore cannot spend money on food intelligently. They are unable to pass driving tests in most states. They cannot read legal contracts or the conditions of credit under which they make purchases. In short, although they may survive, they can have no real integration with the culture.

Learning to read and write will not cure all the problems of poverty, but it at least helps to disintegrate the barriers that otherwise confine nonliterate. This basic literacy should be regarded as a minimal goal by the schools: enough skill at reading and writing to pass a driver's test, to read package labels, to enter into simple contracts, to fill out forms, to follow simple directions, and so on. Subsistence level skills such as these at least permit the person to operate intelligently and flexibly within the economic spheres of the culture.

Yet because these minimal skills are oriented toward subsistence in the

world of jobs and money, teachers often regard them as essentially foreign to English as a subject. But if we realize that a student cannot proceed to sophisticated listening, speaking, reading, and writing without the most basic language skills, it becomes clear that they are integral to the highest goals for the study of English.

It is not so easy, however, to define the highest goals. In one sense, defining a maximum suggests setting an arbitrary limit, and our ultimate goal should be infinite. For our purposes, it is enough to say that the highest goal should involve an understanding of the structure of the subject in the fullest sense of its cognitive, affective, and aesthetic dimensions and an ability to use those understandings.

Knowing the structure of the subject enables us to determine increasingly sophisticated student goals, beginning with those aspects of understanding closest to the students' current ability and leading ideally to the most advanced understanding of which they are capable. With appropriate instruction, the student should move as far as possible along the continuum, through the subsistence level skills to the humanistic study of language, literature, and composition.

This process by which the student learns to cope with the structure of English as listener, speaker, reader, and writer will necessarily involve a special emphasis on the study of written language. Yet the experience of oral language is also extremely important, for two reasons. First, the more limited a student's oral language the more difficult a time he will have with written language. Second, many of the learnings about written language will be developed and evaluated orally, so that *considerable time will be devoted to oral activities*. The reciprocal relationship of understanding oral language to understanding the written is obvious. Learnings in the one support learnings in the other.

Too often the English teacher is the only person in the class who expresses himself with any frequency. But if a teacher wishes his students to become more sophisticated in their dealings with language, he must create an environment that includes materials, problems, situations, and even seating arrangements in which each student can express his ideas and react freely to the ideas of others. Such an environment, of course, requires careful planning.

#### **The Materials of English**

If the teacher's goal is to have his students understand and use language at increasing levels of sophistication, he must be concerned with the materials and concepts he will use to achieve it. As mentioned earlier, the content of an English curriculum is frequently viewed simply as a list of titles, authors, or concepts. To Mr. Roper, for example, it was the list of works his students were required to read. In such an approach, the stu-

dent's recall of the contents of the works is of primary importance. Mr. Roper, like many of the other teachers discussed, does not design his instruction so that his students will learn to handle new problems independently. Nor are the problems of student ability, skills development, and appropriate goals and materials ever considered.

In selecting materials, therefore, the teacher should avoid the use of arbitrary lists. Instead, he must consider (1) the ultimate goal of helping his students to understand how language works cognitively, affectively, and aesthetically and to use that knowledge; and (2) the current level of the students' sophistication. In other words, the teacher should set appropriate goals in light of the students' current abilities and select the materials that will help them to meet those goals. If he chooses either concepts or materials for which the students have not had adequate preparation, they will benefit very little from the instruction. For instance, if a class has difficulty making simple inferences about characters, they obviously will be unable to make the inferences required by a symbolic poem. On the other hand, if the teacher chooses a relatively simple book for a group of fairly bright students—say, *Hot Rod* for above-average tenth graders—they may read and enjoy the book, but they are unlikely to learn anything that they could not have learned without a teacher. In either case, the teacher fails to fulfill his instructional function.

In short, there must be a dynamic relationship between the abilities of the students, the goals in teaching the subject, and the materials and concepts students study to reach those goals.

This concept of relating the materials to the teaching goals clarifies some problems about what to exclude from the curriculum. Some teachers still believe that one special function of the English teacher is instruction in courtesy—how to act on a date, for example. Others feel that using the telephone is appropriate subject matter for all eighth graders in English. But the English teacher is no more responsible for teaching in these areas than is the science or math teacher. The only feasible excuse for teaching how to answer the telephone and ask for a date at the superficial level that appears in most texts is to develop oral language skills of students whose oral language has been retarded by severe physical or psychological damage, or for practice by nonnative or nonstandard speakers.

Approached from a different angle, however, role-playing of dates and telephone conversations can teach students a good deal about point of view, connotative language, audience analysis, and the like. But the emphasis should be on how language conveys meaning, not on superficial forms. Similarly, TV programs, movies, comic strips, and pictures of various sorts are all appropriate for study if *their study contributes to an increased understanding of language and how it works*. Frequently, in fact, such materials can be extremely useful not only in introducing and reinforcing abstract ideas in concrete terms but in arousing the interest of the students. But the teacher

who uses such material without relating it to the use of language is simply failing to fulfill his obligation as a teacher of English. "Enjoyment" alone is not enough. Students can enjoy watching commercial TV with no help from a teacher. On the other hand, enjoyment quite obviously contributes to the alacrity with which students learn things. The trick is to make it possible for them to enjoy what they are learning. Nonliterary materials, even nonverbal materials, are important not solely because they can arouse interest but because they can provide considerable opportunity for insight into abstract concepts about language.

Structure, process, and materials must all be considered if the concept of subject matter is to be dynamic rather than static. The study of English is a process through which students at various ability levels confront appropriate materials in various situations to derive an understanding of the structure of the subject.

\* \* \*

How would teachers who had reached this definition of English as a subject matter respond to concrete problems in curriculum? Listen in for a moment to an English department meeting at Utopiaville High. One teacher is describing a class that she has called "a real problem":

"They're functional and all that. But their inventory responses were just minimal. They just don't seem interested. I think they all wound up in my class because the boys are taking two shop courses, and all of them take business math. None of them is planning on college. And some were frank about leaving school when they turn sixteen. I've got to find a beginning unit that will really interest them. Wake 'em up a little."

Thomas Green, a new teacher, makes a suggestion, "If they're taking math and shop courses, couldn't they study about machinery, visit some factories, interview their fathers on their work and give oral reports to the class? Maybe that would interest them."

The chairman comments, "Tom, maybe it would interest them. But Betty said that these kids are *functional* now. They read and write adequately. They're reluctant but able. The problem isn't one of finding something, anything for them to read and write about. Betty's class now has enough skills to study English. Your suggestion might be O.K. for work with a remedial group. But with functional kids we have to limit our work to English studies." Green clears his throat. "But they'd be reading and writing. They'd be speaking formally. They'd be doing research. Isn't *that* English?"

"Sure. It's English in a sense. People read and write and speak and listen in English class—the language arts. But they do the same things in social studies, and science, and math, and phys. ed., and everywhere else in school, almost. If language arts were the only criteria we used to limit our field of teaching, it really wouldn't be limited at all, would it?"

He pauses. "Betty needs a unit that's going to deal directly with English studies. That's what she's trying to interest the kids in. It will have to be more than routinely interesting; but it can't be a substitute for literature or language or composition. Hopefully, it will contain all these elements. And it ought to begin with something that will really get interest quickly."

Such a unit is the one on humor that follows. It maintains high interest throughout and provides an environment of appropriate materials and situations in which the students can extend, in specific ways, their language capabilities. The unit emphasizes student involvement from the inductive lessons at the beginning to small-group discussions, whole-class, student-led discussions, and the production of part of the play. It provides for a great deal of oral participation, which is important in maintaining interest.

\* \* \*

### AN INTRODUCTION TO HUMOR Outline of a Unit on Language, Literature, and Composition\*

The aspects of *language study* involved in the unit are connected with the humor-producing devices. These are both semantic and structural in character: for example, misplaced modifiers may be regarded as structural defects that lead to semantic ambiguity or confusion.

The forms of *literature* encountered are jokes and anecdotes, parodies, satirical sketches, burlesques, and a full-length play. Besides these whole-class experiences, each student chooses a book for independent reading. In addition, a number of current teleplays are reviewed.

The criticism involves both analysis and evaluation. The works studied are classified on the basis of criteria developed through student analysis: type of humor-producing device(s) employed; apparent intent or purpose of the author; presumed audience. The evaluations are essayed on the basis of subjective reactions to the works rather than on the basis of the exposed criteria. Although the students pursue their criticism with awareness of the various patterns, they are not brought to direct recognition that they are engaged in critical processes.

The *compositions* are of two general types: criticism of the type suggested in the preceding paragraph and parodies. In working with both types, the students follow different kinds of models. The first parody is a direct imitation of a specific literary model; the student approaches it somewhat intuitively after some classroom analysis and discussion. The second parody allows the student to select his own model and his own subject from a corpus of literary experience; in addition, he reads and discusses models of the writing of other students at his approximate level of development, the models repre-

\* This is not a complete unit of instruction. Study guides and model compositions have been omitted.

sending successful attempts at the same kind of problem. The third parody is written without the benefit of a model; and additional difficulty lies in the student's selection of subject—he must draw his subject from direct life experience.

Revision is an important aspect of the composition experience of the unit. Styling is the key element in producing successful parodies. Students who show initial success at imitating a style act as mentors to their groups. Each group is composed of persons who attempted the same style with less success. Workshop-like periods for this revision are implicit in the appropriate lessons.

#### OBJECTIVES FOR THE UNIT

- To analyze various humorous works
- To name, characterize, and identify various humor-producing devices and various forms of humor
- To apply certain techniques of expository writing in completing written analyses and criticism
- To write parodies
- To criticize certain television programs

#### MATERIALS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Outline of study sequences   | Teacher-prepared sheet of jokes                         |
| Sheet of fables  | Sheet of excerpts from "Tribune Primer" by Eugene Field |
| Student-made models of stylized parodies   | Book list of supplementary titles                       |
| Study guide for <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> by Shakespeare  |   |
| E. A. Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Tell-Tale Heart"  |   |
| Recording of "The Tell-Tale Heart" read by Basil Rathbone (National Council of Teachers of English, Stock No. 86828) |   |
| Appropriate television programs  |   |
| Student-written models of each composition assignment  |   |
| Student-written unit examination   |   |

#### EVALUATIONS

- The final unit evaluation is in two parts:
- A. The development by the students of a comprehensive examination of the unit content. Is it comprehensive?
  - B. The answers to the questions on this examination. Are they precise? (The expository writing in the unit serves the purposes of evaluation also.)
- Other evaluation devices and techniques are discussed in connection with specific lessons.

#### PROCEDURES

**PRELIMINARY** About two weeks before the beginning of instruction in the unit a book list of various titles classified as "humor" in the school library is distributed. Students are instructed to read one of the books on the list or any other book purportedly humorous.

#### Lesson 1

The unit outline is distributed and discussed. The objectives of the unit are explained. A general plan for study is suggested.

Joke sheet is distributed and read silently. Teacher directs attention to particular joke and asks, "What makes it funny?" (Example: Seven days in a jeep make one week. Seven days in a week; the rough ride in a jeep would make you weak.) When the source of humor is identified, the device is named, either as drawn from the class or, if the students are unfamiliar with the term, supplied by the teacher.

Other jokes using the same device are then identified by the class. This procedure continues until all the devices have been dealt with. A distinction is drawn between joke and anecdote.

**HOMEWORK** Each person is to write an exposition analyzing a joke that is familiar to him. The analysis is in terms of the humor-producing device(s) used.

**EVALUATION** Is a suitable exposition developed? Is the humor-producing device named accurately? Is a suitable definition provided for this?

**VOCABULARY** Joke, anecdote, device, pun, misplaced modifier, incongruity, mixed metaphor, spoonerism, malapropism, Freudian slip.

#### Lesson 2

A sheet of parodies is distributed, selections from "The Tribune Primer" by Eugene Field. The items are read silently with the preparation: "Does the author use any of the humor-producing devices we learned about yesterday?" These items are noted in the discussion that follows. Next point: "What was the intent of the author in writing these?" (He was imitating children's books or primers. He was poking fun at the style in which primers are written. Unacceptable response: "He was ridiculing primers.") If the appropriate response is not forthcoming, the teacher introduces the idea with a question. The desired insight is that Field did not want his readers to laugh at primers themselves, or at children who use them, but only at the style. The students then list the elements of style that Field imitates: sentence construction, vocabulary choice, tone, and so on. The class is divided into committees to draw up lists of items that a contemporary writer might include in such a

parody: paper clips, newspaper, rubber bands, ball-point pens, and the like. These topics are listed on the chalkboard.

**HOMEWORK** Using two items on the list, one developed in your committee and one suggested by another, write an entry for a primer as Field might. (Optional, extra credit: Write a third using an item not mentioned in class.)

**EVALUATION** Are the imitations successful?

**VOCABULARY** Primer, parody, parodies, ridicule, imitate.

**OPTIONAL PROJECT** Using items written by the class, publish "The Utopia-ville Primer."

### Lesson 3

Distribute prepared sheets of fables, which are read silently with the preparation: "What elements do you find that these fables have in common?" (Subsequent discussion develops: All contain animals; animals talk, animals represent types of people; all have morals.) See Chapter 4 for a detailed expansion of this lesson.

**VOCABULARY** Fable, moral.

### Lesson 4

Students read "The Shrike and the Chipmunks" with the preparation: "Considering our analysis of fables, can this be characterized as a parody?" and "Does Thurber go beyond mere imitation here?" (The discussion develops: This is a parody; Thurber's contains the same elements and humor; Thurber does not ridicule fables nor those who read them, only their style.) Next must be developed insight into some wives' treatment of their husbands. The teacher points out that when humor has a serious purpose, a specific target, and an implicit "hope" of effecting changes in the target, it may be labeled satire.

### Lesson 5

Students read "The Great French Duel." Questions: "What is Twain's apparent purpose?" "Does he seem to want to effect a change in dueling practices in France? Or is he ridiculing the whole tradition?" "What is the principal device he uses to produce humor?" As these are answered in discussion, the form is identified: burlesque. Short discussion of the semantic shift associated with the word.

### Lesson 6

Preparation for the analysis of style. Students read Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" as they listen to a recording of it. They discuss the effect of the story and the main character. Then the teacher focuses his questioning on style and elicits the elements peculiar to the style of the story. As the discussion develops, he makes a list on the chalkboard of aspects of style to examine in any piece of writing: point of view taken by the writer, sentence structure, diction, kind of details used, figurative language, and so on. When the list is complete, the teacher divides the class into heterogeneous groups and assigns Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." The groups read the story and make a stylistic analysis of it in terms of the elements of style listed on the board. Class discussion of the story and its style follows.

### Lesson 7

Library reading of highly stylized materials. A variety of such material is required—*True Romance* short stories, *The New Yorker*, *Time*, Jimmy Breslin, the Bible, Poe, Grimm, and so on. The students choose the material they wish to study. Reading not completed during this period must be completed during the remainder of a two-week period as outside reading. When the reading has been completed, the students must take a well-known story or type of one style and restylize it. For example, *Time* reports on Snow White. The writing assignment is given after the analysis of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. On the day the assignment is made, the students read and discuss models of such work taken from the work of previous students. But the writing assignment is announced before the library period begins.

### Lesson 8

About seven days devoted to explication and analysis of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. One act is covered on each of the first five days. The pattern of each day's work is as follows:

1. A guidesheet for the act is distributed and read. The teacher prefaces the act with a brief synopsis of the action.
2. The teacher provides appropriate glosses for a scene. Silent reading of the scene. Roles are assigned. Players read lines from their seats. The same procedure is used for the next scene, and so on.
3. Material in the act not completed in class is completed at home.
4. The next day's class begins with committee discussion of questions on guidesheet for previous day's reading.
5. Student-led, whole-class discussion of same.
6. Continue with next act as in (1) above, and so on.



**Lesson 9 (Optional)**

Students produce the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude, the play within the play. Class elects director and assistant director who in combination with the teacher cast the play and set up costume, prop, and general arrangement committees. Student directors block play and encourage actors with stage business. Once rehearsals are under way, the teacher stays in the background except for occasional suggestions. The actors may carry lines if necessary. The more ludicrous the casting, costumes, and acting, the better. The class might present its production to other English classes meeting that hour or to students in study halls. The teacher should not strive for a finished performance. Students' errors usually contribute to the humor of the production. (See a student teacher's description of such productions in Chapter 14.)

**Lesson 10**

Students watch a number of TV comedy dramas. By comparing two or more in written exposition, they are asked to answer either A or B:

- A. Which type (satire, parody, burlesque) is each of them? Which verbal devices are used, and what nonverbal devices, if any, contribute to the intensification of humor?
- B. Which of two or more programs of the same format is the more successful development of the type?

**EVALUATION** Is the paper a satisfactory expository form? Does the student show command of the various technical terms he uses? Does he demonstrate his thesis: that one program is a different type from another or that one is better than another in exemplifying a type?

**VOCABULARY** Format, sight gag, slapstick, mug, take, double take.

**Lesson 11 An Original Satire**

Ask students to write on some topical event in a satirical vein using the technique of literary parody. For example, Edgar Allen Poe writes a math exam, Mother Goose teaches a gym class, political campaign promises written in Biblical style.

**Lesson 12 Examination**

**Preparatory homework:** Students are asked to develop a series of questions that would make a good comprehensive examination of the unit. Questions should deal with vocabulary, analysis of form, and the production of original work. Also some questions on reading content.

**Classwork:** When students bring their questions to class, committees are

formed; questions are compared, and each committee makes a trial exam. The trial exams are compared, and from these is developed the true exam. On the subsequent day, students write this exam. On the next day, each student scores his own paper on the basis of class discussion. The entire procedure described here is not revealed beforehand.

**NOTE**

1. Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Pocket Books, 1964), p. 77.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

1. HAROLD C. MARTIN, *et al.*, The Commission on English, *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965). An examination of the content of English as a subject.
2. JOHN DIXON, *Growth Through English* (Reading, England: National Association of the Teaching of English, 1967). Suggestions for fulfilling some of the more general purposes of English.
3. HERBERT J. MULLER, *The Uses of English* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967). An examination of the content, structure, and purpose of English.
4. DWIGHT L. BURTON, Chairman, Committee on the Check List, Commission on the Curriculum, National Council of Teachers of English, "A Check List for Evaluating the English Program in the Junior and Senior High School," *English Journal*, LI (April 1962). Available as a reprint from the National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois, 61829. A useful guide for planning improvement as well as evaluating the status of the English program in a school; covers all aspects of the program.
5. GEORGE HENRY, "Style of Teaching and Teacher Evaluation," *English Journal*, 59 (October 1970), pp. 921-927.



## Inventories: Assessing Student Abilities and Interests

Before realistic curriculum planning begins, the teacher should make a careful assessment of the interests, attitudes, and abilities of his class. Thus, the beginning of the school year is the inventory period, a time when the teacher takes stock.

Although the teacher's impressions of the "quality" of the class may suffice for making general judgments about the types of things to avoid, he should not plan specific work without concrete information about individual performance. To do otherwise is certainly risky and may be disastrous. He should not plan a unit of work around one of Shakespeare's plays, for example, unless he has clear indications that the class members will be able to understand the relationships expressed in the reading matter and to write a sequence of at least three paragraphs that displays some rational ordering. Without these skills as bare minimums, either the class will flounder, or the project will be of such superficial quality that it had better be avoided.

### Sources of Information

There are three sources of information about the students that are available at the beginning of the year: (1) the informal history of the students; (2) their scores on standardized tests; and (3) an operational inventory of their established learnings. The last-named source is the most useful, but let us briefly examine the first two.

1. **INFORMAL HISTORY** The school's general cumulative records, the English department cumulative folders, and the memories of their previous teachers are all valuable sources of information about the students. At the beginning of the year, however, the usefulness of this information is limited.

First of all, the teacher must assimilate all the available data and select from it what is pertinent, at a time when he knows his students only as names on a class roster.

Similarly, in weighing the impressions of previous teachers, he will find it difficult to associate those impressions with the unknown students and to dissociate the personal biases of the teachers from objective reporting. Finally, the teacher will have difficulty in finding the time to do the work because the administrative details connected with opening the school year will consume major portions of his time and energy.

2. **STANDARDIZED TESTS** Although the standardized test score has some advantages over the informal history as an information source, it has its drawbacks.

The test scores will save the teacher time and energy in collecting data, for in a relatively short time he can collect a set of test scores for the entire class. Moreover, the data are relatively objective. Since a standardized test is developed painstakingly by experts in carefully controlled situations, the scores are free from the personal biases that influence school personnel in day-to-day, face-to-face contacts with pupils. In addition, standardized test scores are highly specific in reporting. A score in reading comprehension, for example, will report a student's proficiency at certain reading skills without being colored by such considerations as his reactions in class discussion and his desire to make up missed work.

The credibility of the test scores may, however, depend upon the administrative practices used in recording them. If the recording has been done by hand, there is always the danger of clerical error. (If the tests were originally *hand-scored*, this danger is multiplied.)

Aside from possible clerical error, the recording of scores is often incomplete. Many standardized tests are developed as series of subtests. A reading test, for example is divided into parts that test vocabulary and comprehension. Some tests further subdivide these areas and have other major parts (such as reference skills tests). The scoring allows for reports on the subtests and then a final, cumulative overall score. If a wide imbalance exists between the scores on the subtests, the resulting overall score, taken alone, will give a distorted picture. As an extreme example, if a pupil scores sixth grade in *vocabulary* and tenth grade in *comprehension*, his resulting overall score, say eighth grade, will not reflect his ability to handle ninth-grade reading materials. Unfortunately, many schools record only overall scores.

Another drawback may be the teacher's inability to interpret the scores adequately. Usually, standardized tests report three scores: the raw score, the percentile, and the grade score, but some sophistication is needed to interpret them. In addition to scores on tests dealing with subject matter, there are intelligence test scores. As well as the reported IQ, it is desirable to know the type of test that was administered, the scores on the subtests, and such information as mental age, percentiles, and chronological age in order to make a reasonably sound interpretation. Added to all this is the need for knowledge about expected correlations of intelligence measures with scores on

subject-matter tests. Therefore, it follows that if a teacher doesn't understand all these things, he will be wasting his time collecting the scores because he cannot make intelligent use of the information he has collected.

The final caveat on using standardized test scores is on the validity of the test in reflecting the kinds of skills that are required of a student in daily routines. A standardized test in reading, for example, typically presents a short passage of measured difficulty. The subject responds by selecting a "best" answer from a series of multiples that are presented to him. Compare this relatively simple response in a closely controlled situation with a comparable classroom task:

After finishing *Hamlet* (which has been read slowly and with much discussion and comparison of interpretations), the class is asked to choose from a selection of writing problems (such as "In view of all the evidence, to what extent is Hamlet's experience with the Ghost hallucinatory?") and develop a response in essay form. The material used, the variety and complexity of responses expected, and the time involved in these experiences in actual class situations are simply not reflected in standardized testing procedures.

In addition to the weaknesses cited in using informal histories and standardized tests as primary sources for data on student performance, there is a more pertinent objection. The development of adolescents is not regular and paced. They often grow in spurts. It is frequently the case that the person who leaves school in June is barely recognizable when he returns in September. In addition to maturation, he may have had some special training to overcome deficiencies. There is no way to predict the extent of change that can occur even over so short a period as three months. Hence, historical information of any sort may present a badly distorted view.

The better use for both informal histories of pupils and standardized test scores is in supporting (or disestablishing) opinions developed in more immediate ways.

### Operational Inventories

Before he can start planning his course, the teacher needs the answers to a series of questions about his students. The answers must be obtained on a student-by-student basis.

1. What attitudes and interests do they have that may affect their work in English?
2. How well do they read and write?
3. To what extent can they work independently, without immediate teacher supervision?

As the year goes on and the teacher designs specific units of work, he adds two other questions to the list:

4. How much of the content of the unit I am planning do they already know?
5. Were my presumptions about their previous learning correct?

Very often, a teacher's inadequacies in instruction and in class control can be traced to his failure to ask these questions or to obtain good answers to them. He obtains the best answers most efficiently if he designs his own instruments for obtaining them. These instruments are called *inventories*. He uses them in actual teaching situations using real instructional materials; hence, they are *operational inventories*. They inventory learnings that students bring to him from previous years; as such, they are *operational inventories of established learnings*.

The questions listed above lead to the development of four types of inventories:

*Interest inventories* on student attitudes and interests that may affect their work in English.

*Skills inventories* to reveal how well they read and write.

*Independent study skills inventories* to determine the extent to which they can work independently.

*Information inventories* on the amount and kind of content they recall.

Many advantages result from the teacher's designing his own instruments. For example, he can use actual classroom materials, the kinds of questions that he asks in daily lessons, and the instructional methods he prefers. Thus, he knows how the students respond to *his* teaching, rather than to previous teachers' work or professional testmakers' efforts. Since the inventories are a part of his instruction, he learns concrete information about his students: their names and faces, their reactions to various types of instruction, and their classroom personalities. Thus, the results of the inventories are highly valid from his point of view.

In addition to this gain in personal validity, there are advantages that relate to the efficient use of time. Many teachers find the two or three opening weeks of school to be the least productive period of their teaching. Using the opening days in a systematic way and in a way that is of such great value in determining subsequent practices mitigates the September doldrums.

The major objection to this procedure is that there may possibly be a loss of objectivity resulting from the fact that all aspects of data collection and interpretation are under the teacher's control. This loss is offset, however, by the concomitant condition that any other evaluative technique is in some measure subjective—and a teacher's judgments in his classes are the *critical* judgments in most circumstances anyway. Then, too, as noted above, there are other sources of information that can supplement the teacher's findings and judgments: the informal histories and standardized test scores.

### Interest Inventories

One of the teacher's most important concerns at the beginning of the year is to establish rapport with his class. Therefore, it is essential that he avoid experiences that may tend to weaken it. For example, if many students have a strong distaste for oral reports, it is a strategic error to schedule work so that the opening unit involves oral reporting. On the other hand, if many students enjoy drama, a unit involving plays undertaken early in the year should help establish rapport.

Interest inventories help pinpoint such biases toward English class activities. These inventories take two forms, questionnaires and compositions, both of which will supply information that the teacher needs. When he wants specific reactions to activities and procedures he plans to use (for example, reading poems, writing stories, giving oral talks, arranging for small-group discussions) or when he wants specific information about the students (Do you have a library card? Do you type?), he uses a questionnaire. Making the questionnaire is a simple matter. The teacher simply lists the types of activities that he plans to use (oral talks, and so on) and asks the class to rate each on a general scale, 1 to 5, 1 indicating *preference for*, 5 indicating *dislike of*. At the end of his list, he leaves some blank spaces and asks the class to fill in items of their own choosing and rate them.

When the teacher wants unprompted and open-ended responses, he asks the students to write a brief composition in class: "What I Like and What I Hate in English Class." The writing is preceded by a short discussion that elicits types of activities they have previously experienced in English class. As an activity is named, it is written on the chalkboard. Then, with the admonition that everything has not been named and perhaps a person could think of other things to write about, students are asked to write. When the papers are read, both positive and negative responses are listed and tallied.

It is important in using either type of inventory to obtain frankness in responses. Some students might use the opportunity to curry favor with the teacher by indicating that their preferences are what they assume the teacher's to be. Therefore, greater candor is obtained if the papers are submitted anonymously.

An advantage to the composition is that it gives the teacher an opportunity to be. Therefore, greater candor is obtained if the papers are submitted skills, such things as spelling and punctuation ability. These insights should be regarded as tentative, however, until the teacher obtains more detailed inventories of composition skills (see Chapter 21).

Either inventory technique allows for interesting follow-up procedures. Committees of students can tabulate the results and submit a report of their findings to the class. (In addition to the interest value for the students, this procedure saves the teacher's time and energy.) The teacher might read the compositions to the class, perhaps a few a day. This procedure affords

the hostile and the weak some legitimate recognition, for it is rare that the compositions of weaker writers are shared with the class. (One suspects that such students will draw the inference that here is an understanding teacher.) Minimally, the practice of revealing responses communicates the differences in attitudes held by different persons. Some students "love" spelling, for example, whereas others simply "hate" it.

Another type of interest inventory that provides useful information is an inventory of interests of a more personal and general kind, interests not specifically related to English studies. Knowing beforehand which pupils are talented in art, music, woodworking, and so on, helps the teacher in planning special projects and reports that tie in with the units of study. For example, in a study of animal imagery in literature, a class artist might draw pictures of the animals encountered in the literature, a musician might play and discuss music containing animal imagery, a student interested in biology might report on his scientific experiences with animals as contrasted with his literary experiences. In addition, the guidance and motivation of reluctant readers and writers are aided by the teacher's knowledge of their interests. Many otherwise reluctant students are stimulated to read and write when topics are chosen with an eye to their interest power.

Once again, the teacher uses a questionnaire and a composition. Since the information gained on this inventory relates to specific students rather than to the students as a class, there is no anonymity in responding.

In designing the questionnaire, the teacher anticipates pertinent items and constructs the instrument to include such items as:

- Do you have a library card?
- Magazines your family gets regularly:
- Newspapers in your home:
- Musical instruments:
- Special skills:
- Hobbies:

Again, some space is left for other items that may occur to students. Presenting the questionnaire on larger index cards facilitates filing for quick reference.

One type of composition inventory begins with interviews developed as a class activity. This is especially useful in larger schools when members of a new class do not know one another at the beginning of the school year. In smaller schools a teacher can use the play "I want to get to know you" to support the activity.

The teacher initiates a discussion about different kinds of interviews, asking the students what kinds of interviews they are familiar with and what sorts of questions are asked in interviews. As pertinent items are mentioned (such as name, age, occupation), the teacher lists them on the chalkboard. Indicating that each class member will be interviewing someone in the class whom

he doesn't know, he then asks for additional items that should be structured into the interviews (interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes). If important areas are overlooked, the teacher adds them to the list developed on the chalkboard. Students are paired off and carry out interviews along the lines discussed. When the interviews are completed, each interviewer presents the student he interviewed to the class. As the students are presented to the class, probably a few each day, the teacher notes pertinent information that is revealed on index cards, one for each pupil, and keeps the cards on file for future reference.

Follow-up activities to this inventory are developed around composition work. One composition is "The Person I Interviewed."\* Another one, which is written after the series of presentations, can be developed as a "superlative" ("The Most Interesting Person in This Class," "The Most Widely-Traveled," "The Best Athlete," and so on), the title being suggested by the content of the presentations. The subject is not identified by name, only described. If these compositions are read to the class, they may try to guess the identity of the subject. (The guessing activity is most appropriate for junior high classes.)

Interest is a potent motivator, and the canny teacher is at pains to exploit every advantage that his insight into class interests offers him.

#### **Skills Inventories**

Even more important to the teacher than the students' interests are their skills, for if he knows the types of skills they have acquired and the level of proficiency they have attained, he can immediately determine the specific kinds of work the class can do. Moreover, if he has this knowledge before he starts an instructional sequence, he will be able to evaluate the skills the students have acquired by the time the unit is concluded.

Our essential concern is with the skills involved in *reading* and *writing*. This concern in no way intends to deprecate the importance of *listening* and *speaking* skills, the other members of the language arts quadrivium. In most classes, listening and speaking are the primary skills on which instruction in reading and writing is based. Generally, however, by the time a person reaches the secondary grades, his speaking and listening skills have reached a far more sophisticated stage of development than his reading and writing skills. Moreover, the teacher is at hand when these skills are employed, and an assessment is virtually automatic and inescapable. On the other hand, reading and writing are carried on by a student independently, and much of the reading and writing that is required of him is done when he is not under the immediate supervision of his teacher.

\* This composition is discussed below in connection with writing inventories. See Chapter 22.

#### **Listening Skills**

Of chief interest in the inventory period are the listening skills required to take directions, especially for outside assignments, and to take notes from oral reports and class discussions. The former is treated in the section on study skills (see pp. 34-37). Concern with the latter is largely determined by the importance of informational content in the curriculum. If the curriculum is heavily information-oriented, note-taking is an essential skill. The students' note-taking habits can be simply observed by the teacher. If they are not in the habit, then lessons in note-taking should be developed, and frequent reminders will probably be needed during the early part of the year. Notes may be collected from time to time and evaluated. Needless to say, all oral presentations must be structured to facilitate note-taking.

#### **Speaking Skills**

Oral reporting, dramatic interpretation, and class discussions of various types are the focuses of speaking experiences in class. The students' attitudes toward these activities are elicited as part of the interest inventories. Interactive reading skills and the like are best dealt with as appropriate curriculum experiences are encountered during the year. The rules for class decorum control many aspects of class discussion. Analysis of small-group discussion is considered elsewhere (see Chapter 3). Panel discussions and oral reports are controlled by the immediate purposes and objectives of the activities as specified in the curriculum; thus, these items are dealt with as they arise, rather than in a general way. Finally, there is the problem of students with such speech defects as stuttering and lisping. The classroom teacher should seek the guidance of a trained specialist in dealing with such students.

#### **Reading and Writing Skills**

Because instruction in literature and composition is directly dependent on the extent to which the students have developed their reading and writing skills, the discussion of reading and writing inventories has been deferred to the literature and composition sections of this book (see Chapter 11 for the reading inventory and Chapter 21 for the writing inventories).

Much language instruction is instructional in informational content. Therefore, inventories dealing with language instruction per se are developed in connection with specific units as the teacher plans them throughout the year. The planning of content inventories is discussed below (p. 39).

#### **Study Skills**

In the secondary grades much of the students' work is done outside of class, when his teacher's help is unavailable to him. The purpose of the study

skills inventories, then, is to help the teacher to avoid making bad assignments. If the routine homework time period is about thirty minutes in length, the student spends about one-third of his learning time without the benefit of supervision by the teacher. Imagine the consequences for the year's learning, if, when the children entered the English classroom just after Labor Day, they were not to have the direction of any teacher at all until just before Christmas.

The alert teacher will at once question the efficacy of the homework arrangement. The bulk of published articles along this line have concerned themselves with homework in the elementary grades.<sup>1</sup> The lack of teacher supervision in study has its obvious drawbacks. If a student has misunderstood a concept or a technique developed in class and does homework practice predicated on the assumption that he has understood, and if he practices according to some inappropriate principle, he systematically learns error.

Many teachers have seen the results of such learning. Typically, they are manifest in the areas of usage and grammatical analysis. For example, if a student has misunderstood the rules and conventions governing the use of subject and object case forms with pronouns, his errors may haunt both the teacher and the student all through the year (in the student's case, perhaps all through his life).<sup>2</sup>

There is no way to "unlearn" anything. The best a person can do is to master some competing set of learnings and hope to achieve this in such a way that his behavior and attitudes are controlled by the more appropriate set of learnings. However, the neural mechanisms (and whatever related mechanisms) involved in these competing learning patterns are far from being fully understood. Animal experiments dealing with competing learnings often succeed in reducing the animals to states resembling such human emotional disturbances as "nervous breakdowns," catatonia, and other variations of schizophrenia.<sup>3</sup>

There are other dimensions to the homework problem. One of the terminal objectives of the school curriculum, taken as a whole, is to develop the student's ability to study on his own. Such study involves research, the use of reference materials, techniques for recording, and finally the preparation of the ends of the study (usually data) in a way that facilitates communication, much of which are English-class-oriented skills. The English teacher, therefore, plays a key role in seeing that students attain this important educational objective. Since homework is one of the essential elements in the program, homework in the English class is the most important of all the student's independent study responsibilities.

The effects of homework assignments on classroom discipline must also be considered. The student who must handle poorly conceived assignments may experience frustration, anxiety, and resultant hostility toward the assignment, subject, teacher, school, and all that these images symbolize. In fact, he may become so frustrated that he does no work at all.

The classroom consequence can spell disaster for the teacher. A consistent failure to turn in homework may be interpreted by both teacher and student as a successful challenge to authority. If the student's hostility is carried into the classroom, the teacher may lose control over the class and successful learning experiences may thus be impeded. Making no assignments is better than making bad ones.

Outside study can be classified into two general types: homework that is contingent upon reference skills and research techniques, and homework that derives from routine classwork without corollary research.

#### REFERENCE SKILLS AND RESEARCH

The learning of reference and research skills is cumulative and remains a part of a person's curriculum as long as he continues his education—through graduate study and beyond. Consequently, in designing an inventory of these skills, a teacher should not try to run the entire gamut of possible skills. Rather, he should select only those that his students will be called upon to use. In each inventory, the results will indicate quite clearly the content of subsequent instruction: the mastery of those skills that the inventory reveals as being deficient or defective.

The first inventory should be of the reference skills needed to handle the books that are routinely used in class, the anthology and the grammar. This inventory fits naturally into lessons introducing these books to the class. The items should be cued by the structure of the books and should test the use of the table of contents, index, glossary, and any other such helps. Typical inventory questions are as follows:

- "What is the longest story in this book?" (use of table of contents)
- "Who wrote 'The Highwayman'?" (table of contents or title index)
- "On what page does it begin?"
- "What form of literature is 'Ullalume'?" (type index)
- "On what pages is information about nouns?" (index and cross reference)
- "What is ellipsis?" (glossary)

The next focus of attack should be dictionary. The items should be cued by the content of the dictionaries that will be used. Students in earlier grades should respond to items involving alphabetizing, guide words, diacritical helps at the foot of the page, and choosing appropriate definitions. Most grammars contain useful materials related to using the dictionary. If the teacher opts to use the grammar for this purpose, he must be sure that grammar examples match the class dictionaries. If matching is not close, he should develop his own materials, although he can be guided by the grammar.

As part of inventories, more advanced students should be introduced to the wealth of information on the many aspects of language that is available in the front matter of the better desk dictionaries, to interpreting etymologies, and to evaluating definitions.

## LIBRARY RESEARCH

If the classroom contains no reference works beyond the dictionary, the student will have to work in the library to use such other reference works as the thesaurus, encyclopedia, *Readers' Guide*, the various biographical reference books, and almanacs. A series of class visits to the library will be necessary to inventory the skills needed in using these sources. Thus, in addition to the inventories of reference skills, there should be an inventory of the use of the library itself.

Each library has its own rules of decorum and procedures. The mechanical organization of libraries differs (such things as where reference tools, card catalogs, periodicals and nonfiction are kept). Obviously, a class new to a building will be unaware of the structure and functions of the library, so an inventory will be superfluous, and the teacher, working with the library staff, should develop lessons to familiarize the students with the library routines. If the class is not new to the building, an inventory of library procedures is in order. This inventory should be jointly developed by the librarian and the teacher.

After the student becomes familiar with the physical plant of the library and the library rules, inventories of his skill in using research facilities should be made. Since many students do not know how to alphabetize beyond the first letter of the word, the inventory should begin with alphabetizing and move to using the card catalog and should continue through the reference aids that will be needed during the year.

A list of relatively simple research problems keyed to the nature and number of the reference tools should be developed and presented in duplicated form so that each student receives a copy. If only a limited number of reference tools are available, alternative questions can be employed. For example, if the library contains only two sets of encyclopedias, a question with alternative parts can be developed as follows:

In which volume (number) will information on the following authors be found? What is the page reference for each?

1. Henry Adams
2. Washington Irving
3. Edgar Allan Poe
4. Henry James
5. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thus, students need find the information for only one author. Because seeking out only one of these will demonstrate facility in locating any of them, each student should be assigned only one item on the list.

The starting points on the inventory should be staggered. Some students begin with the card catalog problem; some, the encyclopedia; some, the un-

abridged dictionary; some, the thesaurus, and so on. This practice prevents mad scrambles of great numbers of students to any one source.

More advanced students receive more advanced problems involving the use of more than one source or alternative sources and requiring related value judgments. An example of a library skills inventory developed for high school students is shown on page 36.

Needless to say, outside research assignments must be delayed until the students have demonstrated appropriate facility in research skills.

## ROUTINE HOMEWORK

The first step in developing the homework inventories is to list the types of home study assignments that are anticipated. This type of classification should be made by referring to the precise kind of skill that will be employed in doing the assignment. For example, writing assignments may be sub-classified as follows in terms of the precise skills employed: assignments that are essentially copying; the making of lists; brief responses to questions; longer original writing; prestructured writing, and so on. Before an outside assignment is given, the teacher should have some evidence from classroom observation that the skills required are within the power of the students. A good practice is to reserve a large part of the class period so that students can make a start on assignments that constitute part of the inventory system.

The second aspect of home assignments that must be considered carefully is their timing. Again, classroom observation of behaviors is necessary in order to match the performance of study tasks with preconceived ideas of the time that should be needed to accomplish them. Of course, much of this information will have been obtained in the course of the reading and writing inventories. But it may be augmented by observing the students in the actual performance of an assignment—that is, by starting the home assignment in class, allowing fifteen or twenty minutes for the work, and then checking to see if it has been about half completed. Thus, assignment length and timing should be adjusted experimentally.

The final dimension is an inventory of the general approach to problems of home study: budgeting time, forming good habits, the arrangement of the study corner, and so on. Chapter 16 on reading offers suggestions about how students should approach homework that involves reading assignments (see pp. 390–393). A simple questionnaire should be devised to obtain insight into the students' general study patterns. The responses will indicate the direction of subsequent instruction.

Although they are not specifically in the nature of inventories, we must at this juncture consider the responses made by the class at the point in the lesson when the assignment is made. Part of the student's general approach toward study should be to write down assignments and all directions clearly and carefully. He should have with him at all times a special assignment

**Library References and Research Skills Inventory**

1. Answer either A. or B., but not both.
  - a. The author of the article "Sociology" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* speaks with authority on trends in U.S. population. What experience of his (with the U.S. Government) enables him to do this?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. At which university did the author of the article "Painting" in the *World Book Encyclopedia* earn his degrees? (A.B., M.A.)
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what magazine (title and date) found in this library was the movie "Dr. Strangelove" reviewed?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Optional. Was the review favorable or unfavorable?
3. Who wrote the famous line: "The world is too much with us"?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the title of another book by the author of Mrs. 'Arris Goes to Paris?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Optional. Under what classification are these titles catalogued?
5. Name the first publication in which work by O. Henry appeared in print. What was his real name?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which are the two most widely circulated magazines in the United States?
 

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_

notebook that is kept separate from his notebook for class notes. The assignment notebook should be arranged to receive assignments for at least one week in advance and to allow space for assignments given daily. In addition to space for page references, he will need space to take down specific instructions for the outside work, and space for some sort of statement of the assignment's objectives. A simple visual check by the teacher will ascertain whether students are habituated to this practice. If they are not, a careful discussion of the practice and the rationale behind it should be mandatory. One of the more easily remediable causes of inadequate preparation of outside work is a breakdown in communications at the point at which the assignment is made.

In addition to the oral assignment, assignment sheets prepared in advance and chalkboard reminders should be used. All of this means that a considerable part of classroom time should be spent in making assignments. If the student is to spend upwards of a third of his learning time without teacher supervision, he must be as adequately prepared as possible so that he can use his time in a meaningful way. Therefore, the practice of making assignments at the end of the class period (or as sometimes happens, even after the bell has rung) is pedagogically poor in all respects. If the assignment has meaning, and for some reason cannot be presented well because there is not enough time to present it well, it had better be delayed.

In summary, the development of outside assignments is specially contingent upon the following:

1. The teacher must have sure knowledge that the skills involved in completing any assignment are within the power of the students. He must determine this by observation of classroom behavior, not by observation of the results of outside study.
2. The teacher must set outside assignments with an eye to the time required to complete them. He should determine the students' time requirements by classroom observation.
3. The teacher should clearly state the objectives of each assignment.
4. Specific directions for each assignment should be made clear to the students in an unhurried way and through a number of avenues.
5. Outside assignments must be a meaningful part of the instructional program.

The final point carries a number of implications. Outside work should not simply be done and turned in. It must be organically and sequentially related to all the work. This means that a certain amount of class time subsequent to the completion of outside work should be devoted to doing something in class that is contingent upon the completion of the outside work. This, in turn, means that the making of an assignment for some such purpose as "seeing what they will do with it" is *not* a legitimate practice. In any assignment the teacher will "see what they have done with it."



### Interpreting the Inventory Results

As the individual inventories are marked, the results should be charted in the grade book as are the results of any of the student's work.

The systematic procedures outlined up to this point will give the teacher a good idea of the character of his class and of the characteristics of the class members. Further, he will have strong notions about what will be appropriate directions for some of the year's work. These notions can be clarified further.

After developing the various records and analyzing the accumulated data from several approaches, the teacher will be able to specify the relative strengths and weaknesses of his pupils. One type of pattern he may find is that of the student who appears to be weak at all of the skills examined. The teacher's central problem, then, is where to start remedial work. As indicated earlier, the central concerns of English teaching are reading and writing. Between them, the place to begin, without any question at all, is with reading.

Reading must have priority because our culture demands that people read easily and well. Such cultural items as telephone directories, billboard advertising, cooking directions on packaged foods, and traffic signs attest to the fact that reading skill is considered as a universal norm in our culture. Not only is the person who does not read easily hamstrung in the simplest pursuits of daily life, but when his lack of reading skill becomes manifest to others, he is likely to become the target of scorn, contempt, and even worse. So strong are attitudes about literacy that persons without reading skill are in continual torment, much of it self-inflicted. Imagine the feelings of shame and self-contempt suffered by the adult who cannot do what "every schoolboy" can.

Within the framework of the school as a social institution, the reading requirement is even more pronounced. Few are the classes, including those in manual training and physical education, where reading ability is not at least peripherally important. Although some teachers recognize reading disability, others—especially in secondary school—are unaware of the phenomenon. Moreover, most secondary school teachers are entirely unequipped to deal with very weak readers.

A person can get along with minimal writing skills in most life situations in the general culture, including vocational ones. Simple listings of a limited number of vocabulary items will suffice for a large number of persons. Even in the schools, the popularity of the "objective" tests, with their multiple-choice responses, attests to the general diminution of the significance of writing skills. Consequently, if individuals, groups, or classes show dysfunction in both reading and writing, reading has clear priority, and attention to writing can be delayed.

As for those who are functional—or better—at reading, attention must

be given to developing their skills so that they will become sophisticated in dealing with the more literary as opposed to the more "mechanical" aspects of reading comprehension. With them, such instructional thinking and practice should be routine and more careful attention should be given to their writing.

### Information Inventories

Up to this point, we have considered what the teacher must know about his students in order to plan a meaningful curriculum. When he has this information in hand, he can design his units of work.

Information forms a large part of any study unit—for example, items of fact, the superficial content of specific stories, poems, and plays, definitions, and concepts. As the teacher prepares a specific unit of study, he may need therefore, to design an inventory that will reveal how much of the unit's information the students already know. Let us assume, for example, that a school system has adopted a curriculum that features drama study, and the eleventh-grade teacher's responsibility is Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. The students had studied *The Lark* by Jean Anouilh when they were in the tenth grade. To make efficient use of the time allocated to *The Crucible*, the teacher must know which learnings from the tenth grade have pertinence for eleventh-grade work and which of these have carried over. Obviously, there is little point in repeating experiences that are familiar to students. Consequently, the purpose of the inventory is to assess the pertinent carry-over, the pertinence having been arbitrarily determined previously by the curriculum makers.

The inventory can check the students' knowledge of specific data like places, names, and dates, and such specific terms as "simile," and "alliteration," and "allegory." For example, depending upon the kind of learnings from the study of *The Lark* that are regarded as pertinent to the study of *The Crucible*, an inventory of concepts of varying degrees of complexity could be made to test the students' familiarity with the names of the concepts. In other words, the students could be asked to identify such terms as dramatic unities, character, protagonist, tragedy, depending upon which concepts receive emphasis in the curriculum. Failure to identify key terms would indicate that direct instruction in the terms or concepts may have to be repeated, whereas a high frequency of appropriate identifications would suggest that instructional time related to *The Crucible* should be used otherwise.

### Inventories in Summary

The preparation, administration and scoring of inventories is an arduous task. Although the preparation of an inventory battery



is initially time-consuming, carefully prepared inventories will be useful year after year with only moderate revision, because they relate mainly to general behaviors and skills rather than to discrete elements of content. The information inventory can become an integral part of a curriculum, which focuses on learning specific content. If a number of teachers are involved in preparing inventories, the initial work can be cut down.

Such is not the case with the scoring and evaluation of results. Without doubt the heaviest paper load of the year occurs during the inventory period, yet stretching the inventory period to accommodate the workload tends to defeat the purpose of the inventory procedure. In school systems in which lay readers are employed, the burden of scoring papers can be eased, but even in this case, the delicate and time-consuming job of evaluation must be done by the teacher.

A sound practice is to return the inventories to the class and go over the rationale and the results with the students, offering them insights into their own strengths and weaknesses. Student-kept records of the results of inventories should prove useful here, especially if the inventories indicate that much class attention will have to be devoted to remedial instruction.

Should the teacher use inventory results to help determine students' course marks? His basic purpose in making inventories is to assess the levels of performance of various kinds to help him in his instructional planning. Yet, to the extent that making is related to the students' actual performance of tasks as measured against their presumed ability, it is obvious that inventories will play a part in judgments concerning course grades. Even beyond this consideration, work done in the course of the inventories can be "counted" toward grades simply because it is real work, and as such, it is a direct measure of achievement.

Of course, the inventories will have little value unless the students really do work at them. For this reason, before the teacher undertakes the inventories, he should carefully discuss their purpose with the class. The students will be sure to ask if the inventories "count." The teacher must not hedge in his answer and must answer directly and frankly. If he answers, "Yes," he motivates workmanlike attitudes. Hedging, on the other hand, may result in a lack of honest effort and defeat the purpose of the inventories.

Although inventories mean a lot of work for everyone involved, a good inventory program will predict a good course. Without such a program, the teacher is forced to proceed by guesswork.

The sample inventories presented in this book are not intended as models to be imitated in a mechanical and unthinking way. Rather, they are intended as guides to the kind of thinking that teachers must do in making and using inventories in connection with their own work and in meeting their own needs. However, all the models presented and suggested here have been repeatedly tested in the classroom. They have been found to have considerable utility and may be used with some confidence as they are, or with appropriate

modifications, by any teacher. Whether the teacher uses the specific inventories presented in this book or develops his own, he will need concrete information about individual performance. Proceeding without it is certainly risky and may be disastrous. Inventories provide concrete information.

#### NOTES

1. Avram Goldstein, "Does Homework Help? A Review of Research," *Elementary School Journal*, 60 (January 1960), pp. 217-224.
2. Amelia Diebel and Isabel Sears, "A Study of Common Mistakes in Pupils' Oral English," *Elementary School Journal*, 17 (September 1916), pp. 44-45.
3. I. P. Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927).

## 3

## Differentiating Instruction

When the teacher completes his inventories, he will find that his class shows a wide diversity in interests, attitudes, and abilities. No matter what course content he plans, if he does not make some provision for differentiating instruction, his procedures will misfire with a number of his students.

This diversity exists even in schools in which the administration provides for some homogeneous grouping through scheduling. How can this be so if the classes are scheduled homogeneously? Let us briefly examine some administrative scheduling practices and what such scheduling implies for planning instruction.

#### Administrative Grouping

Probably, the most frequently encountered kind of secondary school scheduling is tracking. Ordinarily, there are three or four tracks, ranked from high to low in general ability, but classes within each track are put together on the basis of chance.

Studies have questioned both the desirability of such grouping<sup>1</sup> and the reality of the results of the grouping.<sup>2</sup> One of the reasons for this is that most schools are not large enough to accommodate truly homogeneous classes at the ends of the distribution curve. For example, suppose that a school administration decides to make an honors track for students having high IQs, say 130 and above. Suppose further that the school population reflects the normal distribution curve as far as its IQ is concerned. In order to have a tenth-grade honors class of only 20 students there would have to be 1,000 tenth graders in that school. There are very few schools large enough to accommodate such groupings.

Some administrative grouping is essential, however, in providing a sound, workable English program because some differences in ability simply cannot be handled in a heterogeneous class. For example, the needs of students seriously deficient in reading and writing skills cannot be met if such students are scheduled into "normal" classes. Usually, because of a lack of special training and appropriate materials and his feeling of responsibility toward his other students, the teacher has to let these students stumble along as best they can.

All work in all English classes depends on the degree of skills development, especially in reading and writing, that students have attained. A student's skills determine how well he functions. Thus, students may be classified according to the way they function.

The first broad grouping made in terms of function is the grouping "nonfunctioning/functioning." Students classified as "nonfunctioning" in English studies are those very few who cannot read or write at all. For example, blind students are nonfunctioning at reading. Recent immigrants who cannot read, nor write, nor understand English are nonfunctioning. Severely retarded students or those with neurological or physical handicaps that prevent them from reading and writing are also nonfunctioning. In most schools there are relatively few such students. Their chronic and desperate needs dictate special classes for them, so their instruction must be in the hands of trained specialists.

By far, most students in secondary schools are *functioning*. These functioning students can be classified by another dichotomy, "dysfunctional/functional." "Dysfunctional" students are those whose skills are so weak that they interfere with the *intended* function of the skills. Dysfunctional readers can do some reading—that is, they can go through the motions, call a considerable number of words accurately, and understand the simplest sentences. But they often do not comprehend even the main ideas of what they read; or worse, completely misinterpret the main ideas. They cannot go far beyond reading for key details with any material and will score far below grade level on any standardized reading test.

Dysfunctional writers go through the motions of writing. But whoever reads their writing must actually analyze it to get any meaning whatever out of it. Even the simplest words are misspelled; many words are omitted; punctuation is erratic; and often, the handwriting is itself undecipherable. The mechanical errors are so numerous and overpowering that a teacher doesn't even consider commenting on the content of the message.

Figure 3.1 is an example of the first paper of the year, answers to a reading inventory, submitted by a dysfunctional ninth grader.

Often, a student shows both reading and writing dysfunction. In such cases reading instruction must receive priority because of the demands of the culture. The needs of dysfunctional students demand special programs.

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1. Summer
2. Then went to the world
3. In the country
4. Tom thought he was trucking
5. Bill
6. He went being ~~happy~~ politics
7. Under the sun the sun sun sun
8. He
9. He is the egg.
10. He

FIGURE 3.1 First paper of the year submitted by a dysfunctional ninth grader.

Administrative grouping practices ought to allow for classes of such students; but in too many schools there are none. It is obvious that even with the most sophisticated in-class grouping techniques, teachers cannot deal with a small group of students in such areas as phonics and word attack while their classmates are working at grade-level tasks. The program difference is just too humilitating. When the whole class needs such instruction, the embarrassment to individuals is greatly reduced.

The functional group contains a subgroup that needs a special program. This subgroup contains students who are "fluent" in skills. The fluent reader scores well above normal on standardized tests. He adapts his reading techniques, including rate, to his reading purposes and the material. He deals readily with such comprehension problems as author's viewpoint, relating reading materials to one another in many ways, evaluating reading in terms of life experience, and making evaluations in terms of various literary traditions. The fluent writer exhibits similar skill in his writing, having a deft touch with nuances that elude his less gifted peers. He produces compositions that are stylized appropriately to his purpose and that are generally free from mechanical errors.

The special needs and abilities of these students are ignored even in many honors classes. Too often their instructional program in all its aspects is identical with that of other students. Of course, because of their superior endowments, these students perform any curriculum task very well. Their achievement at a given task will be obviously so much better than that of members of "ordinary" classes that teachers are convinced that their curricula

lum content is appropriate. In such cases, the corollary evaluation is not made: that the curriculum content for the "ordinary" classes is inappropriate.

Let us consider, for example, two twelfth-grade classes studying *The Admirable Crichton*: the first an honors group; the second a group of college-bound students who are functional at reading and writing. The focus of the study is the satirical commentary on social class structure that Barrie makes throughout the play. The honors group reads and writes with greater skill and insight than the other group. If the play and approach are "right" for the honors group, can it be "right" for the less gifted group? If the material and approach is appropriate to both groups, what is the rationale for having two groups?

In terms of skills, then, there are four recognizable groups that might serve as the basis for tracking: the nonfunctioning, the dysfunctional, the functional, and the fluent. In some schools the administration helps to differentiate instruction by assigning students to appropriate tracks. In others pupils are grouped heterogeneously. Whichever grouping practices the administration of a school may follow, the teacher will face a spread in ability, interest, and attitude in any class. Consequently, he needs techniques for differentiating instruction.

#### Differentiated Questions

Let us first consider some of these techniques that do not require the physical movement of students. Even if the reading inventories indicate that the reading material the teacher plans to use will not frustrate any students, there will still be an ability range among them in terms of handling different sorts of comprehension questions. (See Reading Inventory, pp. 239-246.) In introducing a reading assignment, the teacher should prepare a list of questions that range in difficulty. Not all students should be assigned to answer all questions. Instead, the teacher should name a group of students and indicate which questions they are to answer. Another group should deal with another set, and still another group with a third set ("John, Bill, Paul, Mary, and Edith answer questions 1, 3, 7, and 8. Peter, Howard, Louise, Cathy, and Phil, answer 2, 4, 7, and 9.") All students should answer the one or two key questions in the lesson. The groups and the questions should be matched on the basis of inventory results, a group being assigned the most difficult question type it handled adequately on the inventory and the next most difficult type. There will be much overlapping. The final touch is structuring the list in mixed order in terms of difficulty so that inviolent student judgments about one another and themselves will not follow from assignments of questions obviously arranged from easy to hard.

For a concrete example, let us assume that a tenth-grade teacher is beginning a unit on character analysis and has decided to focus on "the inner man."

The first few lessons are to deal with various mechanisms of compensation and how authors relate these to the behavior of their characters. The class has finished reading "That's What Happened to Me" by Michael Fessler, a story about a boy who daydreams. The next lesson is built around "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber. The central concept developed in this lesson is that daydreaming is a typical compensation mechanism for people of all ages. Two key questions in the lesson are as follows:

1. About how old is Walter Mitty?
2. Compare the daydreams of Walter Mitty and Bottles Barton in "That's What Happened to Me." What are their similarities and differences? What triggers the daydreams of each character?

Since both of these questions bear on the central concept of this lesson, both are assigned to the whole class, regardless of the relative implicit difficulty of the questions.

A number of other questions are developed that range in difficulty from relationships stated in the reading to a question dealing with the structural elements of the story:

3. Who was usually kept waiting?
4. Why did Mitty hurry to the hotel?
5. Explain how Mitty's daydreams are specifically connected to reality.
6. What attitudes do Mitty and his wife have toward each other?
7. At what point are you first aware that Mitty is a *habitual* daydreamer? Explain.

The reading inventory has indicated that all students in the class could read for main ideas and key details, therefore no questions of this type are presented. The best readers in the class had difficulty in perceiving the author's point of view; and no one could handle the more difficult types at all. Consequently, the more difficult question types are not used.

The weakest readers then will be assigned questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Another group questions 1, 2, 4, and 5. Another group 1, 2, 5, and 6, and so on—specific assignments being determined by the results of the reading inventory.

Before the questions are presented to the class, the order of questions 3–7 is scrambled, and the questions renumbered. Thus, the order of questions does not cue their relative difficulty nor the relative reading skill of the class members. This technique permits grouping of students for differentiated instruction in reading without rearranging the furniture for committee work.

Another technique that provides for some differentiation and does not involve committee work is to adjust the seating plan. Obviously, when a teacher begins the year, one of his major problems is learning the names and faces of his students. Additionally, there are many administrative details to deal with: distributing books, keeping records, taking attendance, and so on. To

help with these tasks, he arranges his classroom seating plan alphabetically. But when he has learned the names and faces and when the September administrative trivia are out of the way, there is no longer any purpose in his alphabetical seating arrangement.

Occasionally, in every class, some changes are made: to bring a student with vision or hearing difficulty closer to the front; to break up undesirable conversational groups; to bring inattentive or mischievous students closer to the teacher. Otherwise, the seating usually stays fixed alphabetically, an arrangement that helps neither student nor teacher, whereas a change in the seating plan could be working for both.

An important consideration in teacher-led discussions is obtaining maximum response, having many students volunteer, seeing many hands raised. Let us consider some typical responding patterns in students. First, there is the very fast responder: The minute a question is asked (even rhetorically) his hand goes up, his answer may not be appropriate, but his response is quick. Another type is the student who never volunteers: Sometimes, even very able students never contribute; perhaps they are too shy, but their voluntary responses are nil. These are the extremes. Another group responds only when they are certain their response will be "correct." Another type—the most numerous—will respond, but they are rather more deliberate in their reactions than those with the quick hands.

What sometimes happens in daily routine is that the teacher falls into the habit of recognizing those with the quick hands in order to get on with the lesson. Meanwhile the class develops the habit of letting the few quick responders carry the burden during teacher-led discussion. If these roles become fixed, even the technique of waiting a few moments until other hands go up may not prove fruitful. Those who might have responded earlier in the year—given a little time—have learned the habit of letting the students with the quick hands carry the ball.

A change in the seating plan can help keep bad response patterns from developing. When the students are known by name to the teacher, alphabetical seating has outlived its usefulness. The first seating change should be to move the students with the quick hands to the rear of the classroom. Then when the teacher asks a question and their hands go up, only the teacher sees them. Those who react somewhat more slowly can have a few more moments to formulate responses without being distracted or intimidated by the hands of their faster-reacting peers. The teacher, then, can simply wait a bit before calling on anyone.

Frequently, there are two or three students of another type in a class who can be accommodated by changes in the seating plan. Some students seem to have difficulty in following any directions, even the simplest. These students should be seated close together in some location where the teacher can get to them easily whenever he gives directions of any kind—usually, this means in the front of the class. Then, when directions are given, the teacher can

check these students visually, and if necessary, he can give them immediate help. In this way he can prevent them from learning error as a result of doing things wrong because of misunderstood directions.

Another important technique in conducting teacher-led discussions depends on group classifications that the teacher keeps in mind. As a teacher learns his class, he finds that many students may be classified according to the types of answers they usually give to questions. Many useful questions do not have answers that can be characterized as "right" or "wrong." Some questions invite purely subjective responses; for example, "Which is your favorite Dickens character?" Another type of question invites responses that are not personal but that are also not amenable to the right/wrong dichotomy: "Which of Poe's short stories shows the greatest concern for justice?"

Although answers to such a question cannot be classed as right or wrong, they may be classed by a type of frequency count. Let us assume that most students would respond to this question by naming one of two stories, either "A Cask of Amontillado" or "The Black Cat." Since these are the most typical answers, they may be thought of as "convergent." Another possible answer, though one not given very frequently, might be "The Tell-Tale Heart." Although this is capable of being reasonably supported, it may be considered "divergent" as it does not occur with great frequency.

Many students may be classified in terms of the convergence/divergence dichotomy on the basis of responses they habitually make. Moreover, there is yet another type to consider here, the summarizer. The summarizer, in this case, would name all three stories with amplifying comments and then select one as being *most* concerned with justice.

In leading discussions, the teacher should recognize students of each type according to his purpose in the discussion. If the purpose is a quick review of a small amount of material from the previous day's work in order to go forward, he should recognize the summarizer. If he intends a review lesson over a longer range of previous lessons, he should concentrate on students who make convergent responses. If he wishes to illustrate that some issue is complex, he should call on students who give divergent responses, especially at the beginning of a discussion. At the close of the discussion, he should recognize a summarizer who will tie all the elements together. Calling on a summarizer *first* in this situation would exclude many from the discussion and might suggest that the issue is not complex after all, since only one student had to speak to it. Thus, some differentiating of instruction can be done without ever moving furniture in the classroom.

#### Differentiation Through Group Work

Some teaching situations do demand in-class grouping. One of these is discussed in Chapter 13. The use of groups is an essential

part of the technique in teaching concepts; as teacher support is withdrawn, students find intellectual support in small peer groups. As discussed in Chapter 24, "A Theory of Teaching Composition," small groups of students are invaluable in criticizing one another's composition work. Whenever the class is studying drama, the practice of in-class grouping gives all students an opportunity to read roles in plays. Often it is necessary to have students engage in small-group discussion for various other reasons. Grouping techniques are therefore essential in the teacher's repertoire.

Many teachers are afraid of in-class grouping on three counts. They feel that any teaching pattern other than teacher-led discussions, oral reporting, or independent study threatens a loss of control. They feel that when students are in committees, many of them are not working, and hence time is being wasted. They are afraid of noise of any kind in a classroom. Yet if all the phases of the work are carefully structured, the teacher will be able to retain control, the students will be attentive, and the noise will be kept at a minimum. Although the students will be making some noise—that is, talking—as they work in groups, it will be *good* noise, not suggesting loss of control, lack of discipline, or any other negative element in the classroom atmosphere.

Many teachers are unaware of the simple and reasonable techniques required for successful group work. First of all, the teacher should plan his grouping and structure his groups carefully (specific suggestions for group structuring are detailed below). When group membership has been planned, the names of the members of the different groups should be written together on the chalkboard. Each student will know then, without asking, which group he belongs to, and one of the major causes for confusion in committee work will thus be eliminated. Keeping group size to five and below will help with the noise problem. When groups are larger, a student has to talk across several others and so must raise his voice. Students in other groups will have the same problem, and soon the voices get into competition with one another in an upward-spiraling escalation.

The next step is planning group placement. The groups should be placed as far apart as physically possible, and each group should be bunched together as close as is physically possible. Keeping the groups distant from one another provides insulation against voices traveling from group to group and thus reduces intergroup competition, helping to keep the general noise level down.

The next problem is moving students into their groups. One of the sources of noise in grouping is caused by the movement of furniture, sliding it across the floor, and bumping it into other furniture. It is not necessary for a student to use "his own" furniture. The first step in getting a class grouped is to have the furniture for only one group set into place. For example, suppose the teacher has decided to place one group in the front, left-hand corner of the room. The furniture that is closest to that corner should be moved there while the rest of the class stays in place. Unless everyone

in the group will be writing, it is not necessary to move five desks. Almost invariably, however, one person will be writing, so one desk and five chairs should be moved into the appropriate space. Next, the teacher should indicate that the students who are to occupy that space should move into it while the rest of the class remains seated. Each successive group should be set up in the same way, with the rest of the class remaining seated quietly. During this procedure, the teacher should remind the students about noise and tell them that they are to be as quiet as possible in moving their furniture. With younger students, when all the groups have been set up for the first time and before they are put to work, the teacher should have them return to their normal places in class, returning the furniture. When everyone knows where and how he is supposed to move, the teacher should have the class as a whole move. The procedures described to this point should be used whenever a new grouping arrangement of any kind is made. Like any new routine, grouping routines have to be taught.

The teacher should give all directions before the class moves into groups so that when they get into their groups, the students know precisely what they are expected to do and can start working immediately. Among the general directions that the teacher should give are the rules for decorum within the group. The first rule should be that only one person at a time may talk, the purpose, again, being to help reduce noise. In order for this rule to operate, each group should have a chairman to recognize speakers. Each group will also need a secretary, usually. The first few times that the teacher uses committees, he should choose the chairmen and secretaries for all groups. Subsequently, the groups can choose their own.

During the preliminary direction-giving, the teacher should specify the objectives of the group work. A paper of some kind required from the group as a whole—a list of words, answers to a number of questions, or the like—should specify the objectives. All members of the group should sign the paper, although the secretary alone may write what the group dictates.

The teacher should also indicate how much time will be allowed for the completion of the task. While the students are working, he should move from group to group, giving help as it is needed, answering questions, and evaluating the progress the students are making. A few minutes before the end of the allotted time, he should call for attention and ask if everyone will be finished within the specified time. He can then adjust the timing according to their responses.

In deciding how to put the groups together in the first place, the teacher's first problem is to decide whether he wants his groups to be formed homogeneously or heterogeneously in terms of the kinds of groups that he is using. There are three kinds of groups: ability groups, interest groups, and groups determined by some social criterion.

The teacher should use ability grouping when he is chiefly concerned about concept development or the use of previously developed skills needed to

complete an assignment. Whenever the class is working on concept formation (as described in Chapter 13), the teacher should structure his groups heterogeneously in the following way. Suppose there are thirty students in the class. Because the optimum maximum size for a working committee is five, there will be six groups. The teacher should rank his students in order, strongest to weakest, and assign the six strongest as intellectual leaders of his six groups (these students are not necessarily the chairmen of the group). Next, he should place his six weakest students, so that the weakest and strongest members of the class are together in one group, the second weakest and second strongest are together in another group, and so on. Using the same kind of structuring, he should place the remaining eighteen students into the six groups.

Often, new learnings are contingent upon skills that have been previously developed. Whenever this situation arises, the teacher should group his class heterogeneously so that the more skilled students will support the less skilled, using the same structuring techniques described in the preceding paragraph. For example, suppose the class is going to work on a series of compositions in which some highly stylized material will be imitated. In the first composition in the series, everyone will imitate the same highly stylized material, such as a news dispatch. In order for the class to imitate the style, they will first have to analyze it; the quality of their analyses will depend upon reading skills that have already been developed. Obviously, there will be a range in levels of development of the necessary skills. Therefore, the groups should be structured heterogeneously so that the more skilled students will support the less skilled.

In the matter of *skills development* or remediation, the groups should be structured homogeneously. The value of this structuring is that the teacher can more easily get to the students who need his help the most and spend more time with them.

Groups can be put together on the basis of interest. This is an especially useful technique when working with classes of weaker students. In motivating reluctant readers to read, for example, a baseball book group might be formed, an automobile book group might be another, a horsewomanship group could be another, and so forth. Whenever motivation is the central problem in instruction, the teacher should think about forming interest groups.

The final set of principles to consider in structuring groups is the various social principles. If a considerable amount of the work of the group will be done outside class, as in preparing a play for presentation, for example, the best course of action is to set up the groups along lines of friendship. The teacher should simply allow those who want to work together to group themselves together. In the lower secondary grades, such groups will usually arrange themselves along sexual lines, all boys or all girls. In the seventh and eighth grades the boy/girl basis for grouping usually results in the most enthusiastic kind of work.

Sometimes, however, friends do not help one another work but rather keep one another from working. In forming friendship groups, the teacher should

discuss this problem with the students; and when he arranges such grouping himself, he should keep apart those students who distract one another.

Sometimes committees engage in long-range projects—such as making an 8 mm. film—that are rather complicated and depend for their success on the leadership of one or two committee members. How can a teacher find leaders to build groups around? Often, students that a teacher chooses as leaders are not regarded as leaders by the peer group. The device that is used for finding peer-group leaders is the sociogram, which is made in the following way: The teacher distributes index cards and asks each student to fill in the names of two persons he would like to work with and the names of two he would not wish to work with. The teacher then collects the index cards and tabulates both the names listed as desirable co-workers and the names listed as undesirable co-workers. Next, he makes a chart indicating all those people who choose to work together and those who are rejected from such groups. Those repeatedly mentioned as desirable co-workers are the social leaders. This technique reveals not only the leadership in a class but also what the friendship groups are.

As indicated above, while groups are working in a classroom, the teacher should move from group to group keeping his fingers on the pulse of things. One of the important evaluations he must make is which students dominate their respective groups; this is particularly important when the dominant individuals tend to lead the group astray. If the teacher's purpose in forming the group is to withdraw his support, he must use a technique that is not authoritarian in suppressing the influence of dominant students. If he uses authoritarian techniques such as telling the dominant student not to talk so much and to give the others a chance, his broader purpose of withdrawing his support is defeated.

The teacher's best approach is to lead the group to its own analysis of who the most influential members are through the use of a flow chart. In order to prepare the flow chart, one of the group members acts as an observer/recorder while participating in the group work. This student draws a seating diagram of the group, identifying the members on the diagram by their initials. As a student makes a contribution, the observer/recorder marks a symbol beside his name. The symbols for statements are plus signs; symbols for argumentative or contrary statements that arise in response to these are minus signs; questions are indicated by question marks; and answers to questions are indicated by check marks. When the group discussion is completed, the role of each member of the group can be analyzed in terms of his typical contribution. It quickly becomes obvious to the group which members say nothing, which members typically contribute questions, which usually make an answering response only, which make statements, and which persons' contributions come in the form of reaction to statements made by others. A review of the discussion will indicate which types of contributions were most influential in determining group decisions and group activities.

There is no way to predict which member will be the most influential. Sometimes it is the questioner who will illuminate a course of action; sometimes it is the verbal counterpuncher. Through the analysis of the flow chart, the group gets insight into who the dominant person is; and individual members of the group who make no contributions are also pinpointed.

Whatever class a teacher faces, the inventory results will inevitably show that this planning must include provision for differentiating instruction. The function of grouping is to aid in this differentiation. For example, let us assume that an eleventh-grade teacher has a heterogeneously grouped class with a wide range of ability in reading. He is teaching a thematic unit on physical appearance as it relates to character change and personality. During the early stages of the unit the class had read a number of myths and fairy tales having change in physical appearance as a central feature of the imagery. During the current period class members have been doing outside reading assignments in various works. Each student was assigned a specific selection on the basis of his reading ability. There are twenty-seven students in the class, and the grouping and reading assignments were made as follows:

four fluent readers—*Richard III*  
 six functional, high ability girls—*Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand  
 five functional, high ability boys—*The Portrait of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde  
 five functional, reluctant readers—*Planet of the Apes* by Pierre Boulle  
 four functional, average readers—*Rhinoceros* by Eugène Ionesco  
 three very weak to dysfunctional readers—*The Snow Goose* by Paul Galllico

When the assignments were made, reading guide questions and vocabulary were distributed to help the students through the material they were to read independently. Key questions for all the readings were the following:

1. Does the physical appearance help or hinder the protagonist in his relationship with members of the opposite sex? How does he respond to their physical appearance?
2. Does his appearance change? In what ways? What are the results of his changes in appearance? What are the results of the failure of his appearance to change?
3. To what extent are his physical defects symbolic? Do you find symbolic meaning in the appearance of other characters? Explain.

Additionally, each selection has questions relevant to it alone.

Fluent readers were assigned *Richard III* because it is the most difficult in terms of readability. The very weak readers were assigned *The Snow Goose* because it is quite short and relatively easy. The reluctant group were assigned *Planet of the Apes* because of considerations of interest; at one level of interpretation the book is science fiction, and the satire is not subtle. *Rhinoceros* is not too difficult; the characters are stereotypes, and the symbolic significance



of the rhinoceroses is not profound (although the moral to the allegory is somewhat obscure). The remaining assignments were differentiated on the basis of interest and readability.

When the outside readings are finished, each group meets to discuss its assigned reading, the discussion being channeled by the guide questions. (There are six members in one group, a bit larger than the recommended optimum maximum size. But sometimes such operational compromises are unavoidable.) When the discussions are completed, a restructuring of the groups takes place.

Now heterogeneous groups are formed, the grouping principle being the titles that were read. Each member of each new group has read a different book. After each person briefly summarizes the plot of his book, he answers the key questions on the guidesheets that were common to all the books. Clearly, one function of the earlier homogeneous grouping was to prepare students to make contributions to the heterogeneous groups. During the period of homogeneous groupwork the teacher spends most of his time with the weaker groups.

#### Student-Teacher Conferences

Grouping helps to differentiate instruction and thus to individualize it. But true individualization is accomplished only on a one-to-one basis as in a tutorial. From time to time, various exigencies will point to the necessity for a pupil-teacher conference.

Good conference experiences will do very much to help strengthen rapport, increase understanding of specific learning problems, and generally improve individual performance. A poor conference experience, on the other hand, will have the opposite effect. Therefore, each conference must be planned as carefully as any other kind of lesson. Let us consider conferences of two general types: those initiated by students, and those initiated by teachers.

Very often a student initiates a conference just before or just after class. Usually some very specific problem is bothering him, and sometimes he is unaware of its complexities. For example, a student may request a time extension on a composition assignment. Before any decision is reached, the teacher must know what is prompting the request and must weigh the request against his general planning and objectives. His immediate response, therefore, is to ask the student why he needs more time, and the answer to this question will determine whether a more lengthy and formal conference is indicated. Consider the two following incidents that might occur just before class:

*Student:* Would it be O.K. if I turned in my composition on Monday instead of Friday?

*Teacher:* Why won't you be ready on Friday? What's the problem?

*Student:* Well, we're leaving to visit my uncle Thursday afternoon, and I won't be in school till Monday.

The problem is simple, and obviously, no follow-up conference needs to be scheduled. The teacher simply answers the question. The second incident:

*Student:* Would it be O.K. if I don't turn in my composition on Friday?

*Teacher:* Why won't you be ready on Friday? What's the problem?

*Student:* Well, I don't know just what you want, and I need more time.

In this case, the student needs help, although he may be unaware of it. Obviously, his problem cannot be reviewed in a few minutes before class begins. The situation signals the need for a conference. The teacher's response at this point should be to indicate that he'd like to talk the assignment over with the student at greater length and then arrange for some mutually convenient time for the talk. The student has invited the conference, although he is unaware of his need for it. (Of course, the teacher must be perceptive of the need.) On occasion, students initiate conferences directly and formally. However the case may be, whenever a student initiates a conference, he will have some specific purpose in mind, usually a learning problem of some kind. His immediate needs will give direction to the conference.

It is more often the case that the teacher initiates a conference. Consequently, the teacher must control and give direction to the situation. The first problem that the teacher faces is that of time: When can he get together with a student on a one-to-one basis? Some fortunate teachers have conference periods regularly scheduled as part of the school day, and the time problem is solved. More often, however, the teacher's day is full. Should the teacher have a "free" period in his schedule or study hall supervision, this time might be used for pupil conferences, provided that the student is free at the same time. Otherwise, before-school time or after-school time can be used, provided that the teacher has no assigned responsibility during these hours and the student is free. In many instances, because none of these time blocks is available, conferences must be held during class time.

When? Whenever the class is engaged in independent study, there is time for a conference. If the teacher makes a regular practice of using the last fifteen minutes of the class hour for beginning homework, conference time will be built into class routine. When the class is engaged in committee work, there is also time for a conference.

Some conferences might touch areas in a student's experience that are delicate to him. If the teacher is sensitive to this possibility, the conference will not be scheduled during class time, of course, but rather during some time when problems can be talked out in privacy.

Most conferences, however, deal with specific learning problems in an



intellectual way and can be held in the classroom while other class members are engaged in other things. Nevertheless, many students are somewhat shy about the conference situation in the classroom, feeling as though all eyes are on them. This problem is mitigated to some extent if the conference is held at the back of the classroom, especially if the student's back is kept to the class. Each conference should have a clear purpose and a highly specific conference objective. The student should be aware of both. That is, he should understand *why* the conference is necessary and *what* is supposed to be achieved by it.

Usually the teacher should plan a series of student conferences on some specific problem—style in composition, spelling improvement, progress reporting on long-term assignments—a problem that faces many in the class, but one that has individualistic overtones. When the teacher has decided to have the series of conferences, he should explain to his class that during the next several days he will schedule conferences with individuals during class and indicate their general nature—spelling problems, for example. At this time he should lay the ground rules and announce that not all students will be called into conference, only those who have specific problems. He should indicate that he expects people to work on their own during the conference period and that he won't be able to give much help because he will be in conference with someone. The teacher should also let the students know that any who want to have a conference on the problem should make an appointment.

The next step is to make a list of students who have spelling problems that will yield to specific suggestions.\* The teacher should post the list of names and dates on the bulletin board and indicate that students with whom conferences are scheduled should think about what their problems in spelling are. Thus, when a student is called into conference, he knows that the purpose of the conference is to effect improvement in his spelling. Additionally, he prepares himself by thinking about his particular problems. It is crucial, then, that the teacher have some phase of the student's work analyzed and be ready with constructive comments. Otherwise, the situation is pointless and artificial and will result in wasted time, loss of confidence in the teacher, and destruction of rapport.

The teacher must prepare for the conference. He must have concrete examples of the student's work to focus on, which should show specific examples of the topic under discussion. In addition, he must have some clear course of action to suggest to the student—better yet, alternative courses.

During the conference, although he is following his own plan, the teacher must not be didactic or authoritarian in any other way and must avoid any overtone of threat. The very fact that he is giving special and complete attention to his student is overwhelming enough. He must be "soft" in his general approach and manner, using questions whenever he can. He should establish

the objective of the conference at the outset, and when he feels this is clear to the student, the conference should proceed.

From time to time during the course of the conference, the teacher may need to break away momentarily to give attention to the class. But he must be careful not to show pique at these interruptions, and he must be especially careful to avoid expressing negative feelings toward his conferee. Let us consider a typical student-teacher conference on a spelling problem; the class is working on committee projects—say, reading a play:

*Teacher:* Sit down, Pete. Have you been thinking about your spelling problems?

*Student* (tentatively): Yeah.

*Teacher:* Have you been able to pinpoint any particular problem?

*Pete:* I don't know. There's a lot of words I don't know how to spell.

*Teacher:* But there's one mistake that turns up over and over on your papers. Look at these. (He has several papers ready. Pete looks at them.) You have some trouble handling the apostrophe, don't you?

*Pete:* I guess so.

*Teacher:* I know it doesn't seem like a serious problem, but it is one that can be licked. Can we review a little?

*Pete:* O.K.

*Teacher:* The main problem is with the possessive. Know what that is?

*Pete:* Yeah. When somebody owns something.

*Teacher:* Right. Now, how do you show the possessive?

*Pete:* Add apostrophe s.

*Teacher:* Good. Excuse me, Pete, it's getting a little noisy. (Raise voice.) Class . . . Class! I know you're working on a play, but you're getting a little loud. Keep your voices down, please. (Lowering voice.) Sorry, Pete. Where were we? O.K. You've got the rule. Can you give me a couple of examples?

*Pete:* O.K. . . . Uh . . . Mr. Brown's coat. The boy's hat.

*Teacher:* Good. You seem to know how to handle it. It looks as though your problem is keeping the error out of your compositions. How long does it take you to proofread a composition?

*Pete:* I don't know.

*Teacher:* Have you been proofreading?

*Pete:* I guess not.

*Teacher:* O.K. That's probably the real problem. Pete, will you try to do this: On your next three compositions, will you try to work in some possessives. And definitely proofread. I think you can catch all the errors then.

*Pete:* O.K. I'll do it.

*Teacher:* O.K. Now let's go over this. What problem have we talked about, and how are you going to work on it? . . .

\* A discussion of spelling instruction may be found in Chapter 22.

The teacher had the conference planned. He had isolated a single specific problem, forming the singular possessive. He checked on a series of things to get at the root of the problem: Did Pete understand what the usage was, did he know the critical rule, could he give specific examples? The answers Pete gave indicated that he had the appropriate learnings. The teacher did not insist on a formal statement of rules at any time. The short conference indicated that Pete's trouble was something other than what might be solved by spelling instruction or drill. The proofreading habit was the next point checked—and proved to be the culprit. Finally, a concrete course of action was indicated. The student review was to clarify that the conference objective had been met.

Because so much of English instruction requires individualization, the teacher must have various differentiating techniques in his repertoire. In some cases administrative grouping may help by reducing the degree of diversity in skills in a particular class. However much this diversity is reduced, it will not be eliminated, or even nearly so. Consequently, there will always need to be some methods of differentiating in leading discussion, some need for grouping within the class, and some need for individual conferences.

### The Tragic Hero

The unit that follows illustrates various methods of differentiating instruction in a particular unit. In the course of their study students work in various small group situations with a variety of purposes: library research, discussion of plays read by the whole class and those studied by only a few students, criticism of each other's writing, and discussion of play productions attended. In addition, the teacher confers individually with students about their reading and their writing.

The Tragic Hero, as it appears below, was planned for functional twelfth-grade, college-bound students. It has been presented successfully to very fluent ninth graders as well. However, for the vast majority of ninth, tenth, and even eleventh grade students it is difficult. Recordings of the plays, the filmed Stratford Theatre version of *Oedipus Rex*, and live productions are very useful in helping less accomplished readers dealing with the language of the plays. Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* were originally selected as whole class readings for two reasons: they were relatively short and they were both being performed by local theater groups. Alternate plays can be used. For instance, one popular play with high school seniors is Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. (A good film version is available.) In selecting plays for the whole class to read, the teacher should keep in mind what films are available, but especially what plays are scheduled for production locally by amateur, college, and professional theater groups.

This unit on the Tragic Hero is predicated on the idea that if a student is to understand a concept, he must encounter it in its variety of shapes and contexts. Reading a single tragedy such as *Macbeth* gives the student only a minimum background in tragedy. He will have only a vague idea of what the form of tragedy is. He will know about only a single tragic hero. He will be unaware of the possible range of heroes, situations, and plot structures available to tragedy. By examining a number of plays, however, the student can begin to comprehend not only the actions of a single hero involved in a particular situation, but the nature of the tragic view of man. If the student reads a number of plays, he can consider such questions as: What kind of man can become involved in the tragic situation? Why does the pursuit of what man believes to be his destiny sometimes result in tragedy? What is the view of man that tragedy conveys?

The emphasis on extensive reading, however, does not and should not prohibit intensive study of appropriate works. In the course of the unit, the class reads three plays as a group, each of which is read and studied in detail for plot, character, themes, patterns of imagery, major conflicts, philosophical and cultural ideas, and so forth.

The first activity of the unit involves background reading in the library about the Greek and Elizabethan theaters and about major Greek and Shakespearean playwrights. Following reports on the library reading, the class proceeds to an intensive study of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. The discussion of the play centers in the plot, the characters, the themes, and the ideas. The broader questions concerning the nature of tragedy are reserved until the students have read additional plays. As the study of *Oedipus Rex* draws to a close, the students select a Greek play from a list to read individually. Usually from four to five students read a given play, and they can be grouped together for discussion after they have read the play. It is sometimes very helpful to ask various faculty members to read and discuss a play with one of these small groups. This technique assures a reasonably intensive study of even the outside plays.

The next step in the unit involves the intensive study of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, followed by the selection of another Elizabethan play for outside reading. The approach in this section of the unit is similar to the approach to the Greek section.

By the time the students have read four plays, they can begin to approach the larger questions concerning the nature of tragedy. A class discussion at this point should attempt to isolate significant elements, such as the nature of the hero, the structure of the plot, and the use of irony. The class as a group then begins to examine each of these elements. After the examination of the various elements is under way, a composition is assigned in which the students attempt to define tragedy. Two approaches are possible: (1) Either the student analyzes all the various elements or (2) he chooses the quality

that he feels is most central to tragedy and builds his essay around that central idea.

When the students have completed their own definitions of tragedy, they examine a few excerpts from published critical writings on tragedy to determine what aspects they had not considered.

The final section of the unit is a test of what has been accomplished, for here the student reads modern plays which may or may not be tragedies. The first modern play, *The Emperor Jones*, is examined by the entire class as a play. The students are on their own to decide whether or not it is tragic. Their conclusions are usually of three kinds. Some wish to call it tragic. Some say that Jones is far too ignoble to be a tragic figure. And some say that in some respects the play is tragic, while in others it is not. Following his analysis of *The Emperor Jones*, the student chooses a second modern play and analyzes it without the help of the teacher or other students. Once again he asks himself the question, can the play I have read be considered tragic? The conclusions reached are important only as they reflect the method used in reaching them. If the student examines the play carefully, brings what he has learned about tragedy to bear on this particular play, and presents evidence to support his argument, the unit and the student have been successful.

#### TIME REQUIRED

Approximately six weeks.

#### TERMINAL OBJECTIVES

- To identify the stage conventions of the Greek, Elizabethan and Modern theaters.
- To write a composition defining the nature of tragedy and the characteristics of the tragic hero.
- To write (outside class) an analysis of a modern literary work read independently, determining the extent to which it can be considered tragic.

#### MATERIALS

##### Essays:

- Aristotle, from *The Poetics*, trans. by L. J. Potts in *Eight Great Tragedies*, ed. Sylvan Barnet & others (New York: The New American Library, 1961).
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, "The Tragic," in *Eight Great Tragedies*.
- Hume, David, "Of Tragedy," in *Eight Great Tragedies*.
- Krutch, Joseph W., from *The Tragic Fallacy*, in *Eight Great Tragedies*.
- Richards, I. A., from *Principles of Literary Criticism*, in *Eight Great Tragedies*.
- Tillyard, E. M. W., from *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*, in *Eight Great Tragedies*.

Reference:  
Hamilton, Edith, *Mythology* (New York: The New American Library, 1959).

##### Plays:

- Marlowe, Christopher, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Louis B. Wright & Virginia A. Lamar (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1959).
- O'Neill, Eugene, *The Emperor Jones*, in *Four Modern Plays* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961).
- Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, translated by Bernard M. W. Knox (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1959).

##### Recording:

*Tragic History of Dr. Faustus*, Richard Burton, Capitol Records.

##### Duplicated Materials:

Study Guides for *Oedipus Rex* (I and II), *Prometheus Bound*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*, Greek Tragedies, *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Emperor Jones*. (Guides for *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and for the essays listed above have not been included here.)

Selected Bibliography for Outside Reading.

#### STUDENT LOAD

1. Preparation of oral report and outline.
2. Reading and discussion of six plays.
3. Reading and discussion of seven essays.
4. Writing of major compositions:
  - a. Characteristics of Greek tragedy.
  - b. Definition of tragedy.
  - c. Analysis of *The Emperor Jones*.
  - d. Analysis of outside reading selection—final evaluation.

#### Lesson 1

##### OBJECTIVE

To identify dramatic conventions of Greek, Elizabethan and Modern stages.

##### PROCEDURES

- A. To give the students a background in different periods of drama and to initiate the research work, ask the class if they know the differences between Greek, Elizabethan, and Modern staging. Ask them if they know what changes might have to be made in a play if it were produced on each of these three stages.

After a brief discussion, tell the class that in order to understand the Greek, Elizabethan, and Modern theater they must understand not only the kind of stage the dramatist had at his disposal, but they must also understand what kind of audience the dramatist wrote for, what kind of costuming and actors were available, and what the role of the dramatist was in his society.

List the topics on the board in the following manner:

Role of the dramatist in all three societies.  
What is drama?

Greek stage	Elizabethan stage	Modern stage
Greek audience	Elizabethan audience	Modern audience
Greek actors & costuming	Elizabethan actors & costuming	Modern actors & costuming

Have the students choose topics and group the class according to their topics.

- B. Tell the students that the information they gather will be presented to the class by their group. To insure that the other students are able to follow the talk and have notes to refer to after the talks, the groups will be expected to make outlines for distribution to the class.
- C. Take the students to the library, or tell them to go to the library in the evening and get three or four books apiece on the subject they are working on. The next day, group the students to discuss their topics or to read. When the groups have gathered enough information on their topics, have them make a rough outline of how they are going to present their material.  
Review the outline with each group and make suggestions for improvement. After the outlines are satisfactory, duplicate them.
- D. As each group presents its discussion, allow the class time to ask questions and draw parallels. If the students giving the talk leave out important information, ask questions that will bring it out, or supply the information at the end of the discussion.

#### EVALUATIONS

Are the outlines satisfactory? Do the oral reports supply the necessary information?

#### Lesson 2

#### OBJECTIVES

To identify the characteristics of Greek tragedy.

#### MATERIALS

*Oedipus Rex*  
*Mythology* (selection)  
Reading list

#### PROCEDURES

1. To give the students a background for reading *Oedipus Rex*, distribute copies of Edith Hamilton's account of the Oedipus legend as it appears in her book, *Mythology*. Have the students read the selection, and answer any questions they may have.
2. Distribute *Oedipus Rex* and its study guide. Have the students read the study guides. Answer any questions they may raise. Start the reading of the play together, asking a few questions about the plot along the way. After they are well into the plot, have them finish the reading on their own.
3. Divide the class into small groups to discuss the simple plot questions. Have them appoint a recorder to write down their answers. Circulate to be sure that the students do not get too involved in any one question to the detriment of the others.
4. Discuss with the class the *essay and discussion questions*. It is helpful for students to refer constantly to specific sections of the play to support their answers. For variety it may be useful to have the class work on a few of the questions in groups. Question number 11 is useful as a writing assignment. Its directions are self-contained.
5. To allow students a chance to work on their own and to draw comparisons between plays, distribute the list of Greek plays and let the students select the play they are interested in. Give the students a brief synopsis of each play to help them in their choice. Form groups of not more than five students on the basis of their play selections. Distribute the general study guides and the study guide for the specific plays. Allow them sufficient time to read the study guides and ask questions, and then give them the rest of the class time to read.
6. After the students have read their plays, have them discuss the specific study guide questions first, followed by the general study guide questions. Circulate among the groups to insure that the students draw comparisons between the plays. The important thing is the nature of tragedy as it is exhibited in the plays. The students should begin to formulate a definition of tragedy from the comparisons they make.
7. After the class has finished its group discussions, begin whole class discussion of the general study guide. As the students point out characteristics that are similar, write them on the board. Then have the students summarize in a short paper the characteristics of Greek tragedy. Tell them to use specific examples from the plays they have read to support their position.

## EVALUATIONS

Does the paper comment on the Greek dramatic conventions, the characteristics of the tragic hero, the nature of the tragic situation? Are specific examples used to support the generalizations?

**Study Guide I** *Oedipus Rex*

The following questions will give direction to your reading of the play.

1. In the beginning, what clues do we get to Oedipus' character?
2. What faults in his character are revealed as the play progresses?
3. How is Creon related to Oedipus?
4. According to Creon's report, what was the cause of Thebes' misfortunes?
5. Upon what gods does the chorus call in its prayer for help for Thebes? Why is each god significant?
6. Oedipus' proclamation sets what form of punishment for the murderer of Laius?
7. What is Oedipus' reaction to Tiresias' prophecy? Does he believe it?
8. Whom does Oedipus blame for the supposed plot against him?
9. What, says Creon, are his reasons for not wanting to be king?
10. What is Oedipus' physical defect? What caused it? How does he feel about it? What does his name mean?
11. How and why had Oedipus killed Laius?
12. What seems to be Oedipus' chief reaction to the news of Polybus' death?
13. How does he think he might have been the cause of Polybus' death?
14. How does Oedipus interpret Jocasta's reluctance for him to learn his true identity?
15. Why are Oedipus' children referred to as "monstrous"? For which of them is he most concerned?
16. According to Oedipus, what superhuman power urged him to blind himself?
17. Describe Creon's attitude toward the blinded Oedipus.
18. What final warning and advice does Creon give Oedipus?
19. How does each of the points of Tiresias' prophecy come true?
20. What moral does the chorus draw from Oedipus' story, at its close?

**Study Guide II** *Oedipus Rex*

## ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A Greek audience would have known the Oedipus legend before seeing the play. How would that knowledge have affected their responses to the play in the opening scenes and later?

2. What kind of leader does the situation in the city call for? Is Oedipus this kind of leader? Is Oedipus a heroic character? Support your position.
3. What importance to the play is Oedipus' decision to have Creon give the oracle's reply in public? In questioning Creon, what trait does Oedipus reveal? What does Oedipus do as a result of the information that Creon brings?
4. How does the decision to send for Tiresias influence the plot? In his questioning of Tiresias, what additional character trait does Oedipus reveal? Note especially the speech on p. 27 of the text. What is his reaction to what Tiresias tells him? Why?
5. What does Jocasta's speech on p. 50 reveal about her attitude toward religion? Oedipus' speech on pp. 66-67? How are they similar? What other statements by them do you find in the play which support your inference?
6. When does Oedipus turn from interest in finding the murderer to interest in learning his own identity? In what sequence does Oedipus learn his fate? How does this affect audience response to the play?
7. What is the ultimate irony of the play? List the plot episodes and show how each results from the preceding one, except in the arrival of the messenger from Corinth. What does the interrelationship of the episodes contribute to the irony of the play?
8. How is the play unified in terms of time, space, and character? How does the phrase *in medias res* relate to this play?
9. What are two important roles played by the chorus?
10. Take notes on each of the prophecies indicating what is predicted about Oedipus' life. What in the play is not predicted about Oedipus? Since the play proves the truth of the prophecy, how can Oedipus be said to have acted as a free agent with a free will?
11. Apollo is the god of light, of the sun, of intellectual achievement, the god who controls disease and health. What is Oedipus' relationship to these aspects of Apollo?
12. Who appears to have controlled destiny—Oedipus and Jocasta, the prophecy, or the gods? What evidence supports your contention?
13. Comment on the symbolic significance of the blindness imagery throughout the play.

**Study Guide** *Prometheus Bound*

1. What is the nature of Prometheus' punishment?
2. Why is he to be punished? Could he have avoided punishment?
3. What is his immediate reaction?
4. Is Prometheus greater before or after he brings man fire? Why?
5. Which punishments does Prometheus enumerate?

6. Describe the Wanderer.
7. What is the main problem of the actress who plays the role?
8. What doom for Zeus does Prometheus prophesy?
9. For what reason does Hermes visit Prometheus?
10. Describe Prometheus' final punishment.
11. Does Prometheus at any point regret his earlier action? Explain.
12. Who triumphs in the end, Prometheus or Zeus? Defend your position.

### Study Guide *Medea*

1. Who is Medea's husband?
2. Why does Medea despair?
3. What is the order Kreon gives to Medea? What is his reason for giving this order?
4. Who is Aigeus? What agreement does he make with Medea? (When Aigeus exits, we see the chorus in one of its classic roles; it comments on Aigeus, the comment having little to do with the action of the play. What do you suppose is Euripides' purpose in so flattering Aigeus?)
5. By what method does Medea plan to kill her rival?
6. Why does she plan to kill her children?
7. As a director, how would you develop the murder-of-the-children scene?
8. What is Jason's reaction?
9. What does Medea finally refuse him?
10. Many critics believe that tragedy is resolved with a final suggestion of nobility (or affirmation). How is this view substantiated or repudiated in *Medea*?

### Study Guide *Hippolytus*

1. What is the purpose of Aphrodite's prologue?
2. Which goddess does Hippolytus worship and whom does he refuse to worship?
3. Which member of the household is ill? What is the reason for her illness?
4. What is the nature of the cure the nurse suggests?
5. What is Phaedra's reaction when the cure fails?
6. Who is Theseus and why does he turn against Hippolytus? What is the ironic element in his return?
7. What are the circumstances of Hippolytus' injury?
8. Who intercedes for Hippolytus and what are the results of the intercession?
9. Does the play end on an affirmative note? Explain.

10. What is the most difficult scene in the play to produce? If you were a director, how would you produce it?

### Study Guide *Oedipus at Colonus*

1. Why is Oedipus asked to leave the sacred grove and then the town?
2. How does Oedipus regard his fate?
3. What message does Ismene bring to him?
4. How does Oedipus feel about having been banished from Thebes? Why?
5. What bargain does Oedipus make with Theseus?
6. What reasons does Creon give for asking Oedipus to return to Thebes?
7. What is the situation which prompts Polynices to go to his father?
8. Why is it important to Oedipus that he successfully deny the requests of both Creon and Polynices?
9. How does Oedipus find peace and tranquility at the end of his agony?
10. Is this play a tragedy in the same sense as *Oedipus the King* is? In what ways is it similar or different?

### Study Guide *Antigone*

1. Why does Creon decree that Polynices must not be buried?
2. Why does Antigone insist on disobeying this decree?
3. How does Sophocles raise this specific conflict to a universal one?
4. What is the conflict between Haemon and Creon?
5. Why do we tend to sympathize with Creon?
6. What part does Tiresias play?
7. Creon relents of his decree and of his sentencing of Antigone. Why is it too late?
8. Who is the real tragic figure of the play, Antigone or Creon?
9. What are the multiple causes of Creon's tragedy?
10. Near the beginning of the play, the guard bringing news of the burial to Creon says, "Tis sad, truly, that he who judges should misjudge." In what respects does this apply to Creon?

### Study Guide *Greek Tragedies*

1. What specific problems do the major characters of the plays confront?
2. Is each problem due to external forces, forces which are internal to the characters, or both? What precisely is the nature of these forces?
3. Do the events of the play lead to a resolution of the conflict? Is the resolution external in the events, internal in the minds and emotions of the characters, or both? What is the precise nature of the resolution?

4. If there is no resolution, a continuing unanswerable question must be presented. What is the precise nature of this question?
5. What is the theme of the play? State the theme as carefully as possible.
6. What role does each character play in the enactment of this theme?
7. In what ways is the play similar and different from *Oedipus Rex*—in plot development, in character, and in theme?
8. From your reading of the two plays write out notes toward a definition of tragedy. Include the nature of the hero, his personality, his social position, and his relationship to other characters. Also include the nature of his experience and its relationship to the nature of the audience's experience during the course of the play.

### Lesson 3

#### OBJECTIVES

- To identify the characteristics of Elizabethan tragedy.  
To compare Greek tragedies and *Faustus*.

#### MATERIALS

*Doctor Faustus*, book and record  
*Macbeth*  
*Othello*  
*Titus Andronicus*  
*Hamlet*  
*Julius Caesar*  
*King Lear*

#### PROCEDURES

1. To begin the analysis of Elizabethan drama, review with the class their notes on the Elizabethan theater, paying particular attention to Marlowe and the history of the Faust story. Distribute copies of *Dr. Faustus* along with the study guide.
2. To aid reading comprehension, have the students read the play in class along with the recording. Advise the class before they begin that the record omits some of the scenes, telling them which scenes to pass over as they follow along. Following the class reading, tell the students to reread the play at home, using the study questions as a guide.
3. To insure knowledge of important details and simple inferences, conduct a whole class discussion based on the first sixteen study guide questions. Cut off discussion when it is clear that students understand the literal level of the play.
4. To begin interpretation of the play, divide the class into groups and assign each group two or more of the essay questions. After the groups

- have discussed the questions, ask them to prepare a report of their ideas for the class. As each group reports, involve the whole class in discussion of the particular questions answered by the group.
5. To compare the tragedy of *Faustus* to the Greek plays in the previous lesson, ask the class questions which will lead them to select similarities and differences.
    - a. How does *Faustus'* situation at the beginning of the play compare to the situation of *Oedipus*? Other Greek heroes?
    - b. What is the general movement of the action in *Dr. Faustus*? How does this compare to the general movement of Greek tragedies?
    - c. In *Oedipus*, what is reestablished by the fulfillment of the hero's fate? Is there a similar reestablishment in *Faustus*?
    - d. How do *Oedipus* and *Faustus* differ in their attitudes toward their destinies at the end of the play? Does this affect the audience's interpretation of the two characters?
    - e. Compare the problem of man's free will and fate in *Faustus* and the Greek plays.
      - (1) To what point is man in control of his destiny?
      - (2) Can the gods defeat man?
    - f. Compare the characteristics of *Faustus* and *Oedipus*. Are they in any way similar? In what ways are they different?
    - g. Is the fluctuation of *Dr. Faustus'* will parallel to the action of *Oedipus*? Does *Oedipus* at any time doubt himself or his intentions?
    - h. What portions of the Elizabethan play assume the function of the chorus in Greek tragedy?
    - i. What elements common to all the plays read thus far would indicate the essential nature of tragedy?
  6. To provide for individual analysis of an Elizabethan tragedy, list the titles of supplementary plays on the board. After the students have selected the plays they wish to read, distribute the corresponding study guides. When the students have read the plays, assign the composition of a short essay in which they discuss the tragic elements of the play they have chosen and make pertinent comparisons with previous readings. Allow time for individual or group conferences during this part of the unit to discuss problems which arise in the reading, giving students an opportunity to test the ideas they have formed.

#### EVALUATIONS

1. In Procedure 5, are discussion responses pertinent?
2. In Procedure 6, are the generalizations, contrasts, and comparisons in the compositions supported by parallel references to Greek and Elizabethan plays? Are these references specific? Do the generalizations follow logically from the specific references?

**Study Guide** *Dr. Faustus*

1. Where was Faustus born? Is he low-born or of high birth? How do you know? What is the connection between Faustus and Icarus? Does this give a clue to Faustus' tragic flaw? What do you expect it to be?
2. In Scene I, where is Faustus? What is he doing? What are Faustus' ambitions? What do you think would be the purpose of such acts? Would they be at all practical?
3. The First Scholar refers to Faustus as a man "that was wont to make our schools ring with *sic Probo*." What does this indicate about his character?
4. Does Faustus oppose or give in to temptation? What shape does Faustus order the devil to take? Why? What quality in Faustus does the incident reveal?
5. Why does Mephistopheles appear before Faustus the first time? What is the tone of Faustus' conversation with Mephistopheles? How does the spirit react initially to Faustus' desire to sell his soul to the devil? What is Mephistopheles' definition or description of hell? Faustus' reaction?
6. What do Wagner and the clown discuss?
7. What is the purpose of the good and evil angels in Scene V? As Faustus writes his pact with Lucifer, his blood ceases to flow from the wound. How does he interpret this? What remedy does Mephistopheles offer?
8. What means does Mephistopheles use to distract Faustus? Does he succeed?
9. In the agreement, what benefits will Faustus receive? What must he do in return?
10. Why will Mephistopheles not tell Faustus who made the world?
11. Whose spirit does Faustus conjure up for Emperor Carols?
12. After he buys the horse from Faustus, what warning is the horse-dealer given? What happens to the horse when the man disobeys? How does the man "pay" for his disobedience at that moment? Later? What moral would you infer from this incident?
13. What does the Old Man tell Faustus? What is the meaning of Faustus' request to see Helen of Troy? What does this show about the depth of Faustus' sin?
14. Did the scholars approve Faustus' bargain? What is the unpardonable sin Faustus commits?
15. What is the moral drawn by the chorus at the end?

**ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who are the principal characters? What is the function of each character; that is, what does he contribute to the drama?
2. What is the principal conflict in the drama? What is the course of the development of the conflict? List the six episodes in which Marlowe tells the tragedy of Faustus.

3. What is the story of Lucifer? Why is it related? In what respects does Faustus resemble Lucifer?
4. How is Wagner's part in the drama a comic commentary on Faustus?
5. What is the irony of Mephistopheles' remarks about God, hell, heaven, etc., to Dr. Faustus in Scenes III and V?
6. What powers had Faustus been granted by Mephistopheles? How does he employ them? What does this suggest about the significance of those powers?
7. Is Faustus' corruption the outcome of his interaction with evil, or were the seeds of decay always in his character? Explain and find evidence to support your position.
8. Could Faustus have been saved by repentance? Find the lines which support your answer. Why was he unable to repent?
9. What analogy can be drawn between Faustus and contemporary scientific investigation? In this, consider knowledge apart from moral considerations, then as part of moral considerations.
10. To what extent is Faustus glorified, that is, made to be a superman? For what purpose? Explain.
11. What aspects of Faustus' character are revealed first by his bargain with Mephistopheles and later by the uses that he makes of the powers he is granted?
12. Choose one scene that might be difficult to produce, for instance, the scene of the contract signing. If you were a director, how would you stage the scene?

**Lesson 4****OBJECTIVES**

To write a paper defining tragedy, using examples from the plays as supporting evidence.

**MATERIALS**

Model essay.

**PROCEDURES**

1. Before assigning the composition, a number of procedures should be followed in order to prepare the students for the assignment. A general synthesizing discussion of tragedy, based on the works read in previous lessons is the first step in such a preparation.
2. Divide the class into small groups and distribute copies of the following general discussion questions to the groups. Assign each group the discussion of *one* of the questions, since an adequate discussion of each question would require too much time. When the groups have finished



their discussions, ask each group to report its ideas to the class. Along with each report there should be an open discussion of the material presented and of the question which served as a basis for the report. Require each group to make specific references to plays as supporting evidence, and to provide quotations for the class in their reports.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—TRAGEDY

1. What are the qualities common to the tragic hero? How is he a type which can be identified in literature?
  2. What is the role of fate in tragedy? How is it related to the free will of the hero? In what forms can it appear?
  3. What common elements are found in tragic plot structure? What is the movement of the plot from the beginning to end?
  4. How does tragedy make use of irony? How does irony contribute to the tragic experience?
  5. What emotions are experienced by the audience in tragedy? How are the emotions aroused by the writer?
  6. What is the tragic writer's view of the universe and man's place in it? Does it change from play to play, or is there a basic philosophy consistent with tragedy? Explain.
3. Once the entire class has had an opportunity to discuss the previous questions in some detail, explain that each student will be required to write a paper defining tragedy. There are several approaches to the topic, and time should be spent discussing various methods of organization and topic formulation.
  4. Some students may wish to write an over-all view of tragedy, enumerating each of the major elements of the genre and then giving examples and other evidence to support their thesis. Others may wish to choose the one element they consider central to tragedy and focus on it, showing all other elements in relation to this one. To provide a model for analysis of structure and theme, distribute a sample outline, such as "The Nature of Tragedy," below. In addition to commenting on organization, the students should discuss the validity and clarity of the content.

Sample outline of "The Nature of Tragedy," as part of the analysis of the model essay.

1. Introduction—problem of definition.
2. Aristotle's theory—summary and examples.
3. Specific tragic flaws and downfall.
  - a. Oedipus
  - b. Creon
  - c. Faustus

- d. Hamlet
- e. Macbeth
4. Tragic emotions—pity and fear.
5. Tragic Irony.
6. Ennobling of hero through suffering.
7. Conclusion—summary of major points. Final statement on essence of tragedy.

Assign the composition on tragedy, allowing time in class for formulating topics and for writing introductions. This enables the teacher to assist students who have difficulty getting started. Conferences should also be arranged with individual students to discuss their progress on the assignment. Before students turn in a final draft, divide the class into heterogeneous groups of three. Ask students to criticize the papers written by the other members of their groups. Then ask them to prepare a written analysis of a paper written by another student. Following this activity, students may revise their own papers if they wish.

## EVALUATIONS

Is the composition well organized? Is the thesis adequately defended? Does the content reflect the work of the unit to this point? Does the definition of the tragedy include a discussion of the tragic hero as a central feature? Is the tragic hero carefully characterized?

## Lesson 5

## OBJECTIVES

To analyze and compare some theories of tragedy.

To examine various tragedies in the light of critical essays in order to revise the definitions of tragedy established by the students.

## MATERIALS

- Selection from *The Poetics*—Aristotle
- "Of Tragedy"—Hume
- "The Tragic"—Emerson
- Selection from *Shakespeare's Problem Plays*—Tillyard
- Selection from *Principles of Literary Criticism*—Richards
- Selection from *The Tragic Fallacy*—Krutich

## PROCEDURES

1. Distribute copies of the selection from *The Poetics* with the study guides. When the students have read the selection, conduct a class discussion using questions such as those on the study guide.

2. The essays by Emerson and Hume are difficult; so it is helpful for the teacher to read the essays aloud while the class reads along. Questions as to Emerson's and Hume's meaning are asked while the reading is in progress. Use the general questions in the study guide for whole class discussion when the reading is completed.
3. Have the students read both Richards' essay and Krutch's essay in small groups. Have them answer the study guide questions and prepare to present a summary comparing all the essays they have read. They should select those points in the essays they agree with and attack logically those that seem inadequate or incorrect. Each presentation should focus on one particular selection while taking the others into account. Whether they agree or disagree with the writer is less important than the discussion which should arise during and after each presentation.

#### EVALUATIONS

The group reports and the ensuing class discussion should re-examine and revise the definitions of tragedy constructed in the previous lesson. The teacher can direct this re-examination and revision by asking questions such as the following:

1. What do the critics say about tragedy that your definitions neglected?
2. Are these elements important to tragedy?
3. Should your concept of tragedy be revised in light of these comments?
4. Do your definitions disagree with what the critics say? How?
5. Are your ideas about tragedy reinforced by what the critics say? How?
6. In what ways do the plays you have read support or detract from the generalizations presented in the critical essays?

#### Lesson 6

##### OBJECTIVES

To write an analysis of a modern drama, determining whether or not and why it should be considered tragic.

##### MATERIALS

*The Emperor Jones*  
Selected Bibliography

##### PROCEDURES

1. The purpose of this lesson is to present the students with a problem which will allow them to make use of what they have already learned about tragedy. The problem is first to decide to what extent particular modern plays adhere to and deviate from traditional tragic patterns, and then to decide what effect such adherence or deviation has on the

- play. For instance, while the plot structure of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* is very like the structure of Greek and Elizabethan tragedies, the nature of the Emperor as a ruler and as a man differs markedly from that of the heroes of most Greek and Elizabethan tragedies. This combination of character and plot produces an effect which is far removed from the effect of Greek or Elizabethan tragedy. In the process of dealing with this problem, the student reinforces his previous learning as he uses it in making rather complex inferences.
2. Distribute copies of *The Emperor Jones* and the study guide questions. Following the reading of the play, either orally in class or as a homework assignment, conduct a class discussion involving characterization, plot, dramatic techniques and interpretation of specific passages. The study guide questions will be useful as a basis for this discussion. A review of the description of modern theater as presented in the first lesson may be useful at this point.
  3. After students have completed their study of *The Emperor Jones* and their outside reading (see Evaluations 2), raise the following question: Some critics feel that tragedy cannot flourish in the modern theater. What do you think? What characteristics of our time might preclude the development of tragedy?

#### EVALUATIONS

1. Assign the writing of an analysis of *The Emperor Jones*. The students may take various positions: the play is a tragedy or it is not, or it is tragic in some respects but not in others. The composition will give evidence to support one of the positions, drawing on not only the drama in question, but also the other tragedies read in the unit and the definitions of tragedy developed by the class.
2. Ask the students to select a work from the bibliography. Ask each student to write an analysis of the work as tragedy—giving his definition of tragedy and explaining to what extent the work can be considered tragic.

#### Study Guide *The Emperor Jones*

1. How might you describe Jones' personality? His ambitions?
2. How does Jones view his subjects? How do they view him?
3. What is the relationship of Jones to his society on the island? To his society in the United States?
4. How does O'Neill reveal significant events in Jones' past?
5. Consider each of the events. What does each reveal about Jones' personality? What does each reveal about his relationship to his society? How has each contributed to Jones' ambitions, his attitudes towards the islanders, and his attitudes towards others in general?

6. In what ways is Smithers like Jones? What advantages does he have that Jones does not have?
7. Does Jones change during the course of the play? If so, how?
8. Why does Jones fail in his attempted escape?
9. In what ways is his failure ironic?
10. To what extent or in what ways can this play be considered tragic?

### Selected Bibliography for Outside Reading

- Anouilh, *Antigone*  
*Becket*  
*The Lark*
- Chekov, *The Cherry Orchard*  
 Conrad, *Lord Jim*  
 Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*  
 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*  
 Ibsen, *The Doll's House*  
*An Enemy of the People*  
*Ghosts*  
*Hedda Gabler*  
*The Master Builder*
- Kazantzakias, *The Last Temptation of Christ*  
 Lorca, *Blood Wedding*  
*The House of Bernarda Alba*  
*Yerma*
- Miller, *Death of a Salesman*  
 O'Connor, Edwin, *The Last Hurrah*  
 O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape*  
*Mourning Becomes Electra*
- Shaw, *Saint Joan*  
 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*  
 Wharton, *Ethan Frome*  
 Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*

### Lesson 7 (Optional)

#### OBJECTIVE

To criticize the production of a tragedy by a local theater group.

#### PROCEDURES

1. This lesson is necessarily optional because in any given area live productions of plays may not be available. However, the effect of visiting a live

- production, when it is reasonably well done, is so powerful that the teacher should make every effort to include attendance in his unit.
2. The unit should be scheduled around production dates so that students will be familiar with the play before they attend the theater. Otherwise, many lines and even whole sequences of events will be lost on them, especially with Elizabethan plays. If they have not read the play, they should be given a fairly detailed plot summary before they attend. Such precautions are not so necessary with modern plays.
  3. Assuming they read the play before attending, divide students into small groups and ask each group to plan the production details of a scene that particularly appeals to them, including such things as where actors will stand, how they will move and behave, what the set will be, what lighting will be used, and how actors will deliver particular lines. Following the production, ask the groups to compare their production notes for that scene with what they observed in the theater.
  4. Assign a composition evaluating the real production of the scene which they prepared. Their evaluation will be largely subjective but should consider the effectiveness of various elements in the scene, how well they related to each other, and how effectively the production of that scene supported the play as a whole.

#### NOTES

1. A recent extensive study purporting to show among other things that there are no advantages to students in racially homogeneous classes is the following: James S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1966).
2. "The Thorny Garden of Ability Grouping." *Overview*, 1 (June 1960), pp. 36-38.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

1. For discussion of administrative grouping and its implications for curriculum: CONANT, JAMES B., *Shaping Educational Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964).
2. For a discussion of questioning and response classifications: GETZELS, JACOB W., and PHILIP W. JACKSON, *Creativity and Intelligence* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962); and GULFORD, JOY PAUL, *Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959).
3. For discussion of grouping techniques and theory, and additional bibliographies: CARTWRIGHT, DORWIN PHILIP, and ALVIN ZANDER, *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).
4. ORTON, JOHN W. ed., *Readings in Group Work* (New York: Selected Academic Readings, 1965).

## Purposes, Concepts, and Objectives

After the teacher has assessed the abilities of his students, he must begin planning for instruction. Creating an environment in which students can respond freely, read critically, discuss energetically, and write creatively takes careful planning. The teacher must consider the concepts and skills he wishes to teach in relation to the materials he will use and both of these in relation to his students. And he must consider all of these in relation to his general purposes.

The unit on "Animals in Literature" which appears at the end of this chapter was developed for seventh-grade classes and has been used extensively by many teachers in various forms with considerable success. But what general purposes would a teacher have in using such a unit? What concepts in literature, language, and composition would he attempt to develop? What should the students be able to do by the end of the unit that they could not do prior to having studied it? These questions are extremely important in the development of any instructional sequence.

### General Purposes

A seventh grade teacher's decision to begin the year's literature study with a unit on animal stories is governed by several purposes. First, he wishes to begin the year with material that will have immediate interest for the students, and he knows from experience and from research findings that most seventh graders have a strong interest in animals. Second, he wishes to provide an easy transition from elementary school reading to junior high reading. He knows that seventh graders are faced with many adjustment problems. Stories about animals provide familiar territory and thus help to reduce anxiety. Third, he wishes to introduce some concepts basic to the literary study the students will meet in the seventh grade and important to the reading and interpretation of literature in general.

Any course of work in English exists as an alternative to other courses because time alone prevents the study of all things that might conceivably be studied. At every phase of curriculum planning, the planner must make choices. When all other exigencies governing his choices are held equal, his purposes will determine his choices.

For example, if there is a possible choice in course content between studying the work of Poe or of Hawthorne, and the teacher is aware that at a later stage in the curriculum the students will study the French symbolists, his broader purpose will invite the option of Poe because of his influence on the French school.

Again, considerations of purpose will indicate directions to avoid. In the study of Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, if the sonnets are to be used only as models for writing, then having the class read Shakespeare's biography would not be a useful procedure.

### Concepts

We must ask two basic questions in selecting concepts for the curriculum or for an individual unit. First, are the concepts underlying the proposed unit of instruction important to the understanding of the subject and to the development of skill in that subject? Second, is the proposed unit of study appropriate to the background, ability, and knowledge of the pupils so that it is likely to be of interest to them? If the teacher can answer these questions positively, his next step is to determine specifically what he intends to teach—to formulate terminal objectives.

*Are the concepts underlying the proposed unit of study important to the understanding of the subject and to the development of skill in the subject?*

Jerome Bruner, in *The Process of Education*,<sup>1</sup> has suggested that every subject matter has a discoverable structure and that a subject is best taught by teaching its structure. All too frequently a course presents a student with isolated bits of information, which if he learns them in the first place, he will soon forget. He has no conception of an underlying structure that will enable him either to remember what he has learned or to cope with new situations. Obviously, a student who understands the concepts underlying the operation of the English language—that is, how it has meaning—will be better able to cope with new language situations than one who has only bits and pieces of information about the language.

Frequently, when teachers are most convinced of the usefulness of what they teach, their instruction is least useful. For example, many teachers believe that a knowledge of traditional school grammar is not simply important to composition but prerequisite to it. Yet an important report from the National Council of Teachers of English states unequivocally that there is

no relationship between the study of grammar and the ability to write—except perhaps a negative one.<sup>2</sup>

The teaching of literature offers numerous similar examples. High school courses that seem to be related to the nature of literature are, in reality, concerned with little more than the chronological ordering of a few selected works. Students may learn the plots, characters, themes, and occasionally even the chronological ordering of these works, but such study does not increase the student's ability to read *other* works. If their ability to read other works of literature improves at all, it does so only by chance. In part, this has happened because high school teachers have been so concerned with explaining the meanings of specific works that they neglect to plan instruction so that the students *themselves* learn to derive meaning from literature.

In short, a teacher should think very carefully about the ideas and concepts he wishes to teach. They should be productive in the sense that the student can put them to work for him in interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating his language. They should help the student to produce or unlock various language structures on his own.

Units on animals appear very frequently in seventh grade anthologies. Ordinarily they are shallow because they do not attempt to convey concepts important to the understanding of literature. Instruction is primarily concerned with what happens at the literal level of a given story, and discussion centers on telling about experiences with pets. The students might be highly motivated, but the unit provides nothing that will be useful in their later reading of literature.

Yet a unit on animals need not be empty. The one outlined at the end of this chapter introduces four concepts important to the study of literature, important and useful beyond the immediate confines of the unit.

1. **ANIMALS AS CHARACTERS, IMAGES, AND SYMBOLS** An animal in a story or poem can be either a main character as in Kipling's "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi," or he can be a secondary character such as Lady in James Streeet's story "Weep No More, My Lady." When the animal is a main character, the action and thought of the story revolve around it. If the animal is a secondary character, it usually contributes to the understanding of other characters. Other animals play only an incidental role in the action of a story. For instance, the cat in Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Black Cat" is not really a character, but an image that helps to produce the horror of the story. In some works animals are used symbolically. Fables and some poems such as Blake's "The Tiger" and "The Lamb" make use of animals that have emblematic value in our culture: The lion usually equals courage, honor, kingliness; the lamb equals innocence; the fox and the snake equal cunning and/or treachery, and so on. Although the distinctions among animals used as main and secondary characters, images, and symbols may seem rather simple, they are not so simple to

seventh graders for whom they can serve as the beginnings of rather sophisticated literary concepts.

2. **THE AUTHOR'S TREATMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER** The author's treatment of animals as characters can be anthropomorphic (attributing human characteristics to nonhumans) as in Kipling's "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" in which a mongoose thinks, feels, and acts like a human being with emotional and rational faculties, or it can be naturalistic as in Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, in which the animals act primarily on the basis of instinct. Students can also examine the ways in which the author develops the "personality" of the animal. Do we see the inner workings of the animal's mind, its fears, motives, desires, and the like? Does the author say explicitly that the animal is good or bad, friendly or vicious, cowardly or courageous, straightforward or treacherous? Or does he let the reader know such characteristics only through the actions of the animal or through what humans say about the animal? If we must infer the "personality" of the animal, then what do various circumstances of the plot reveal about the animal? Questions such as these are of utmost importance, not only to seventh graders but to literary critics. Note the critical difficulty with *Hamlet*.

3. **THE ANIMAL AND HIS ENVIRONMENT** Perhaps this short title sounds as though it ought to be a part of someone's science curriculum, but think for a moment how much literature is concerned, at least in part, with a man's or animal's attempt to confront, adapt to, or conquer his physical environment: to name a few, Jack London's works, DeToe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Kipling's *Captains Courageous*, Ole Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, and, at a much more complex level, William Golding's *Pincher Martin*. An examination of the relationship between the animal and its physical environment can serve as an introduction to the relationship between man and his physical, social, and cultural environments, and these relationships are extremely important in almost any extended literary work.

4. **THE IDEA OF CONFLICT** A plot of any sort does not arise without conflict. The interpretation of conflict is one of the most important aspects of reading literature. In junior high and high school, teachers frequently expound three kinds of conflict in literature; man against the elements, man against man, and man against himself (the internal conflict). This analysis is so superficial, however, that students are easily misled by the activity. The identification of a conflict as "man against man," for instance, tends to obliterate the specificity of conflict in a given work and homogenize all works. The conflict might involve individuals, an individual and a group, an individual and a whole society, or any number of other combinations. It might arise out of petty jealousy, greed, or various other conflicts in personal values. Or it might arise out of an individual's or group's rejection of social or cultural values. The

conflict might be presented in gross physical terms or in emotional or spiritual situations.

Any generalization that an author suggests in his work is likely to reside in the specific nature of the conflict, its causes, and its resolution. Therefore, the reader must ask such questions as the following: What is the initial cause of the conflict? What signs of conflict exist before the outward manifestation appears? What is the essential nature of the conflict? Is the conflict resolved? If so, how does the resolution come about? If not, what is the effect of its remaining unresolved? Finally, what is the significance of the conflict in terms of the work as a whole? All these questions and more need to be asked if the analysis of conflict is to be worthwhile. Although seventh graders may not be capable of answering all these questions, one of the primary purposes of an English teacher is to enable students to do so. A unit on "Animals in Literature" is admirably suited to this purpose because it can present a wide variety of conflicts for the student to examine.

Of course, any study unit may touch briefly on any of the ideas suggested above. An occasional question about conflict, a discussion about theme, a note on point of view—all are likely to be included somewhere or other. But such incidental examination of literary problems does very little to help the student become adept at handling them on his own. Units must *focus* on one or more of the concepts if the students are to apply them in later reading and writing situations.

*Is the proposed unit of study appropriate to the ability and knowledge of the pupils so that it is likely to be of interest to them?*

Obviously, decisions about what to teach cannot be made only on the basis of whether or not the concepts are important to the structure of the subject matter. A teacher who falls into that error is likely to meet disaster within weeks, days, or even minutes of the opening day of school. His classes will be noisy at the wrong times or will achieve a silence so profound that it can only be the result of utter boredom. He is likely to present either material that is far too difficult or material so easy that the students ridicule him for it.

There are two aspects to the problem of insuring that instruction is appropriate. First, the teacher must determine the abilities of the students (see Chapters 2, 11, and 21). Second, he must determine what abilities and knowledge are requisite to the unit he is planning. Units he decides to teach should move from what the students know and can do to the things they don't know and cannot yet do. Following these procedures has a great deal to do with maintaining student interest.

Everyone knows students who are indifferent to English, who make an effort to look bored and unimpressed regardless of what the teacher presents. These students are largely responsible for the hands-in-the-air postures of their despairing teachers. Yet consider for a moment why they are that way. They have been eminently unsuccessful in academic areas for at least six years—a long time for even an adult to experience frustration and failure.

If they display interest, try hard, and *then* fail, their stupidity, their worthlessness is confirmed in their own eyes. But if they do not care, if they do not try, then failure can be attributed to something other than incapacity. A good bit of the "I-don't-care" syndrome can be overcome by carefully assessing student ability, selecting appropriate materials, and structuring lessons from the simple to the complex.

Interest inventories ordinarily ask students to indicate what kinds of books they like, what kind they would write, or which books they have actually read. Some teachers, in their desire to have students love literature, use these responses as a basis for curriculum planning. Yet although the responses may be an aid to curriculum building, they do not form an adequate base for it. For instance, if students have never heard of myth, they cannot indicate it as an interest on a survey. The mere fact that it does not appear should not lead inevitably to the conclusion that students would not be interested in it.

In general, the teacher should ignore stereotyped thinking about student interests. He should select materials that the students will learn to handle in the unit. Then he should watch for signs from the class. Are more students than usual staring out the windows? Is the class discussion lively? Do students' faces indicate boredom? Or do they appear interested and alive? Finally, at the end of the unit the teacher might distribute a questionnaire on which students can anonymously indicate their interest in the unit as a whole and in specific parts of it. (See Chapter 14.)

**EVALUATION** Whatever the concepts taught in a unit or in a curriculum, the teacher must continuously evaluate their validity and appropriateness. They must be valid in light of the definition of the subject. They must be appropriate in terms of student ability and interest, and students must be able to put them to use. To select the concepts for a unit or a curriculum once and consider the task complete will not do. Population shifts cause changes in the character of students in particular schools. Scholarly progress may invalidate or add to the teacher's original definition of the subject. More than likely, a curriculum will tend to invalidate itself. If the curriculum works, what the students learn in one grade will make certain learnings unnecessary in the next. To a certain extent the culture of a school creeps downward from grade level to grade level. Tenth graders teach ninth graders what they have learned. No one objects to this sort of change, but it is another reason for continuous evaluation of the decisions about the concepts we teach.

#### **Specific Objectives**

When the teacher has determined the purposes of his instruction and selected concepts important to the study of literature, composition, or language and appropriate to the abilities and interests of his

students, he enters the next phase of deciding what to teach. He must decide what his students should be able to do by the conclusion of the instruction. In other words, he must formulate objectives.

There are two classes of objectives. The first, *terminal objectives*, are attained when a unit of study is completed. Assume, for example, that the objective is "to write a Shakespearean sonnet." When a student can write one, his unit of study is completed because he has *attained the objective*.

In order for him to write a Shakespearean sonnet, he would have to be able to characterize one. This then is another objective: "Characterize a Shakespearean sonnet." Because getting to the point where he can write a Shakespearean sonnet depends upon his first being able to characterize one, the objective of characterizing the sonnet is called a *medial objective*. *Terminal objectives* depend on *medial objectives*.

When the teacher plans work for a year (or longer), the terminal objectives of one unit can become the medial objectives for another. For example, the objectives for composition for the year might be: "To write sonnets of all forms." In that case, writing a Shakespearean sonnet, although a terminal objective in its own unit, would be a medial objective for the year.

Needless to say, determining the terminal objectives for the whole English studies curriculum is a central task for the whole profession. Beyond this, determining terminal objectives for American education is an absolutely crucial task.

#### Advantages of Specific Objectives

Defining the specific objectives of a given lesson is extremely important to both teacher and students for a number of reasons. First, the teacher's planning becomes far easier and more meaningful once he knows what he can expect his students to be able to *do* by the end of the instruction. He can then plan procedures and select materials appropriate to his purposes with a minimum of labor. Attempting to build anything without a specific plan in mind means a waste of time and energy in false starts, unexpected detours, repair of damage resulting from unforeseen obstacles, and so on. A shipwright does not begin to build a boat without a blueprint—an abstract representation of his *objective*. Medical doctors do not treat a patient haphazardly; they must know what conditions they wish to alleviate or what diseases they wish to cure—their *objectives*.

Those who argue against setting terminal objectives claim that teaching is an art and is not so mechanical as shipbuilding or medicine. Therefore, they say, objectives are either irrelevant or confining, or both. It is true that good teaching must grow out of the interaction of teacher and student. But even a sculptor does not begin hammering away at a block of stone without first making some sketches that represent his *objectives*. Da Vinci's sketches, for

example, are famous. Any teacher who is a greater artist than Da Vinci may claim exemption from objectives—perhaps.

There is no question that objectives must and do change through the interaction of artist and material or of teacher and students. The sculptor may make certain concessions to his block of stone. As he gets to know his material better, he will find that there are certain soft spots, cracks, and the like, and he will change his plan accordingly. A painter may have a sudden insight about the color or shape of some object, and instantaneously his objectives change. Similarly, a teacher confronting a group of students will necessarily learn more about them. He will detect ambiguities and omissions in his original objectives, or he may discover that his original plan is inadequate. He must change his objectives accordingly.

A second advantage of precisely formulated objectives is that they reduce frustration and insecurity by enabling the teacher to evaluate what has been accomplished in the classroom. Of all the subject-matter teachers, the English teacher is least likely to know whether or not he has accomplished anything. The math teacher can simply count the number of problems his students solve correctly. The foreign language teacher knows his students cannot speak a language at the beginning of a semester but will be able to use certain words and phrases at the end of a certain number of weeks. The English teacher, on the other hand, is frequently reduced to counting errors in compositions or rationalizing that though students don't like Shakespeare in school, they will later in life when they reflect upon it. Evaluation of this kind is not very satisfying to an honest teacher, and most English teachers are honest and conscientious. Part of their reward lies in watching their students grow.

Carefully formulated objectives help an English teacher to evaluate what the students have accomplished in the course of a unit. If the objectives are clearly stated, the teacher need only observe his students to determine the extent and quality of their learning.

It is the student who is best served by the careful formulation of objectives. Obviously, if the teacher knows what he wants the students to be able to do by the end of the instruction, he can convey the goals to them. They in turn will learn more easily and with less frustration.

Nearly everyone has experienced considerable uneasiness at the hands of teachers who know only intuitively what they expect of students and cannot explain assignments. Successful students handle this problem by "psyching out" the teacher, and it is their compositions that help the teacher to define what it was he wanted in the first place. The other, less fortunate students are doomed to partial or complete failure from the beginning. The teacher who formulates objectives carefully will not have to wait until he reads the compositions to decide specifically what he wanted; he will know at the beginning of the lesson and will be able to teach his students far more efficiently.

There is a second advantage to the student. If the teacher knows what he



wants his students to do, he is less likely to teach the student one thing and test him on another, a very unfair but common practice in English classrooms. For instance, many teachers drill students on the meanings of vocabulary words and test them on their ability to write the words in sentences that illuminate their meanings. They justify the test on the basis that students do not understand the words unless they can use them in a sentence. Yet learning definitions and writing words in sentences are quite different tasks. A clear statement of objectives might have changed either the test or the instruction. If the teacher plans to test students' ability to write words in sentences, it is only fair to teach them how to do it.

### Formulation of Objectives

The formulation of specific terminal objectives is not a simple task. They should be stated so clearly that two competent teachers could agree *in advance* about what students need to do to fulfill them. The following objectives are typical of those that frequently occur in English curriculum guides. As you read them, ask yourself if you would agree with another competent person in deciding which students had fulfilled them.

1. To understand the nature of the English language
2. To make the student aware of the literary heritage of the United States and England
3. To improve vocabulary

Everyone will agree that these statements express the general purposes of an English course. But in most English curricula such statements are intended to serve as the terminal objectives for a unit of instruction or for a year's course. If they do not help us evaluate instruction in terms of student progress, then they are useless as terminal objectives. A brief examination will reveal their uselessness.

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A satisfactory set of terminal objectives for vocabulary development as one phase of a year's English program might read as follows:

#### GENERAL PURPOSE

To improve vocabulary

#### TERMINAL OBJECTIVES

1. Given a list (the list should be appended) of 300 words studied during the course of the school year, to choose the correct synonym from a list of four alternatives for at least 70 percent of the items. (The test or sample items should be appended.)
2. Given a set of passages utilizing 50 of the 300 words studied during the school year, to write adequate, short definitions (the phrase "adequate, short definitions" should be defined or examples should be supplied.) of 35 of the 50 words as they are used in context.
3. To use correctly the 50 key words (a list of key words—such as "plot," "conflict," "resolution," "prose"—should be appended) that are introduced by various units of study in compositions written throughout the course of the year.

Clearly, a teacher can use any or all of these or other specifically stated objectives. The point is that objectives stated in this way are useful for both planning and evaluation. First, they tell precisely what the student must do—for example, he must choose the correct synonym from a list of four alternatives for 70 percent of 300 words. Second, they tell the conditions of the



students, he enters the next phase of deciding what to teach. He must decide what his students should be able to do by the conclusion of the instruction. In other words, he must formulate objectives.

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Clearly, a teacher can use any or all of these or other specifically stated objectives. The point is that objectives stated in this way are useful for both planning and evaluation. First, they tell precisely what the student must do—for example, he must choose the correct synonym from a list of four alternatives for 70 percent of 300 words. Second, they tell the conditions of the

evaluation—he will receive a list of 300 words with four alternative answers for each one. Third, they indicate the minimal performance required.

Thus, if a teacher adopted the second objective, he would know how to plan vocabulary lessons for the year. Students would work with words in context. Preliminary tests would require the student to write definitions of certain words underlined in various passages. Therefore, it would be necessary to teach students how to write definitions.

This problem brings us to another important aspect of terminal objectives, *criterion statements*. The criterion statements enable the teacher to judge consistently the extent to which his instruction has been successful. For instance, criterion statements should define the phrase “adequate, short definitions” in the second objective above in such a way that the teacher can immediately recognize a successful definition. If he teaches and requires formal definitions, then the criterion statements might read as follows:

1. The definition must take the sentence form.
2. The word to be defined must be the subject.
3. The definition must indicate the class to which the word being defined belongs. The class should be neither too broad nor too narrow. For example:

A hammer is a thing . . .

A hammer is a carpenter’s tool . . .

4. The definition should differentiate the word being defined from other members of the class.
5. Neither the word indicating the class nor its modifiers may include the word being defined or a derivative of it.
6. Additional statements should be used if necessary to make contrasts with similar words.
7. The following definition by a tenth grader represents an adequate definition: “A hammer is a tool with a handle attached to a head made of metal, rubber, or plastic, used for striking other objects such as nails, wood, metal, etc. A hammer is different from a mallet in size and shape. The head of a mallet is much larger, and usually made of a softer material. A hammer is different from a hatchet in that a hatchet has a cutting edge.”

Writing objectives for vocabulary study, punctuation, and spelling is relatively simple because the objectives tend to deal with specific bits of information that can be committed to memory. Writing objectives for composition and literature study is considerably more complex. The objectives should never dictate the precise ordering of specific words for a composition, nor should they indicate specific responses to a literary work. They should, however, specify the processes and/or forms that a student should use in producing his composition and in approaching a work of literature. Such objectives may include several alternatives. For instance, a twelfth-grade literature student

might be required to approach a poem from any one or a combination of several points of view. A ninth grader who may have learned two modes of organization might be asked to use either one in writing a composition. An eighth grader learning to write formal definitions must observe the form and choose whatever details and language are relevant to his problem in definition. But any one of a number of definitions may meet the requirements. Tenth graders could be asked to examine *Aniigone* in terms of the conflicts existing in the play and to specify what the conflicts are, defend and explain their choices, and determine which conflict has most significance for the play as a whole. Obviously, a variety of answers of equal validity are possible. In most cases the teacher should be less concerned with eliciting some particular response from a student than with seeing that the student use a sound argument for defending his conclusions.

The following terminal objectives and criterion statements for the unit “Animals in Literature” illustrate how objectives for literature and composition can stipulate processes and forms while allowing considerable latitude in fulfilling the tasks. Note that no specific responses are required in any of the objectives.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To write an essay analyzing a book selected from the unit bibliography.
  - a. Criterion statements
  - b. The essay must be written and revised during class time.
    - (1) The analysis must answer the following questions:
      - (2) How does the author treat the animal? To what extent is the animal anthropomorphized? To what degree is it treated as an animal? What evidence is there to support your position?
      - (3) What generalization does the author imply?
  - c. The essay must include a statement of the book’s theme and answer the above questions in explaining the theme.
2. To write a paragraph essay analyzing the symbolism of a fable not studied in class.
  - a. The reading and writing must be done in one class period.
  - b. The student must identify the referents of the symbols in the fable, explain their relationship and how they contribute to the moral.
  - c. He must evaluate the appropriateness of the author’s choice of animals in terms of the conflict in the fable and in terms of the moral.
3. To write an original fable.
  - a. The animals must be personifications of human characteristics.
  - b. They must be generally appropriate to the qualities they represent.
  - c. The fable must include a moral.

The terminal objectives stated at the beginning of the "Tragic Hero" unit contain no criterion statements, and that creates a problem. For instance, the final objective reads, "To write (outside class) an analysis of a modern literary work read independently, determining the extent to which it can be considered tragic." The problem arises because the terms "analysis," "modern literary work," and "tragic" are rather vague. The selected bibliography at the end of the unit helps define "modern literary work," and the teacher can easily clarify that anyway. The whole unit deals with the concept of the "tragic," but even so, if the teacher wishes to require that the student makes use of specific characteristics in his analysis, then the objective should convey them. "Analysis," however, is the chief problem which the following criterion statements help to clarify:

1. The essay must include a definition of tragedy which enumerates the major characteristics of tragedy. The definition may be formal or informal.
2. The essay must explain which characteristics of tragedy the modern work and its hero display and which they do not.
3. The essay must explain what characteristics the work displays which are not those of tragedy.
4. Assertions must be supported with specific examples from or allusions to the work.

Further, if the teacher will base his evaluations in part on organization and mechanics, he must include criterion statements to that effect unless such criteria are standard for all work of this type. Even then, he should be sure that students know how to organize and proofread. Such criteria not only clarify the assignment for the student but clarify what the teacher's instructional emphases will be.

The various objectives above are stated in *behavioral* terms. That is they stipulate what students must *do*. If the students cannot perform the tasks described in the objectives by the end of instruction, then the teacher knows that some aspect of his instruction has been inappropriate or inadequate. But if he has no objectives or if the objectives do not describe clearly what the students must do, then the teacher has no way of evaluating his instruction. Objectives must emphasize what the student must do or perform because, as the first chapter pointed out, there is absolutely no way to examine the internal thinking processes themselves. But the emphasis on external behavior does not imply lack of interest in internal processes. On the contrary, English teachers must examine external behavior as the *only* means of determining what thinking has taken place.

Nor does the emphasis on behavior require mechanistic responses. Too many English teachers, primarily those who have not analyzed their objectives, write tests that require only recall of information: the names of authors, the

content of poems, interpretations thoroughly discussed in class. Objectives can be written at many levels, and *recall* is the least sophisticated because it requires the least understanding. The objectives for English should require the student to put what he has learned into operation in new situations. For example, the first and second objectives for "Animals in Literature" require analysis of a book and a fable, which the students read on their own, applying the principles learned in the unit. The third objective requires synthesis, creating something new, which, at the same time, reflects what has been studied in the unit. Objectives such as these go far beyond rote learning and enable the teacher to make a real assessment of *understanding* and *creativity*, terms that are too often mouthed and then ignored because the teacher has no clear idea of what he means by them.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to write useful terminal objectives before planning a unit of instruction. Some teachers must plan a unit in some detail before they can formulate specific objectives. As long as they begin their planning with the specific concepts of the unit in mind, they can usually write objectives later. Examining the materials they will use, the questions they will ask, and the assignments they will make helps to clarify the goals of the instruction and to suggest the criterion statements. If the teacher writes objectives as the final stage of unit planning, he must check his plans to be sure they are in line with his objectives. If he does not check his plans, then the students may suffer. The teacher may teach one thing and expect the students to do another. After teaching a unit and examining student responses, the teacher can revise terminal objectives, criterion statements, and procedures. For instance, requiring formal definitions of words in context to indicate knowledge of meaning is probably unduly severe. Formal definitions of concrete words such as "hammer" are difficult enough to write. Presumably, a vocabulary test would include many abstract words, but chances are that many students would fail the test because they could not write adequate formal definitions. Therefore, a less formal definition would be more appropriate to the test. Thus, a teacher who had required formal definitions and realized their difficulty might wish to revise the criterion statements.

The following rules are useful in formulating terminal objectives:

1. The objective should take the infinitive form, for example, "To write haiku."
2. It should be written from the student's point of view, explaining what he must do.
3. Another competent person should be able to select students who have fulfilled the objectives. His selections should be in agreement with the teacher's.
4. The objective should avoid such ambiguous terms as understand, examine, appreciate, interpret—unless they are defined either in the objective or in the criterion statements.

5. The objective should specify what the learner must be able to *do* or *perform* when he is demonstrating his mastery of the objective.
6. The objective should specify the conditions imposed upon the learner while he is demonstrating his accomplishment of the objective. For example, "Given an unfamiliar poem such as 'Ozymandias,' to write . . . in a fifty-minute class period."

Although it is difficult, writing objectives for literature, composition, and language study is absolutely imperative. Literature and composition study suffer horribly because teachers have not decided what to do in specific terms. For example, one assignment required eleventh graders to write a letter to the employer who had fired Walt Whitman. The teacher was dissatisfied with the results, but he had no right to be because he had had no specific objectives in mind and no criteria to define what an acceptable letter would be when he had made the assignment. Therefore, no instruction had taken place. The students had learned no techniques, no methods of approach and had no idea of what the teacher really expected. In class one day, they produced the best letters they could under the circumstances, and they received low grades. The low grades punished the students for what the teacher had failed to do.

On the other hand, the teacher must be wary of attempts to standardize objectives for all students at particular grade levels. The teacher himself must prepare clear objectives appropriate for his own students in his particular classes.

## ANIMALS IN LITERATURE\*

### Lesson 1 Identifying Unit Concepts

#### OBJECTIVE

To identify key unit questions

#### MATERIALS

Overhead projector

#### PROCEDURES

1. The teacher begins the unit by asking students what pets they have and how they treat their pets. He guides the discussion to the question of how human beings think of animals (as having human characteristics or only animal characteristics). He encourages students to talk about

the animal stories they have read and leads into the problems of what conflicts animals encounter, why human beings become attached to animals, and the relationship between animals and their environment.

2. The teacher explains that the students will be reading animal stories and asks them to suggest questions that they might use as they read the stories. From the discussion above and with some prompting from the teacher, the class develops a set of questions such as the following. The teacher will record the questions on the overhead as they are suggested and reproduce them for use throughout the unit.

#### a. Conflict

- (1) What are the various kinds of conflict present in the story? (Animal vs. animal, animal vs. man, animal vs. nature.) What are the specific conflicts?
- (2) What are the causes and results of the conflict?
- (3) Through what abilities, characteristics, and opportunities does the animal resolve the conflict?

#### b. The animal in his environment

- (1) What characteristics of the animal enable him to adapt to his environment in finding food and shelter and in protecting himself against environmental threats?
- (2) How does the animal react to threatening situations—through fear or planning?
- (3) In what respects can we say that animals plan?
- (4) What characteristics of man enable him to adapt to nearly any environment whereas most animals can survive in only some environments?

#### c. The author's treatment of the animal

- (1) Is the animal given the position of a main character, a secondary character, or a symbol?
- (2) Does the author attribute human characteristics to the animal, or does the animal remain a creature of instinct?
  - (a) How does the animal learn from experience?
  - (b) How does he communicate with other animals?
  - (c) In what situations does the author attribute possession or lack of any of the following to the animal: loyalty, generosity, kindness, cruelty, helpfulness, obedience, rebelliousness, courage, or justice?
  - (d) What motivates the animal to be loyal, kind, courageous, and so on?
  - (e) If a giraffe runs from a lion, is the giraffe cowardly? If two lions fight until one kills the other, can we say that either or both are courageous? If a small animal fights back when cornered by a larger animal, is the small animal courageous?

\* This is simply an outline, not a complete instructional unit. Study guides and the bibliography for outside reading have been omitted. The unit was first developed by the authors and teachers at Euclid Central Junior High School (Euclid, Ohio) and was subsequently distributed by the Project English Demonstration Center at Euclid Central and Western Reserve University.

- (f) Why is it questionable that virtues such as courage and loyalty can be attributed to animals?
- (g) What characteristics of man prompt him to attribute such qualities to animals?

### Lesson 2 Conflict and Environment

#### OBJECTIVES

- To identify and explain the causes, results, and resolutions of the conflicts in the stories and poems
- To analyze the relationships between the animals in the materials and their environments

#### MATERIALS

John I. and Jean George, "The Hunt"  
 Jim Kjfelgaard, "Snow Dog"  
 Liam O'Flaherty, "The Wild Goat's Kid"  
 Samuel Scoville, "The Cleanlys"

#### PROCEDURES

1. The teacher provides guide questions for "The Hunt" and assigns it to the whole class. When the reading is complete, the teacher leads a discussion that focuses on the problems of conflict and environment as suggested by the questions in parts 2 and 3 of "General Study and Discussion Questions" above.
2. The teacher then divides the class into three homogeneous groups and assigns the strongest readers "The Cleanlys," the next strongest "The Wild Goat's Kid," and the weakest "Snow Dog." Each group reads the story, discusses it in terms of the special reading guide questions and parts 2 and 3 of "General Study and Discussion Questions." If the groups have seven or more students, it will be necessary to divide them in two for discussion. Each group then presents its findings to the rest of the class *or* assigns the class its story and elects representatives to lead the whole class in a discussion of it.

### Lesson 3 Author's Treatment of the Animal

#### OBJECTIVE

- To identify and explain the way in which the author treats the animals as characters

#### MATERIALS

Robert P. Tristram Coffin, "The Spider"  
 Rudyard Kipling, "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi"  
 Howard Maier, "The Red Dog"

Beryl Markham, "Wise Child"  
 Sterling North, "The Great Dan Patch"  
 Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless, Patient Spider"

#### PROCEDURES

1. While the reading and discussion of this lesson focus on part 3 of the "General Study and Discussion Questions," the questions in parts 1 and 2 continue to be considered.
2. The teacher assigns "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" in which Kipling anthropomorphizes the animals. The discussion focuses on how the animals are given human characteristics and what the result is. The teacher leads the students in comparing and contrasting "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" with stories in previous lessons. For more specific contrasts he reads aloud the poems by Coffin and Whitman. After discussing each poem, the two views of spiders can be compared with each other and then contrasted to the treatment of animals in the Kipling story.
3. The teacher then assigns "The Red Dog," "Wise Child" and "The Great Dan Patch" to homogeneous groups from strongest to weakest respectively. The procedures for Lesson 2, part B, apply here.
4. When discussions are complete, the teacher leads the class in developing the opening paragraph for a composition discussing the various unit problems as they apply to "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi." The teacher uses the overhead projector to record student suggestions. When the first paragraph is developed, the teacher leads the class in developing an outline for the remainder.
5. Each student then selects a different story already discussed and, following the model developed by the class, writes an essay in which he answers the questions concerning conflict, environment, and the author's view of the animal.
6. When the essays are complete, the teacher divides the class into small groups to evaluate the essays. The groups criticize each essay in terms of how adequately it answers the various questions. Students have a chance to revise in light of the criticism.

### Lesson 4 Animals As Symbols

#### OBJECTIVES

- To identify the referents of animals used as symbols
- To write an original fable

#### MATERIALS

Aesop, *Fables*  
 Edward McCourt, "Cranes Fly South"  
 James Thurber, *Fables for Our Time* (selections)

## PROCEDURES

1. The detailed lesson plans in Chapter 5, on introducing symbolism through fables are satisfactory here. The seventh-grade teacher will have to use additional fables and more group work, however.
2. Following the examination of fables, assign "Cranes Fly South" and discuss the significance of the cranes to the reader as well as the characters in the story.
3. Before writing a fable, the students objectify the characteristics of the fable, and compile a list of them:
  - a. Each animal represents a human characteristic or quality.
  - b. The animals frequently represent opposite traits, for example, wise-foolish, brave-cowardly.
  - c. The reader knows only a few characteristics of the animals.
  - d. The fable has a moral, either implicit or explicit.
4. After suggesting ideas for fables, the students begin writing their own fables. If necessary, the teacher suggests combinations of animals and situations such as the following:
  - a. The giraffe teases the donkey about his long ears.
  - b. The alligator tempts a turtle to examine his teeth.
  - c. The rooster announces to the animals that he should be the king of the barryard.
5. When students have completed their fables, they criticize one another's fables in terms of the characteristics listed above. They should have an opportunity to revise in light of the criticism.
6. The teacher may select a committee of students to select fables and to produce a dittoed collection of fables written by students.

**Lesson 5 Synthesis**

## OBJECTIVE

To apply the major unit questions to a series of short poems

## MATERIALS

Dunning, Lueders, and Smith, *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*

## PROCEDURES

1. The teacher makes a selection of six or seven poems dealing with animal subjects in *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*. He reads the poems aloud while the students follow in their copies.
2. Each student fills out a card indicating his first and second choice of poems he would like to study. The teacher organizes groups of three or four students according to their preferences, and each prepares a discussion of its poem for the class. The unit questions developed in Les-

sons 1 and 4 are applied to the poems. Each group decides how to present its poem: by organizing a debate on some aspect of the poem; by asking questions or presenting a series of views to stimulate class discussion; by using audio-visual equipment.

3. Some classes may take only a day or two for the presentations. Others may take a week. The teacher permits the class to move at its own pace.

**Lesson 6 Synthesis**

## OBJECTIVE

To analyze novels in terms of the unit questions

## MATERIALS

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (fluent readers)  
 Jack London, *White Fang*  
 Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller* (slow readers)

## PROCEDURES

1. The teacher divides the class into three groups according to reading ability and distributes novels and study guides accordingly.
2. To use students' previous knowledge of the North as a basis for motivation and involvement, students reading the books by London are given a map with two trails marked from California to the Yukon.
  - a. Students write a short description of the physical environment of the area covered by these trails on the back of the map.
  - b. When they are finished, they are divided into small groups to share their ideas.
3. To secure student participation and motivation, students with lower reading ability will begin *Old Yeller* with a short period of oral reading by the teacher.
4. The class will vary daily within the groups according to the pace each group sets. The following activities may be used in any combination or sequence at the option of the teacher and students:
  - a. Oral activities:
    - (1) Discussion of themes treated in a chapter (for example, the conflict in "Dominant Primordial Beast" in *The Call of the Wild*)
    - (2) Discussion of main ideas in a chapter (for example, the force of hunger in Chapter III of *White Fang*)
    - (3) Discussion of character (for example, the man in the red shirt in *The Call of the Wild*)
    - (4) Discussion of vocabulary (for example, "venison" from *Old Yeller*)
    - (5) Discussion of study guide questions

- (6) Discussion of the themes as treated compared to other chapters and other selections studied
- b. Written activities for individuals or groups:
- (1) Answers to study guide questions
  - (2) Analysis of a particular theme or themes in a chapter
  - (3) Rewriting of a section from another point of view
  - (4) Composition concerning the student's experience with animals
  - (5) Listing the sequence of events
  - (6) Comparing the treatment of a particular theme in the novel to the treatment of the theme in a short story
- c. Activities for slow students
- (1) Drawing illustrations of scenes from the book
  - (2) Building models of animals or scenes
  - (3) Preparing a bulletin board display
  - (4) Drawing maps of the area covered in the book
  - (5) Viewing and writing reports on television animal programs
5. To maintain interest, the classroom activities also vary within each daily period. Each group participates in as many as three different activities in one class period. For example:
- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><i>Group I</i><br/><u>White Fang</u></p> <p>1. Silent reading</p> <p>2. Oral discussion</p> <p>3. Writing paragraph</p> | <p><i>Group II</i><br/><u>Call of the Wild</u></p> <p>Writing paragraph</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Oral discussion</p> | <p><i>Group III</i><br/><u>Old Yeller</u></p> <p>Oral discussion of study guide questions</p> <p>Writing paragraph</p> <p>Reading</p> |
|--|---|---|
6. Each student writes a paper discussing the novel he reads in terms of the unit concepts.

### Lesson 7 Final Evaluation

#### OBJECTIVE

To write a book report analyzing a novel in terms of the unit concepts

#### MATERIALS

#### Bibliography

#### PROCEDURES

1. The teacher prepares a bibliography of books dealing with animals that are available in the school or local public libraries. He distributes this and helps students make appropriate selections.

2. The teacher provides some class time for reading so that he may confer with students to help develop a topic about which the student can write his report. The student prepares to answer the questions listed under terminal objective 1 at the beginning of the unit.
3. The teacher reserves class time for writing and revising the essay.

#### NOTES

1. Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).
2. Richard Braddock, *et al.*, *Research in Written Composition* (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), pp. 37-38.
3. Benjamin S. Bloom, *et al.*, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1956). A very useful analysis of levels of objectives in six major categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

1. RALPH MAGER, *Writing Instructional Objectives* (San Francisco: Fearon Publishers, 1961).
2. JEROME S. BRUNER, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).
3. NORMAN E. GRONLUND, *Stating Behavioral Objectives for Classroom Instruction* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970).





## Creating an Environment for Active Learning

*There is an odd paradox in the teaching process which sounds, at first, as though teaching were an art of noble hypocrisy, like the noble lie of Plato's state. There can be no sense of excitement or discovery, no glimpsing of new worlds of the mind, without dramatizing for the student a mental attitude that is inductive and empirical, putting the learner into the same psychological position as the most original of thinkers.<sup>1</sup>*

For generations teachers have assumed that the most efficient method of teaching the young is to impart knowledge directly. Since the invention of printing, the two primary sources of knowledge have been the teacher and the texts he assigns. The primary goal has been for the students to absorb as much as possible of what the teacher and text have to say. Classic examples are common on nearly every college campus in the country. The professor speaks. The students write in their notebooks. They read the assigned texts. At the end of the course, when the professor finally asks a question, the students copy the answer, presumably from memory, into little blue books. Some shortcomings of this model of teaching should be evident to anyone with experience in our educational system. First, this model assumes that education is simply a matter of accumulating knowledge. The tests that most high school and college students encounter are evidence of that. Second, it assumes that all students are capable of accumulating knowledge in the same way and at the same rate. This assumption, along with economic exigencies, has given rise to the mass lecture, common at many large universities and, unfortunately, in more and more high schools. Third, the model ignores, almost completely, other means of learning, especially that of discussion with other students.

The lecture as a method of instruction is not always or necessarily bad. Some lectures are very stimulating indeed. Some secondary English teachers are able to talk their students through a literature and composition course. But

when lecture is the only method, the student is never more than a passive agent in the learning situation. He may be able to recall what the teacher says, but only infrequently and incidentally does he learn to cope with new problems independently. And when he does, it is usually through some chance circumstance, related tenuously, if at all, to his classroom experience.

Typically, the literature student who has been taught by this method may know the meaning and structure of a particular poem or novel that his instructor has treated in class, but the student is unable to cope efficiently with a new literary experience. He may know a few adjectives by which he can characterize Poe's style, but he is unable to show how those words have specific application in one of Poe's tales that his instructor has not discussed. He has had neither the challenge nor the opportunity to approach a literary work on his own. The instructor has always done it for him.

Since it is clearly impossible for English teachers to deal specifically with all the language situation in literature and composing that his students might encounter outside the classroom, it is imperative to teach so that students learn how to examine and use their language independently. That, of course, requires active participation by the student and a different model of teaching. The method must be largely inductive, putting the learner in what Northrop Frye called "The same psychological position as the most original thinkers."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, we can never use a completely inductive method in the classroom.

If the student were to start from scratch and explore his subject inductively, it might take him years to formulate a single, useful generalization. Further, most students would find the process far too frustrating. But it would be a foolish teacher who did not allow his students to benefit from what man has already learned. The teacher can use his knowledge to arrange problems, materials, and situations so that his students *rediscover* for themselves and gain understanding on their own, a method capable of taking advantage of what man already knows without losing the pride and excitement that comes with discovery for oneself. If the teacher who uses this method is a hypocrite, his is a noble hypocrisy. He knows in general where the students are going, and he organizes the material so that they can have insights for themselves.

Picture such a classroom. Students are actively engaged in discussing subject-matter problems with the teacher or other students. Most students participate in the discussion. At times students work independently; at other times they work in groups. They examine additional materials and discuss them. Gradually, having learned to approach problems of a particular type, they no longer need the guidance of the teacher in that respect. Unfortunately, such classroom situations do not come into existence by magic. Most teachers, at any rate, do not know the magic words. Most must plan carefully and be prepared to change the plans once the lesson is begun. Further, most teachers should strive to be aware of how they themselves behave during a lesson and how that classroom behavior affects the learning and attitudes of their students.

The remainder of this chapter will deal with two major aspects of creating environments for active learning: planning—what the teacher does to prepare the lesson; and teaching—how the teacher behaves once the lesson has begun.

### Planning for Active Learning

Two aspects of planning for active learning are extremely important for both experienced and inexperienced teachers: (1) beginning at a level of sophistication appropriate to the students, and (2) selecting and arranging appropriate materials and questions. In addition, the inexperienced teacher must plan all procedural details the first time he uses a particular lesson or else he runs the risk of losing his students' attention while he is searching for materials, thinking of appropriate questions, and so on.

#### BEGINNING AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL

Chapter 4 emphasized the importance of determining the prerequisite knowledge or skill for reaching terminal objectives. If the student has not met the prerequisites, the medial objectives, then instruction must begin with them.

If the composition inventories at the beginning of the year indicate that students are functional writers, the teacher may want to introduce the concept of "audience" to his students. His purpose is to help them learn to write for particular audiences. The terminal objective may be "to write three versions of a composition, each designed for a particular audience." One prerequisite or medial objective is "to analyze an audience." But even prior to this the student must have some conception of "audience" and the importance of making the analysis. So the most basic objective is "to identify factors responsible for breakdown in communication." If students are unfamiliar with the concept, the teacher probably cannot begin by introducing the term "audience" as an abstraction. He must present it in as concrete terms as possible, perhaps by asking students how communication breaks down when one person in a conversation is not familiar with a term that another is using or by asking how they would speak to parents as opposed to the school principal or a clergyman concerning some currently inflammatory topic.

#### SELECTING AND ARRANGING APPROPRIATE MATERIALS AND QUESTIONS

Once the teacher has determined the appropriate level at which to begin instruction, he must decide how to increase gradually the difficulty of the problems his students encounter. This decision involves both materials and questions. An ordinarily sound rule is to move from the more simple and concrete to the more complex and abstract. The teacher should begin with materials that present as few problems (apart from the major instructional con-

cern) as possible. Similarly, he should begin with the simpler questions, those that will prepare students for the more difficult questions that follow.

Let us suppose that the teacher wants his class to learn to identify and interpret literary symbols. In order to do this, they will have to have some concept of what a literary symbol is. Let us assume further that this area of learning is an entirely new one to the students and that the students are eighth graders. Since this learning is relatively complex and at the same time central and crucial to serious literary study, the teacher knows that a single lesson cannot do the job. Consequently, he must develop a unit of related lessons. The unit must provide an opportunity for analysis of literature in terms of symbolic intent. To have the students simply develop a definition of literary symbol would defeat his underlying purpose; the reason for pursuing this study in the first place is to enable the students to deal with interpretation problems caused by symbolism in all their reading.

In order to avoid possible confusion, the teacher must limit consideration of symbolic imagery to images of the same type. And although problems of the evaluation of literature will be ultimately important to his students—not all symbolic work is per se worthwhile—to engage the class in evaluation problems at the stage of concept formation might cloud their thinking and perception. So he will delay considerations of critical evaluation to some later time.

Since he has decided to limit the symbolic imagery to imagery of a single type, his next task is to choose the type and then select works that contain that kind of imagery. He decides that there are many literary works containing animal imagery in which the animal images might legitimately be interpreted as symbolic. Among the many works that he is considering are *Aesop's Fables* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

It is intuitively obvious that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* involves harder learning in every way than *Aesop's Fables*. The length of the poem alone makes it harder. The greater vocabulary load makes it harder. The greater number of interrelationships among the many more elements in the imagery makes it harder. (How to interpret some of the elements is still perplexing scholars.)

Since his students will have enough problems forming the concept of literary symbol alone, it would be a strategic error to begin their study by having them read a work that presents so many other difficulties, which might well represent a block to learning. Anticipating this, he schedules the experience so that they will deal with the easier material, *Aesop's Fables*, first, and later, when the concept of literary symbol has been formed, perhaps they will study *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Scheduling materials in terms of difficulty is an extremely important aspect of planning for inductive teaching. Because of considerations of concept formation, easier materials are used before harder materials. And all materials

must relate in an obvious way to the concept under consideration. New concepts are harder to deal with than familiar ones. Since this is undeniably true, learners will need a great deal of support when they begin to learn a new concept.

At the beginning of his work on literary symbols, the teacher must be careful to use only materials that contain clear instances of symbols. He anticipates ambiguity and deals with it before students themselves become aware of it. His questions move from the simple to the complex. He teaches using similar instructional patterns so that new things in the instruction itself do not present learning problems; thus, the instructional pattern itself supports the learning. When students begin to anticipate the whole pattern, volunteering answers to questions even before they are asked, it is time to withdraw support and allow them to work more independently.

#### REDUCING STRATEGIES TO CONCRETE PLANS

The teacher begins the study of the literary symbol by using *Aesop's Fables*. He selects a number of fables for class consideration. Among them are "The Fox, the Crow and the Cheese" and "The Dog in the Manger."

Let us consider the general structure of the procedures:

1. A fable is distributed to the students.
2. Before they begin reading, the teacher presents guide questions for the reading.
3. The students read the fable silently. The teacher may read the fable aloud (optional).
4. The teacher conducts a discussion beginning with the reading of the guide questions.
5. The teacher continues the discussion with other questions that lead to forming the concept of "literary symbol."
6. The term "literary symbol" is introduced after the concept is formed.
7. By a review of the discussion, the term is tentatively defined. (As work progresses, the definition will be both refined and expanded.) The lesson is a short one; perhaps two or three such lessons are possible in a class period. Let us see how this outline is realized in terms of the two fables, "The Fox, the Crow and the Cheese" and "The Dog in the Manger."

#### Lesson 1 "The Fox, the Crow and the Cheese"

1. The fable is distributed to the students.
2. Before they begin the reading, the teacher presents guide questions (which are directed at explicating the literal level of the fable):
  - a. What does the crow have that the fox wants?
  - b. How many arguments does the fox use with the crow? What are they? Which one works?

3. Students read the fable.
4. The teacher begins the discussion with the reading of guide questions.
5. The teacher continues the discussion with other questions that lead to forming the concept of "literary symbol."

(The next set of questions requires inference from the learners. They are easy inferences, to be sure. But inferring is harder than responding to things specifically reported in the reading. Therefore, at this stage of instruction, inference questions are handled under teacher direction.)

- a. Why did the fox compliment the crow on his singing?
  - b. Why did the crow start to sing?
  - c. What human character traits does the crow have? The fox?
  - d. What is a "foxy" person like? What is "vanity"? What is "gullibility"?
  - e. What human character traits does the crow represent? What traits does the fox represent?
  - f. When one thing represents something else—such as our flag (point to it) represents the United States—what is the term used for the thing doing the representing, the flag in this case? (If the students don't know the term "symbol," introduce it by writing it on their chalkboard and spelling it aloud. Have the students write it in their notebooks.)
  - g. What are some other symbols? (Wedding ring, the cross, and so on.) What do they represent?
  - h. The thing that does the representing is called a "symbol." What do you call the thing it represents? (Students will probably not know the term "referent." Follow the same procedures used in introducing "symbol" in *f* above.)
  - i. We said that the fox and the crow represented human character traits. Which traits did each represent?
  - j. In this case which are the symbols? (Fox and Crow.) Which are the referents? (Character traits.)
  - k. In literature, things are often used to represent other things. When something represents something else, what is it? (A symbol.)
  - l. Because the symbol occurs in literature—unlike the flag in this room—it is called a "literary symbol." (Follow the procedure in *f* above for introducing the term.)
6. The term is tentatively defined.
    - a. Let us look at these literary symbols and see what they are like. Who wrote this fable? (Somebody, the author, Aesop.) Does the author tell us what the animals are supposed to represent? (No.) How do we know? (We figure it out. It's obvious.) Does the author tell us what the referent for a literary symbol is? (No.) But he may give us a clue. What clues does Aesop give us?

- b. So we see that the referent for a literary symbol doesn't have to be expressed.

(Later work can involve literature in which the referent is expressed.)

- c. We could classify things as "concrete" and "abstract." (If these terms seem unknown to students, introduce them as in 5f above.) Name some concrete things. Name some abstract things.
- d. What are the literary symbols in the fable? (Fox and crow.) Are they concrete or abstract? (Concrete.) What are the referents for these symbols? (Character traits.) Are character traits abstract or concrete? (Abstract.)
- e. Let us review what you have learned about literary symbols. What is the term used for the thing the symbol represents? (Referent.) Does the author have to present a referent for a literary symbol? (No.) Will the symbol be concrete or abstract? (Concrete.)

The next lesson follows a similar pattern; the fable used is "The Dog in the Manger." The procedures vary slightly because students are now familiar with both the concept and the general procedures themselves.

## Lesson 2 "The Dog in the Manger"

1. Distribute fables.
2. Introduce reading guide questions and vocabulary as follows:
  - a. *Vocabulary*. What is a manger? (If students do not know, explain it. They cannot understand the reading without knowing the term.)
  - b. *Questions*. What animals are involved in this story? Where is the dog? Why does the cow want him to move? Does he move? What is the dog's purpose in acting the way he does? What human character traits does the dog have?

(The set of guide questions is made a bit harder in the second lesson. Support is being withdrawn.)

3. Silent reading.
4. & 5. Discussion begins with reading guide questions and continues: What does the dog symbolize? What does the manger symbolize? (If it is necessary, judging by responses, the same careful detailed pattern of the previous lesson can be followed.)
6. & 7. Symbols in this fable are checked against the definition that was developed in the previous lesson.

If necessary, other fables can be read in teacher-controlled situations until responses are quick and sure. Usually, three such lessons will suffice. When responses in the teacher-led discussion are good, the next stage in

withdrawing support begins. Duplicated sets of reading-guide questions and discussion questions are prepared and distributed with fables. The class is divided into small groups for discussion. A student chairman leads the small-group discussion.

The teacher is no longer giving direct support because the general procedural pattern is known. The only new elements are in the content of the fables. In small groups more students have a chance to respond. Disagreements in interpretation can be resolved by the peer group, which can, if it is necessary, seek help from the teacher. The teacher moves from group to group giving help as it is needed. After the small-group discussions, the class is reformed, and the questions are taken up again so that responses can be compared. Since the territory is familiar and the questions are before everyone, a student can lead the whole-class discussion, thus allowing the teacher to comment in a general way. This procedure continues the withdrawal of support and allows students greater intellectual independence.

The next stage of the group work is changing from fables to other short forms. Such poems as Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider" and Blake's "Chapel All of Gold" can be used. Guide questions at this stage can go directly to the analysis: "What are the symbols and their referents in this poem?"

When students are responding well in groups, independent work begins. Such a story as "The Masque of the Red Death" by Poe can be assigned as homework with guide questions leading to the identification and interpretation of various symbols in the story. The problems are now being handled independently. There is a follow-up discussion in class the next day.

The final stage is the independent reading of such longer works as *Lord of the Flies*, *The Pearl*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The reading is assigned, and a book report type of composition is required. The report must discuss literary symbolism in the work chosen for the reading. Thus, all phases of the work are now being handled in an independent way. There is virtually no teacher support. But the central concept of "literary symbol" is formed, and the objective is attained. Because the work was structured, because pupils gradually came to stand on their own feet, because the materials and questions used at first were easy and clearly showed the principle under attack, blocking was minimized, and the curriculum works.

## PLANNING PROCEDURES

In day-to-day instruction, neither purposes nor objectives nor evaluations take up a very great share of planning or classroom time. Evaluations in the form of tests hang like a cloud of doom over the heads of all, true enough. But in the day-to-day routine, the *procedures* dominate the curriculum. Procedures are what the teacher does and what the students do, and what order these things are done in. They will also include the materials that are used.

Although procedures absorb the lion's share of time and require the longest preparations, when purposes have been determined, objectives carefully ex-

pressed, and evaluative techniques and devices decided on, the procedures will follow almost as a matter of course.

To a certain extent many teaching procedures are a matter of routine—such things as collecting papers, distributing books, leading discussions, and so on. These routines vary from teacher to teacher and even from class to class of the same teacher.

A beginning teacher must not assume that any class will operate any routine without instruction. An experienced teacher in writing lesson plans will assume a number of operations under a simple statement like, "Divide the class into committees." Such a statement supposes a great deal of preplanning (setting up the committee on some basis) and earlier teaching (how to arrange furniture, how to function in small groups, and so on). The first time any procedure that will become routine is used, a carefully detailed, step-by-step lesson plan must be thought out. If class behavior indicates the need, instruction based on the plan must be carried out even after the initial lesson employing the routine is finished.

An important routine has to do with giving directions. When directions have been made explicit, the teacher should ask if there are any questions. When the questions are answered, or if there are none, the teacher should then ask the class to repeat the directions. Only after directions have been restated by students are activities begun. This procedure should be followed whenever directions are given.

Finally, the objectives of the instruction should always be made clear to the class. There is no reason to keep students in the dark about the goals of their learning; nor is there reason to assume that they are so sophisticated that they just naturally perceive the objectives. A failure to clarify objectives can result in students working pointlessly (or feeling that they are), working toward wrongly conceived objectives, or in some cases working against the teacher. When objectives are clear, students can help in overcoming deficiencies in materials and procedures and often will short-cut extraneous steps. Consequently, at the inception of an instructional sequence, objectives should be discussed (and if it is appropriate there should be a discussion of purposes also).

These items are the nuts and bolts of instruction, philosophically trivial. Dealing with them ultimately becomes automatic behavior with a teacher. Failure to exercise care in handling the nuts and bolts invites disaster.

#### THE DAILY PLAN

When the teacher has done all the planning outlined above, he must prepare a daily lesson plan, a procedure that beginning teachers find particularly trying.

Time is the controlling element in daily planning. Conceptually, a lesson may be so short that several may be taught in one class period, as with the fable lessons detailed above. Or it may stretch over a number of class periods.

Thus, the teacher must anticipate how much of a lesson is to be covered during the class period; to do this, he must first make a time estimate for each procedure. Because it is often difficult to anticipate response times, there must be provision in the plan for changes: additional activities for occasions when the class moves faster than expected, or strategic changes for occasions when the responses take longer than expected.

The plan should include a statement of objectives and a list of all necessary materials. It must also include a list of procedures in the sequence in which the class will experience them. The procedures should indicate at what point during the lesson the objectives should be revealed.

Teachers who are just starting out should express, in detail, how even trivial procedures are to be carried out, how the paper is distributed, for example. When this sort of thing has become so routine that it is second nature to both class and teacher, careful explanations can be reduced to such a note as "distribute paper."

A good plan for beginners, and experienced teachers who are trying a lesson for the first time, is to arrange the plan in three columns: the first, very narrow for a notation of anticipated time; the second, the statement of procedures; the third, a statement of the reasons for the procedures. The act of expressing the reason often indicates a weakness in the procedure or in the sequencing of procedures.

An important part of many lessons is making the homework assignment, which should be made as close to the beginning of the lesson as possible (pp. 35-38). A major shift in strategy that may be necessary, however, is to cancel the assignment if its completion is contingent on completing all the planned activities and time runs out unexpectedly.

Let us examine a daily lesson plan that has been used widely and with great success, a plan for teaching the writing of haiku. Parenthetical comments refer to the plan and are not a part of the lesson.

#### The Haiku Lesson

##### OBJECTIVES

- To analyze haiku
- To characterize haiku
- To write haiku

##### MATERIALS

Chalkboard model of haiku for analysis:

- Someone lights a moon;
- Then angels with silver chalk
- Draw on their blackboard.

Sheets of duplicated haiku for analysis and criticism  
Scratch paper

<i>Estimated Time</i>	<i>Procedures</i>	<i>Reasons</i>
2 min.	1. Preliminary to lesson, write model for analysis on chalkboard. Have board clean with enough space for results of analysis. Class must be able to identify figures of speech and write them. (Lesson timing begins here.)	1. Don't slow down the lesson for this—class control may suffer or interest may lag.
3 min.	2. Call class to order. Talk a little about characteristic simplicity in Japanese culture, art. Relate haiku to tradition of economy and simplicity. Write word "haiku" on the chalkboard. Explain that this is both singular and plural form.	2. Introducing vocabulary and key ideas.
2 min.	3. State objectives of lesson and make homework assignment: "I would like you to write four haiku on a single theme of your choice for tomorrow. To be able to do this you will first have to know the characteristics of haiku. So we will analyze the one on the chalkboard together." Have class repeat the assignment and what will happen during the lesson.	3. Objectives should be clear to students. Homework assignment should be given with plenty of time in an unhurried way. Class repeats so that teacher is certain everything is clear.
1 min.	4. Indicate that many questions will seem easy but answers are not to be spoken out. Hands must be raised.	4. Otherwise answers will be shouted out. Avoid danger of wrong answers. This pattern is especially important for step 13.
2 min.	5. Instruct class to read the poem silently, and ask a pupil to read	5. Begins with perception of poem as a

<i>Estimated Time</i>	<i>Procedures</i>	<i>Reasons</i>
2 min.	6. "How many syllables are in the first line?" "Five." "How many syllables in the second line?" "Seven." "How many syllables in the third line?" "Five." "What kind of letter does a line of poetry begin with?" "Capital." At this point indicate that this is the usual convention in all poetry, not just haiku.	6. Analysis begins with mechanical elements as these are easiest to detect.
2 min.	7. Indicate that in much familiar poetry, words at ends of lines rhyme. Ask if lines do or do not rhyme in haiku. Answer: "Do not rhyme." Point out the possible dichotomy in word classification: strong/weak. Explain that "strong" words carry a clear meaning—like "red," "boy," "city." "Weak" words do not carry a clear meaning—like "of," "and," "that." Ask if haiku lines end in strong or weak words. Answer: "Strong."	7. Calls attention to first-composing problem that is distinct from specific tradition. Single words are easier to deal with than ideas; more difficult than mechanics or counting.
2 min.	8. Indicate that the haiku must contain at least one figure of speech. Ask if the model does. There are three in it, and the poem as a whole is a metaphor for nightfall. Answers: "Someone lights	8. Beginning of image analysis is with general poetic devices. Because figures are highly conventional, they are easier to

Estimated  
Time

Procedures

a moon' may be personification or hyperbole"; "silver chalk' is metaphorical for stars"; "blackboard' is metaphorical for night sky."

Reasons

deal with than other elements in imagery. Also, this is review material. Phrases are harder to deal with than words as indicated in previous step.

2 min.

9. Indicate that haiku must contain a clear reference to time. This is usually a seasonal reference but it may be any passage of time: minutes, years, days, forever, and so on. Ask if the model contains any such. Answer: "Night."

9. Getting away from structured elements and into "meaning."

This aspect is conceptually not very difficult.

2 min.

10. Indicate that the haiku must give the reader a clear picture or "image" and that the image should contain one stable element and one changing element. Ask if this haiku meets the criteria. Answer: "Yes. Stable element: sky; changing element: stars and moon going on and off."

10. Most difficult conceptual aspect of analysis.

2 min.

11. Quickly review all elements needed in haiku. Students may refer to notes on chalkboard.

11. Pulls together all elements in the tradition.

(First medial objective has been attained. Lesson time should be about half gone.)

5 min.

12. Distribute duplicated sheets of haiku. \* Ask class to read them and find out if there are any that break the rules. Answers:  
a. "Daydreams' may or may not be a clear reference to

12. Can be done only after rules are articulated. Work with several whole patterns helps to fix concept strongly.

\* These are appended to the Lesson (p. 115).

Estimated  
Time

Procedures

- a. time."
- b. "Line 1 contains four syllables."
- c. "Line 3 contains four syllables."
- d. "Line 2 contains six syllables."
- e. "Line 1 contains six syllables."

Responses need not come in sequence.

(Second medial objective has been attained.)

5 min.

13. Distribute scratch paper. Indicate that class is to supply titles for these haiku. Since they are now familiar, you will allow only one and one half minutes for titling. When the time is up, compare titles.

13. Introduction to idea of theme. Also an activity of high interest.

(There will be a consistently strong convergence in response, surprising the class. For example, most will title the first "daydreams," the second "the moon," and so on.)

3 min.

14. Point out that the reason for the strong similarity of titles is that class was responding to the *theme* of the poem in titling it. Ask for suggestions for other possible themes that haiku might be written on and as these are suggested write them on the chalkboard under heading "theme."

14. To give class some ideas of themes they might use. Support in a basic conceptual area on which assignment hinges.

*Estimated*

*Time*

*Procedures*

*Reasons*

- |           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 1 min.    | 15. Indicate that class will now write their first haiku and that the first line will be supplied. Write it on chalkboard—<br>“Winter trees are hands”<br>Suggest that class think of characteristics of hands to complete poems: fingers, gloves, beckoning, and the like.   | 15. First line supplied to eliminate as much frustration as possible. |
| 2 min.    | 16. Before writing begins, analyze line by questioning:<br>“How many syllables does this line contain?” “Five.”<br>“Does it end in a strong word?” “Yes.”<br>“Does it contain a figure?” “Yes: metaphor.”<br>“Does it refer to time?” “Yes: winter.”<br>“What must you add?” “Two lines of seven and five syllables.”<br>“What must you be careful about?” “Lines should not rhyme and must end with strong words.” | 16. Review helps clarify immediate task.                              |
| 5-10 min. | 17. As class is writing, circulate and give help as needed. As poems are finished, read them aloud and ask for comments. Comment good poems.  | 17. Recognition and support in a new kind of task.                    |
- (Some evidence that terminal objective has been attained.)
- |                 |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| balance of time | 18. Review homework assignment and permit students to begin in class. | 18. Uses up remaining time. Teacher help available. |
|-----------------|---|---|
- (Finished homework is evidence of terminal objective.)

**Haiku Sheet for Analysis**

1. Daydreams are fingers  
Reaching to grasp far-off thoughts  
Of silver and gold.
2. The moon's a lantern  
That sheds beams of golden light  
Showing Night his way.
3. Are cats' eyes daggers  
Flashing through the black of night  
Seeking their prey?
4. Sparkles of fresh dew  
Lingering in the dawn  
Make morning a gift.
5. Twilight, a calling card,  
That announces the nightfall,  
One last flickering.
6. Barren trees shiver.  
The icy winter has come:  
Time to sleep once more.
7. Autumn trees are men  
Stately, old, and awaiting  
Winter's long, long sleep.

**Teaching the Lesson: Encouraging Student Participation**

It should be obvious that the planning described above is aimed at encouraging student response by beginning instruction at an appropriate level, organizing materials and questions from simple to complex, and providing support until students are ready to work independently. But other factors are also important. The teacher who hopes for active learning in his classroom must consider the physical organization of the room and his own behavior as they affect the responses of the students.

In a traditional classroom, the desks are arranged in rows with all students facing the front of the room, with the result that the attention of the students is focused on the teacher. If the dominant method of instruction is the lecture, such an arrangement is necessary. But if the method is teacher- or student-led discussion, some other seating plan is preferable. When seats are arranged in rows, students see only the teacher's face, not the faces of other students, and



their tendency will be to respond primarily to what the teacher says, not to what other students say. For an active, engaging discussion, the students should respond to one another. Arranging the desks in a hollow square, a circle, or a horseshoe shape will support such discussion. The students will be able to see one another and will not be forced to direct their questions to the teacher.

The teacher's verbal behavior, what he says to encourage response, is a significant factor in both the attitudes and achievement of students. A study by Ned Flanders<sup>2</sup> demonstrated that students whose teachers encouraged response had more positive attitudes toward their subject matter and learned more than did students whose teachers' verbal behavior tended to preclude student response. Flanders used a system of ten categories to describe the verbal behavior of both teacher and students in a classroom. The first seven of these have to do with teacher talk in the classroom. Categories 8 and 9 refer to student response, and 10 indicates silence. Every three seconds, the classroom observer indicated, by recording the number of one of the categories, what type of verbal behavior had taken place during the preceding three seconds. Observers worked and practiced together until they could apply the categories with a high reliability (usually over 0.9).

The categories of major interest here are the first seven, those that concern teacher talk.

1. **ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENT FEELINGS** When a student reports his reaction to the work in class, the teacher can ignore it, accept it, or reject it. For instance, a student may say, "This is really a dumb story." The teacher may ignore the remark. Or he may reject it with what he regards as witticism: "Perhaps what you say tells us more about you than it does about the story." If he does this or bluntly disagrees with the student, he will significantly diminish the possibility not only for real evaluation of literature in his classroom but for discovering how his students react to the works he teaches. On the other hand, if he accepts the student's remark and encourages students to talk about their reactions, he may be able to lead them to increased understanding and perhaps to more sophisticated evaluation. At the very least, his students will be willing to express their feelings in class.

2. **PRAISE OR ENCOURAGEMENT** If a teacher desires the continued response of his students, he must express encouragement and praise when it is warranted. Encouragement is a simple matter: "Yes," "Go ahead," "I see what you mean," or even "Uh-huh." There are degrees of praise and the teacher should use them with discretion. If he praises everything equally, his students will cease to value his commendations. On the other hand, he can indicate approval of most student efforts while reserving stronger praise for special insights and for outstanding efforts. Such expressions as "O.K.," "All right," "That's interesting," and "Good" will indicate approval. When the response warrants it, the teacher can use the student's name and emphasize the praise:

"John, that is a very important idea." If the teacher explains why the response is worthwhile, both the praise and the learning are reinforced.

3. **ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENT IDEAS** Sometimes the responses will be inappropriate. Sometimes there will be several different responses to the same question or problem. In both cases the teacher will want to accept the responses and lead the class to examine them. If the responses must be rejected, it is much more effective for the peer group to reject them than for the teacher to do it. This sort of behavior by the teacher encourages students to examine their own responses—a crucial part of the learning process.

Sometimes the teacher will want to build on the response of a student: "That's an interesting idea and leads us to the heart of the problem. . . ." We consider that idea in relation to the other aspects of the problem. . . . The teacher can also build upon student responses by reviewing what has been said, showing the relationships and moving to a problem that grows out of the responses. This category represents an important teaching strategy that allows every student to feel that what he thinks is worthy of intellectual consideration by the group.

4. **QUESTIONS** When they are carefully planned, questions are an important means of eliciting response. Too frequently, however, a teacher who has not considered very carefully what his lesson involves will ask questions that get no response. They are ambiguous, or they are too difficult because the teacher has not prepared adequately for them. When no response comes, the unprepared teacher tends to answer the question himself. The most important part of preparation is not simply knowing the answers to the questions but considering what questions to ask in order to help students to have their own insights into the problems. Certain questions will require a good deal of thought, and the teacher should allow the students enough time to think out their responses. There is nothing inherently bad about silence in a discussion—if the participants are considering what is relevant to the discussion.

5. **LECTURE** Most teachers talk during a class period far more than they are aware. They lecture, they answer their own questions, they give examples. Teachers may think they use a discussion technique simply because they break up a lecture with an occasional question. But the discussion is terribly one-sided with one participant, the teacher, talking 60 to 99 percent of the total class time. Some lecturing is unavoidable, and some lecturers can be very powerful in influencing their listeners. But it is folly to think that a class is really discussing something simply because a teacher intersperses his remarks with a few questions.

6. **GIVING DIRECTIONS** The directions included in this category are those that require physical compliance: "Go to the board and write," "Answer the question," "Read the next passage aloud." When the teacher requires students to think about a particular problem, student compliance is not observable and

the teacher's remark is included in category 5. Clearly, some directions are necessary, but when a teacher's comments to the class have a high proportion of directive language, the students are likely to feel inhibited and coerced.

7. **CRITICISM** There are times when criticism of students is unavoidable. A few students who disrupt a classroom will respond to direct rebuke only. If a teacher finds a great deal of disruptive behavior in his class, he must examine the probable causes: Are the tasks too difficult for the students? Are the materials and activities such that they retain interest? Are the classroom procedures planned to move smoothly, so that the students do not have an opportunity to become unruly? Does the teacher's behavior increase the anxiety of the student?

At this point, however, the concern is with criticism of student responses to a lesson. A teacher must assume that when a student responds, he is making the best attempt he is capable of at that moment and in those circumstances. If the teacher responds with criticism of what the student says, the student's desire to respond again will certainly diminish. Such remarks as "What have you been dreaming about?" "I don't see how you can possibly say that," "That is incorrect," "It's easy to see how you have been thinking of something else" can be very discouraging. When teachers react frequently with such comments, the students defend themselves by ignoring the instructor.

The first four categories described above represent the kinds of verbal behavior by the teacher that are conducive to student response. The last three tend to limit not only the opportunity but the desire to respond. Flinders' study demonstrated that teachers who accepted, encouraged, and elicited student response were more successful in terms of student achievement and attitude than were those whose tendency was to inhibit response.

Let us examine the behavior of a teacher who encourages active learning in his class. The tenth-grade students in this particular class are studying a unit similar to, but more sophisticated than the unit outlined earlier in this chapter, and after studying certain poems and short stories in which symbols are relatively clear, they begin reading *Animal Farm*. The guide questions for the first three chapters are as follows:

1. What is the basis for Major's complaint against human beings?
2. What do Farmer Jones and Manor Farm represent?
3. How does the rebellion come about?
4. Which of the Seven Commandments should be regarded as the most important? Why?
5. What do the various animals represent? Napoleon, Snowball, Squealer, Mollie, and so on?
6. What evidence is there that the animals will or will not obey the Seven Commandments?

Because the teacher wants the students to respond to one another, the class is seated in a hollow square so that they do not focus on the teacher alone but on the person speaking.

The class discussion begins with the first guide question. Commentary on the teacher and student responses appears in italics.

*Teacher:* What is the basis for Major's complaint against human beings?

*Sam:* I think he doesn't like the way people treat animals.

*Teacher:* Uh-huh. What do you mean? *Encourages elaboration.*

*Sam:* Well, you know, the way a lot of people hurt animals and don't treat them right.

*Teacher:* All right. *Accepts response.* Does anyone see some other basis for Major's complaints?

*Carol:* Well, Major says that man takes everything from the animals but doesn't produce anything himself.

*Teacher:* Yes, go on. *Encourages elaboration.*

*Carol:* Man takes the milk and the eggs and slaughters the animals and sells them. And that's not fair because . . .

*Richard:* What do you mean it's not fair? That's just the way things are.

*Carol:* Sure, in real life, but this story is not real life.

*Teacher:* What difference does it make that the story is not real life? *Accepts Carol's response and at the same time moves discussion toward symbolic interpretation.*

*Carol:* Well, in real life the animals would not be able to speak or anything. They wouldn't have a point of view. They wouldn't know that they are being used unfairly. And here they represent something.

*Teacher:* Good. What do the animals as a group represent?

*Pamela:* They represent any group of people that someone else takes advantage of or controls.

*Teacher:* O.K. Is that how you would describe Jones' treatment of the animals?

*Sam:* No, 'cause he does worse things than just control them.

*Teacher:* Right. What do you mean by "worse things"?

*Sam:* Well, he takes away everything. I mean, he even kills them.

*Richard:* But he has to do that. That's what farmers do.

*Pamela:* Oh, Richard, don't be silly. Don't you see the animals aren't just animals. They represent people—people who are under the absolute control of someone else.

*Teacher:* That's a good point, Pamela. *Gives extra reinforcement for a key element of the meaning.* Farmer Jones controls things in an absolute way to the extent that the animals have nothing for themselves. Can any of you think of any real life situations in which one person exercises complete control over everyone?

*Richard:* Yeah, school.

*Teacher:* All right, how is that similar, Richard? *Accepts what appears to be a challenge.*

*Richard:* Everyone has to do what the teachers say—or what the bells command. They tell you when to get up and sit down, when to work, and what to study.

*Teacher:* Good. Is there any difference?

*Frank:* Nope, it's just the same.

*Carolyn:* Not quite. The school only controls you part of the time—not all the time. And the school doesn't take our money the way Jones takes what the animals produce.

*Sam:* Yeah, and they don't kill us either. At least, not really.

*Teacher:* Can anyone think of any other real life parallels? *Responses to this question will help in understanding the idea of absolute control or tyranny and, at the same time, will prepare for later symbolic interpretations.* (During this phase of the discussion students mention feudal life, communism, sharecropping, and the French Revolution. The class examines how each is similar and different. Obviously, such digressions cannot be planned but are important. Following this, the teacher returns to the initial question.)

*Teacher:* Let's get back to the first question. What is Major's key objection to human beings?

*Pamela:* He objects to the way Jones controls everything without any consideration for the animals.

*Teacher:* George?

*George:* That's what I was going to say. Except Orwell uses the words "tyranny of human beings." He is really objecting to totalitarian forms of government.

*Teacher:* Very good. Let me note that on the board. (Teacher writes: Objection is to totalitarian forms of government.) *Reinforces the key point and gives strong support to the student.* Now then, what do Manor Farm and Jones represent? *Several hands go up, but since this is an easy question at this point, the teacher waits for students who respond less frequently than most.*

*Joe:* Well, the farm must represent a country.

*Teacher:* Very good. *Joe does not answer very often, and the teacher offers more praise than he might to a more able student.* Joe, what do you think the farmer represents?

*Joe:* He must represent . . . like the government.

*Teacher:* Very good. What is wrong with the government that Jones represents?

*Sally:* It's really bad.

*Teacher:* Why?

*Sally:* Well, he does not treat the animals well. He doesn't even feed them. And he kills them.

*Sam:* Yeah, that's what started the rebellion. He hadn't fed the animals 'cause he was drunk.

*Teacher:* Good. There are three questions that I think we might debate at this point. I'll suggest each one, and you decide which point of view on one of the questions you would like to take. The first problem is in the guide questions. Which of the Seven Commandments is most important and why? Would anyone like to take a position on that?

*Richard:* The animals themselves boil them down to "Four legs good, two legs bad." So it must be the first two that are important.

*Carolyn:* Ohhh! Richard, what's the matter with you? The seventh is most important, "All animals are equal." The first two don't guarantee anything for anyone.

*Teacher:* All right. We have two points of view. Alice, will you act as secretary and write down the names of people who want to prepare an argument for each point. No more than five people on a committee. Does anyone want to volunteer now? Or do you want to wait until you hear the other problems? (Some students volunteer.) The next problem I had in mind involves what the pigs represent. Will they be good leaders? What do they represent? Are they appropriate animals to represent what they do? Does anyone want to make a statement?

*Frank:* The pigs have to be the leaders. They are the smartest. Snowball is really good because he cares about what happens to the other animals.

*John:* But you don't think of a pig as being a marvelous example of leadership. I mean you usually think of pigs as greedy, dirty, and lazy.

*Teacher:* There are two points of view to consider. Anyone want to volunteer? (Some do and Alice records the names.) The third problem is also in the guide questions: What evidence is there that the animals will or will not obey the commandments?

*Linda:* I think some will and some will not.

*Teacher:* Which will?

*Linda:* Boxer will. He is already working harder than anyone else. But the cat won't probably, because it runs away when it's time to work.

*Teacher:* Does anyone have a different view?

*Sam:* I think they will all work. It says they are all really cooperating.

*Teacher:* Anyone else?

*George:* The pigs have broken the commandments already. They reserved milk and apples for themselves. They don't believe that all animals are really equal.

*Teacher:* Fine. We have three points of view on that question. Volunteers? (More volunteer.) Is there anyone who is not on a committee? I would like to present its point of view. Examine the first three chapters carefully to get all the evidence for your case, but you had better examine the evidence that your opponents are likely to use. Tomorrow, we will take one problem at a time. Each committee should take no more than five minutes for its

presentation. And after you hear your opponent, you will have one minute for rebuttal. Then the discussion will be open to the class. Ed and Alice, I would like you to serve as the discussion leaders for tomorrow. You do the timing and lead the class discussion. Any question? Committee?

The discussion above and the follow-up plans illustrate three different processes for inductive teaching: the teacher-led discussion, the small-group discussion, and finally the student-led discussion. Because the teacher recognizes the importance of response, he does not limit his procedures to the teacher-led discussion. There will be more student response and hence greater involvement through both the small-group and student-led discussions. At the same time, the problems posed and the debate format will force a very close examination of the text, perhaps even closer than if the teacher himself had led the discussion.

To summarize, the most important considerations for creating an environment conducive to active learning and participation by the students are the following:

1. Beginning at a level appropriate to the abilities and experience of the students
2. Selecting and organizing materials and questions that proceed from easy to complex
3. Planning the procedures (especially those new to the teacher) in concrete terms
4. Encouraging student response through the verbal behavior of the teacher and through appropriate seating arrangements and discussion techniques

In exploring new problems it is necessary to examine the data from as many vantage points as possible and to forgo established procedures—in short, to think creatively. Getzels and Jackson describe two cognitive modes in their study of creativity and intelligence:

The one mode tends toward retaining the known, learning the predetermined, and conserving what is. The second mode tends toward revising the known, exploring the undetermined, and constructing what might be. A person for whom the first mode or process is primary tends toward the *usual and expected*. A person for whom the second mode is primary tends toward the novel and speculative. The one favors certainty, the other risk. Both processes are found in all persons, but in varying proportions. The issue is not one of better or worse, or of more or less useful. Both have their place.<sup>3</sup>

Creating a classroom environment for active learning involves the use of both cognitive modes. The student who questions and explores is not rebuked for his failure to choose a "correct" answer. The teacher's role is not so much to reward and punish correct and incorrect answers as it is to help the

student reexamine his ideas and responses in the light of the data and decide for himself the adequacy of his answers, generalizations, and hypotheses. The teacher is not simply an authority figure who imparts information in the form of facts, theories, or interpretations. He is, to use Plato's figure, a midwife whose job it is to assist at the birth of ideas in the minds of his students.

#### NOTES

1. Northrop Fye, "Elementary Teaching and Elemental Scholarship," *PMLA*, LXXIX (May 1964), p. 15.
2. Ned A. Flanders, *Teacher Influence, Pupil Attitudes, and Achievement, Cooperative Research Monograph No. 12* (Washington: U.S. Office of Education, 1965).
3. Jacob W. Getzels and Philip W. Jackson, *Creativity and Intelligence* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962), pp. 13-14.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

1. PLATO, *Meno*, tr. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1949).
2. NORRIS M. SANDERS, *Classroom Questions: What Kind?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).



## Evaluation in the Curriculum

During the course of a year's work, a teacher must make different kinds of evaluations of his students' work and use different kinds of evaluation instruments: inventories, quizzes and examinations, compositions, and questionnaires. These help him to assess each student's learnings. Taken together, their results help to assess the instruction the teacher provides.

Let us consider these evaluation instruments—how the teacher should devise and use them, his purposes in using them, how he should interpret them, and what action he should take after making the evaluation.

### Evaluation Instruments

#### TEACHER-MADE TESTS

The design of any teacher-made test should depend on its purpose. Teachers sometimes develop very short quizzes for spot-checking students' learning. Ordinarily, the purpose of such a quiz is to determine to what degree each member of the class understands a small but crucial bit of the course content. Sometimes, a quick quiz is used as a method of checking on how well students attend to outside assignments. Such tests are simple to construct, for the pertinent test items (questions) are suggested by the purpose. Trick items or catch questions are out of place in such short quizzes, since responses to them will not give the desired insights. In other words, the questions will not be valid.

The test intended to evaluate longer periods of study and more complex learnings requires much more care in its development. For this discussion, let us assume the teacher wants to evaluate the learnings in a literature unit. In developing the test, he must consider what kinds of information he wants the test to give him and how he will treat the information when he gets it.

What kinds of information should the test give? First of all, it should indicate to the teacher whether or not his objectives have been attained—or how closely they have been approached. Moreover, the test should be diagnostic to some extent—that is, if the responses show that the class does not have the desired learnings, the test should give the teacher some clue as to what needs to be done. For example, if some reteaching is necessary, the test should be constructed so as to indicate at what points the original teaching went wrong.

Let us suppose that a teacher wishes to construct a test to be given at the conclusion of a unit on symbolism. The terminal objectives of the unit were "to interpret literary symbols in a work" and "to support the interpretation." Therefore, there must be items that present materials containing symbols, that request an interpretation of them, and that request support for the interpretations. In order for a student to handle such items, he must know what symbols are and be able to identify them. Probably, these learnings were medial objectives in the unit; let us assume so. Therefore, there must be questions testing for these earlier learnings, as well. Does the student know what symbols are *in general*? Can he identify specific imagery as symbolic? The responses to these questions will determine if the instruction has broken down at this point in the learning sequence.

Assuming that the test reveals that these learnings have not taken place, the next problem is to determine why. Presumably, the concepts were developed inductively during the course of the unit as a result of the analysis of specific materials. If learning blocks occurred at this point in the instruction, some of the items should be designed to show whether students are familiar with the classroom materials and whether they were understood. Thus, the test must contain items of the following kinds:

1. Items that test the students' familiarity with, and understanding of, the content material used in direct instruction
2. Items that test their knowledge of the general concept of literary symbol
3. Items that test their skill in identifying symbols
4. Items that test their skill in interpreting symbols
5. Items that require support for their interpretations

The forms these items should take should be determined, in part, by considering how the teacher will deal with the responses, once the tests are turned in. When the tests are turned in, the first problem he will face is scoring them. Insofar as possible, the entire scoring procedure should be consistent from test to test. Therefore the items should be designed to allow for maximum consistency in scoring. Although multiple-choice items allow a very high degree of scoring consistency, it is often difficult to make valid multiple-choice items that test skills.

The use of any multiple-choice items—whether they be true-false, match-

ing, or selecting from a series of multiples of the *a, b, c,* or *d* genre—says something about how “deep” the learning is expected to be. If a tester uses multiple-choice items, he presents both correct and incorrect information, and the student is required only to recognize that the information is correct or incorrect. Generally, recall items are more demanding than recognition items because they require the student to produce information with the cues implicit in the instructions and questions as his only helps. For example, it should be more difficult to respond to the question, “Who wrote ‘Crossing the Bar’?” than to choose the author’s name from the list, “Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley.” Therefore, the next consideration in designing test questions is the “depth” with which the teacher feels it is necessary for a student to know information. Assuming that a skill can be thought of as a cognitive learning, the only way that a teacher can be sure that a pupil “knows” a skill is to require him to “recall” it; that is, be able to use it on request.

Planning recall items introduces another important consideration: ambiguity in responses and in the questions themselves. In administering the test, a few minutes at the beginning of the testing period should be planned for clearing up ambiguities. However, questions that invite divergent responses cannot be handled as readily. For example, think of the possible legitimate answers to a question like this:

“A symbol is \_\_\_\_\_.”

How could one maintain much consistency in scoring these possible answers (and there are many other possibilities):

- “something that has a referent.”
- “used to represent something else.”
- “a figure of speech.”
- “often used by authors.”
- “sometimes capable of many interpretations.”

Some types of questions must be somewhat open-ended, inviting various responses, such as the type asking the students to support the assertion that an image is a symbol. Many forms of support may be reasonable in a particular instance. In such cases, the teacher must anticipate all the pertinent responses in advance.

Next he must decide on the order of the items within a section. As noted in the discussion of reading inventories in Chapter 11, questions should be presented in an order ranging from easy to difficult. Although the structure of the question (multiple choice vs. recall) tends to predict relative ease, as does the task that the question implies (recall of key specific information vs. inferences), the only way that a teacher can be certain of the relative difficulty of an item is by noting the frequency of correct responses. Obviously, a question that everyone always answers correctly is easier than a question that

hardly anyone can ever answer. Over a long period of use, tests and other instruments can be redesigned so as to yield more reliable information.

Next, the teacher must make a crucial decision about the scoring of the test. There were five types of questions that were to be included, each testing a different learning. The teacher must decide which of the learnings, if any, he feels is the most important and whether there are different degrees of importance that can be assigned to the various items. Such decisions are not easy. For example, he may decide that the students’ ability to identify certain imagery as symbolic in some new reading is the essential feature of the unit or that the character of the support they provide for their interpretations is more important. If the unit included the reading of literary masterworks, the teacher may decide that familiarity with their structure or content is of overriding importance. His decisions about relative importance will determine how the individual items or sections on the final test will be weighted, that is, how much each will count. The more important a given response, the more heavily it should be weighted in the final scoring.

The administration of the test must be considered now. Some time in the testing period must be reserved to check inadvertent ambiguities, both in the expression of the items and in the directions that are part of the test. Students must be made aware of the weighting given to the various parts, since they have only a limited amount of time for writing the test, and should have information that will help them in planning their time. Otherwise, they may use too much time in places where the returns—both in terms of final scores for them and diagnostic information for their teacher—will not justify the time spent. (This consideration suggests that in any curriculum design there ought to be provision for lessons teaching students how to take tests—that is, how to prepare for them, how to attack them, and how to deal with the results.)

While the class is writing the test, the teacher should circulate and watch to see that directions are being followed. If the students respond badly because of ambiguous directions, the test results will not be useful (unless one purpose of the test is to evaluate the student’s ability to follow directions). From time to time during the testing period, the teacher should indicate how much time there is remaining.

In designing a test for a unit, it is clear that the teacher must pull the unit into perspective. All the main concepts, the objectives, all experiential elements, and their relationships must be viewed both independently and as a complete pattern. One important function of a test for a student is that he is forced to do the same thing. All too often, however, students are not sophisticated enough to put all these elements into the proper perspective by themselves. A good technique, therefore, is to have *the class* design the final unit test or sections of it. This activity also helps them to gain sophistication in preparing for tests, generally.

The procedures are easy and logical. First, the teacher leads a discussion about the appropriateness, use, and design of test items. Then the content of the unit is briefly reviewed. Next, heterogeneously grouped committees are formed to design items, each group working on one section of the test. When each group has finished its work, the class is regrouped so that each new committee contains at least one member from each of the previous committees. Each member presents his section of the test to the new group. Then, when the whole class is familiar with all parts of the test, the teacher leads a whole-class discussion on weighting. Finally, using student-made items as a base, the teacher completes the final test design. The procedure requires about three class periods.

#### COMPOSITIONS

The test is not the only tool that the teacher has to help him evaluate learnings. Student responses in discussion can serve as a basis for general evaluations as can worksheets and homework papers of various sorts. Probably, compositions are the most important of these other evaluation instruments. We shall discuss here the type of composition that is intended to communicate information, including an expression of the writer's feelings and opinions.

One purpose of literature study is to develop critical faculties. Only by analyzing the informational content of his students' compositions can the teacher evaluate the success of his students in developing their critical faculties—that is, the extent to which they bring their total life experience, independent intelligence, and personal sensitivity to their reading. In the classroom, it is composition alone that permits an adequate and appropriate critical response from all the students.

If the teacher wants to make such an evaluation, he should, under ideal conditions, attend only to the informational content of the finished composition. In most secondary school classes, however, such ideal conditions only rarely obtain. English teachers teach composition as well as literature, and consequently a composition must be evaluated *as a composition*, even though the teacher's purpose in assigning it had been to assess the students' other learnings.

Therefore, the finished composition will usually be judged on the basis of its informational content; the techniques of organization, definition, and logic used in presenting that information; the writer's aptitude in handling the mechanics of the written language—the spelling, punctuation, and capitalizing conventions; and the language style.

The weighting that a teacher should give to these elements depends on the type of student doing the writing, the previous instruction of the class, the objectives in instruction, the purpose of the assignment, and the material that the writer is discussing. To the extent that the whole program has been individualized, composition grading should be individualistic. This is especially the case in classes where the inventories (Chapter 22) have shown a

wide spread in writing ability among the class members. Then, in extreme contrast to the scoring of tests, the grading of compositions should not, and could not, be based on rigid paper-to-paper scoring consistency.

Suppose that the inventories have revealed that the class is weak in the techniques of organization (Chapter 22), and the teacher therefore decides to teach a composition unit that will have as its objective a mastery of the techniques for presenting data. When the writing is evaluated, the heaviest weighting should be given to those organizational techniques. Some papers will show control of all the techniques; others will show control of some of them and weakness of varying degrees (including omission) in others. The weaknesses will vary from paper to paper: some students will have poor definitions, some will not be able to support generalizations, and so on.

Next, the teacher must decide on what action to take as a result of the evaluation. Obviously, in this case, some individualizing of instruction will be necessary—probably in the form of notes on the compositions indicating which parts need to be revised and what directions the revisions should take. Thus, the evaluation will not be completed until the teacher has read the *revisions*.

Although in reading the compositions the teacher gives the heaviest weight to organization and the like, he will also have to take account of such other features as information, the spelling, punctuation, and capitalizing conventions, and style.

Some teachers are uncomfortable in assigning a single mark to a composition and may give a composition two letter grades (one for "content," one for "mechanics"); in fact, it is conceivable that a whole series of grades could be used. Even without so elaborate a marking apparatus (and what it implies for recording marks and averaging them for report cards), the act of reading and responding to compositions is terribly time- and energy-consuming. However, any teacher who feels comfortable only with multiple composition grades and who is willing to take the additional time and effort required to deal with them should do so. On the other hand, many teachers feel that one mark suffices. The question is essentially one of teacher comfort, and any alleged "rationale" to the contrary is really rationalization.

Whether one mark or multiple marks are used, the teacher must rank the compositions. Ordinarily, the most convenient technique for ranking is to place the compositions in piles, each pile containing papers of about the same general merit. Then, the only problem is deciding which mark or range of marks to assign to each pile.

On occasion, there will be a highly problematic paper. For example, consider an otherwise fluent composition that displays a disheartening number of spelling errors. Probably the best marking procedure in this case is to give two marks, one for spelling and one for the rest of the paper. This procedure helps to drive home to the student the feature of his writing that he must particularly attend to.



Difficult as it may be to evaluate information-oriented compositions, this job is simple when compared to grading more clearly belletristic work. The great danger in judging belletristic writing is that the teacher will make an entirely personal appraisal, judging the composition only and not considering the process that generated it. In order for a student's composition skills to improve, the teacher must consider the composing process—especially in connection with belletristic writing.

In making such papers, the elements discussed in connection with more utilitarian writing should, of course, be considered when they are pertinent. Beyond this, the aesthetic merit must be judged. In order to make consistent evaluations, the teacher must try to visualize the writer's composing problem as the writer himself saw it. Only then can he make helpful comments on his general approach to the aesthetic problem. Perhaps the weakness in a paper is in some feature of the writer's approach, but perhaps the student perceived his problem inadequately to begin with. Whatever the case may be, the teacher should try to put himself in the writer's place so that he can evaluate the paper from a point of view that will be relevant to the writer.

### Evaluating the Curriculum

Individually, an inventory, a test, or a composition are used to assess student learnings. Collectively, they can be used to make assessments about the curriculum. Assuming that English skills are cognitive in character, these instruments are the principal means of evaluating the success of the curriculum in producing appropriate cognitive learnings. As indicated in Chapter 4, evaluative judgments are made in terms of criterion statements, which describe the implications of attaining objectives. Therefore, one measure of the curriculum as a whole is whether objectives are being met.

Assuming that the objectives are worthy and need not be altered, two conditions are possible: the students generally attain the objectives, or they generally do not attain them. In the latter case, either methods or materials (or both) should be changed. Even if the objectives are being attained, there may yet be some question about materials and/or methods: that is, the procedures, although effectual, may not be efficient.

An example may help to discriminate between these concepts. Consider a problem of moving ten tons of sand from one place to another. One man with a wheelbarrow and shovel might do the job in two weeks. The same man with a steamshovel and a dump truck could do it in half a day. In both cases the sand would be moved. Therefore, both methods are effectual because they get the job done. The second method, however, is the more efficient in terms of time and the worker's effort.

Consider the problem of eliminating run-on sentences from the composi-

tions of a group of thirty students. Six years of grammar book drill might result in eliminating the faulty usages from the work of twenty-five students. Another approach might be to teach a few lessons in proofreading and have a series of short conferences—of about five minutes—with each student. During the conference, the student would read his work aloud, and when his stress, pitch, and juncture patterns indicated the need for terminal punctuation, he would insert it. Assuming that this procedure would also be effectual with the twenty-five students in terms of curriculum time and effort, it is more efficient by far than the endless drill.

Another dimension of curriculum evaluation has to do with the affective (rather than cognitive) responses of the students. Assuming that the objectives are attained, how do the students feel about the program? Do they like, for example, drilling on run-on sentences year after year for six years, even though the drill eliminates run-on sentences from their writing, and they are aware of both the objectives of the drill and success of the procedures?

To an important extent cognitive learning is conditioned by the emotional climate that surrounds it. Negative feelings about experiences can result in learning blocks, whereas positive feelings can help to eliminate blocks. Whether or not cognitive learnings take place in a curriculum, affective responses must be assessed. It is important to maintain an instructional climate that is appealing.

Much of the assessment of student feelings can be done informally. The frequency and tone of responses in discussion can suggest inferences to the teacher. Students will usually let a teacher know how they feel. If they do not do this—with both positive and negative responses—this is itself evidence of negative reactions and may mean that they are afraid to express their feelings. Needless to say, discipline problems of the other kind—rudeness, unruly behavior—are likewise evidence of negative feelings. Students' thoroughness in preparing outside work is another good clue to affective response. Requests for more time are also clues; when the extensions result in work that is very well done, this is an indication that the worker has been highly motivated. A good device for gauging affective response is the questionnaire (as described in Chapter 14).

One further evaluation of the curriculum is necessary, an evaluation of the quality of the students' experience. Suppose that objectives are being met, and students obviously enjoy the work. Suppose further that the procedures seem both efficient and effectual. Now let us postulate a tenth-grade class working on a unit in this happy situation.

The unit will deal with literature about adolescent love, a topic that ought to be appealing to tenth graders. The reading ability of the class is such that, with proper instructional techniques, they might read *Romeo and Juliet*. The teacher is versed in these techniques. Obviously, they could also deal with contemporary books aimed at the adolescent market. All other things



being equal, the teacher should choose *Romeo and Juliet* since the quality of the reading experience it provides is so much higher than that of the adolescent novel.

How does one judge this quality difference? To a large extent, the value judgment has ultimately been made by society as a whole. A teacher's own experience, including his own education, enables *him* to make the judgment. Probably, it is a question of taste as well as knowledge, and presumably an English major, a college graduate, has the appropriate background for making the necessary discriminations.

The choice of materials and teaching methods will be discussed in detail throughout the balance of this book. Challenging, even difficult, materials and tasks do not in themselves predict negative affective responses. Feelings of pride and accomplishment can accompany the knowledge that a hard task has been mastered. However, if the task is *not* completed because it is inherently frustrating, quite the opposite feelings can be generated. The tightrope between challenging and frustrating curriculum content is a difficult one for teachers to walk.

The evaluation of a curriculum cannot take place all at once. Usually, very poor elements are obvious. In another year, these may be modified or dropped, and alternatives are substituted, which in turn must be evaluated.

Even when a teacher feels comfortable about the validity and reliability of his homemade evaluation instruments, and they show that his objectives have been met, that student feelings about his program are positive, and that the content of the program is rich in quality, he cannot yet be sure that his instruction alone is responsible for this outcome. Suppose, for example, that one of the objectives in his program is to teach his class to write sonnets. After he proceeds through the unit and everyone is able to write an acceptable sonnet, how does he know that *he* has taught the material? He cannot know, unless he had first established that writing sonnets was not in his students' repertoire before he started the unit. Therefore, any sound system of evaluation must provide for pretesting for previous learnings. This pretesting need not be formal; using the example of the sonnet unit, the teacher might simply ask his class: "How many of you know how to write sonnets?" Certainly, not a very formal or elaborate device, but one that nevertheless produces the appropriate information.

Finally, evaluations are judgmental. Although this is not the same thing as saying that they are random, absurd, useless, or wasted, the judgments of evaluators are naturally subject to change. As a teacher's experiences accumulate, the character of evaluative instruments should change. Probably the value system of the teacher will change as well, and the relative importance of various elements in his experience will shift. In addition to these changes, as time passes, the culture changes, and with cultural changes come changes in the reactions of students.

The evaluation process must be dynamic, not static. Let us reconsider the elements in that process in a general way:

1. An evaluation rests on an appropriate observation of whatever is to be evaluated. A test must be valid, first of all.
2. The observation must be rated in some way. Generally, the rating should be as consistent as possible. The consistency need not derive from the scoring technique but may reside in some other phase of the treatment of the observations.
3. When the observations are made and rated, subsequent behavior should be conditioned by the information that has been derived. This is the purpose of engaging in the evaluation process in the first place.

A teacher's curriculum experience will, more and more, assume the character of a constant evaluation of all phases of that experience. Evaluations are often judgmental, and whatever guidelines a teacher may use, in the end the quality of his evaluation will be determined by the character of his judgment.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The following pamphlets are useful guides for many phases of test construction and treatment of test results:

1. From the Educational Testing Service, 20 Nassau Street, Princeton, New Jersey: *Making the Classroom Test* (1959), and *Short Cut Statistics for Teacher Made Tests* (1960).
2. From NCTE, Champaign, Illinois: *Building Better English Tests* (1963).