

## Composition

The teacher of composition should base his instruction on a systematic approach rather than on his own ad hoc intuitions. Yet he cannot rely to any great extent on research findings since the research that has been done is too limited to offer many fruitful guidelines. What he needs, then, are two theories of composition: a theory of the composing process and a theory of instruction. Both theories should result in teaching procedures that are adapted to various types of compositions as they are differentiated in terms of the writer's motivation, his purposes, and his analysis of the probable responses of the intended audience.

Before the teacher can plan instruction, he must know what his students' needs are and how he can best meet those needs. Chapter 21 presents a series of inventories related to composition skills: spelling, the mechanics of punctuation and capitalization, organization, and originality. The results of each item in the battery have implications for instruction.

The traditional approaches to teaching composition have not proven entirely satisfactory. Chapter 22 examines the various weaknesses in these traditional approaches.

Chapter 23 presents a model of the composing process. This model emphasizes the role of communication in verbal composing, demonstrating how writing is influenced by the writer's purposes, his intended audience, and his environment.

Planning is essential to effective instruction in composition. The teacher must plan the type of instruction that will be best suited to the needs of his particular students. He must also plan on how he will tie in the composition instruction with the rest of the English curriculum. Finally, he must consider how to evaluate the finished papers in a way that will contribute to the students' further progress. These subjects are discussed in Chapter 24, which presents models for composition lessons.

Several different types of compositions—and the appropriate instructional techniques—are discussed in Chapters

25 through 28. Student compositions are used as examples throughout. Chapter 25 deals with the type of writing that will best meet the students' everyday school needs—writing that is intended to convey information. Poetry, fables, and other types of form-oriented writing are discussed in Chapter 26. Writing that is intended to draw an emotional response from the reader is the subject of Chapter 27. This chapter suggests ways in which students can be taught both to analyze and to imitate such writing. Chapter 28 explores some of the introspective and environmental elements that may influence students' writing. Finally, Chapter 29 discusses the needs of dysfunctional writers and outlines a number of techniques that will be useful in bringing such students up to a functional level.

As noted above, Chapters 24–29 contain many examples of student composition. The examples are presented in the form in which they came to the teacher's desk, before they were red-marked. Consequently, the reader can expect to find in them errors of various sorts. Although the reader will find errors in the compositions, if the writers had not had the kinds of lessons described in Chapter 24 there would have been a great many more errors of many kinds. Unless otherwise noted, most of these compositions are the work of students in the lower secondary grades, mainly eighth and ninth. Generally, the work is several cuts higher than that which is customarily produced by students of this age—in spite of the errors present. The work of younger writers has been chosen to indicate several things: first, the diversity in writing that one finds in a narrow age range; second, the capacity that younger students have, third, by extrapolation, the heights to which high school juniors and seniors (and their teachers) may aspire.

Composition instruction should start in the inventory period at the beginning of the year because before the teacher can begin to plan writing lessons, he must have a clear idea of his students' writing ability. In addition to their composing, he must assess their needs and abilities in spelling and in the mechanics of punctuation and capitalization. Since these instructional areas are important only as they relate to writing, they must be integrated with the composition curriculum.

### Spelling

The spelling inventory is intended to yield two kinds of data: the general types of misspellings made by the individual students and the independent study method that should prove to be the most advantageous for them.

Probably the single most difficult aspect to learning English is its spelling. There is not a one-to-one relationship of grapheme (letter) to phoneme (significant sound). In many languages, Spanish, for example, there is very nearly such a one-to-one relationship, and even the few exceptions to the rule pattern regularly. Consequently, in many of these countries spelling is not taught at the secondary school level because it presents no problem to the students.

Since, with our language, spelling is a continuous problem, the teacher is faced with spelling instruction at all grade levels. The character of this instruction rests on a three-part analysis of the problem. (1) What are the situations in which spelling is done? (2) What are the demands made by the language itself? (3) What are the functions of the learner in terms of learning to spell? The inventory itself will reflect the results of the analysis in each of these areas.

(1) *Spelling Situations.* With the exception of such situations peculiar to some classrooms as the spelling bee, very little occasion for the oral spelling of words is ever encountered by anyone. One such occasion is the use of spelling as a kind of code to confuse young children. Another common occasion is the oral spelling of a word to

clear up ambiguity caused by the graphemic-phonemic inconsistency in the language. There may be other occasions. Whatever the case may be, the problem of oral spelling can be regarded as so trivial as to be dismissed without further consideration as a significant conditioner of general needs (but not as a learning device! See below).

Situations involving the spelling of words in lists and in contexts analogous to lists cannot be dismissed as lightly. Much business writing (including that of school personnel) involves the listing of items; many business forms are set up in this way. Large sections on employment applications, tax forms, and college applications, for example, require responses that are essentially listings. The social importance of these situations is great.

In the schools (and colleges), however, spelling problems are more usually encountered in the broader context of extended, related sequences: sentences, paragraphs, and longer compositions. Because of the subtle shifts of pitch, stress, and juncture that occur when words are taken from lists and put into contexts, the spelling problem already significant in terms of words on lists, for many writers, is intensified. For example, even the simple word "have," when put into the context "I would have tried harder" becomes "of" on many papers: "I would of tried harder." Similarly, tests of such listed items as "all right" and "too," "to," and "two" will often display the students' apparent mastery of the words, whereas compositions from the same students will show the form "alright" and confusion in the appropriateness of "too" and "to." Consequently, the spelling inventory is developed as a context.

(2) The words used in the context of the inventory should be members of classes that have long been established in spelling research. The classes, which are determined by various considerations, are: basic writing words; words formed by following conventional orthographic rules; spelling demons; and other words.

**BASIC WRITING WORDS** If we were to select a number of writing passages at random and count and tabulate the words in them, we would find that certain words would recur much more frequently than others, such words as "a," "an," "the," "and," and the like. Rinsland found that only 100 of these frequently recurring words accounted for about 60 percent of all the words used in a person's writing.<sup>1</sup> Other researchers have shown that if a list of the 1,000 most frequently recurring words is made, the words on it account for upwards of 90 percent of the total number of words used in writing.<sup>2</sup> If the list is further extended to include the 3,000 most frequently recurring words, these words constitute close to 95 percent of the total. At about this point, the extension of the word list becomes of somewhat less value. Increasing the frequency list to 10,000 words extends the percentage of the total by only a relatively small amount;<sup>4</sup> apparently, something analogous to the concept of diminishing returns sets in at about the 3,000 word-count level.

<sup>j</sup> These 3,000 words, then, can be regarded as basic to writing. If a person

has complete mastery of them, only 5 percent of his total writing can contain spelling errors. An interesting point to consider is that most of these words are the targets of spelling instruction in most schools by the end of the third grade.

**ОРТНОГРАФИЧ РУЛЕС** Spelling instruction has been plagued by "rules" of the mnemonic kind that are supposed to aid the speller. In many cases these alleged rules lack generality to the extent that following the rule may result in more misspellings than nonadherence to it. Such rules often involve learning lists of exceptions, both "regular" exceptions and "irregular" ones—or exceptions to exceptions. Consider one of the more popular such rules: "the *ie*-*ei* rule."<sup>5</sup> If the student remembers the mnemonic accurately—"Is it *i* after *e* or *i* before *e*, except after *c*? Or is it before *c* or when sounded 'eigh' as in neighbor or weigh?"—and even if he remembers the whole rule, what is the result of his applying it in such situations as the formation of the plurals of nouns ending in *cy* such as democracy, in such phrases as "The Great Democratic—s?"

The only significant orthographic rules are limited in number and have much broader applicability. They concern such spelling details as the conventions of plural formation, the uses of the apostrophe, and the conventions associated with adding various kinds of suffixes and similar details of spelling. Most desk dictionaries contain sections on these rules of orthography, as do the school grammar books. These sources can be used as references to develop a complete listing of these rules. Words exemplifying the usages are included in the inventory. Unhappily, even these rules are not without exception. But at least the few exceptions are themselves nearly "regular" in character.

**SPELLING DEMONS** If spelling errors were collected and treated in the same way as was described in the formulation of the basic writing list above, a similar phenomenon would be observed. Certain words in misspelled form would tend to appear over and over again. For some reason, certain words invite misspelling more than do others. Frequency of use is one of the factors. For example, "to," "too," and "two" are used very frequently; hence one can expect a greater number of misspellings of these words than of words like "bivalve" and "opt," which are less frequently used. Obviously, however, there are deeper reasons for such misspellings than can be accounted for by considerations of frequency. After all, "a," "an," and "the" are used with greater frequency than "to," "too," and "two" and are rarely misspelled.

To date, no one has developed a foolproof instructional attack on these words ("to," "too," and "two") nor on a great many others on the demon lists. For our purposes, the inventory will present samples of such words to see whether the students have mastered them. Mastery of them, needless to say, reduces the probability of spelling errors immensely and is theoretically second in importance only to mastery of the basic writing words. Even after intensive work, however, many writers fail to learn the proper spelling of these words.

*more words assisting mastery*

In addition to these words that pose a general spelling problem, there will very likely be particular words that the individual writer has difficulty with, for example, new words in the writer's vocabulary and words that he persistently misspells. With some of these words, he may be aware of his uncertainty about the spelling; with others, he may not know that he has a spelling problem. Finally, words containing specific sounds or letter configurations may give him trouble.

As the year's work develops, many heretofore unknown terms will be introduced into the writer's vocabularies. \* Before beginning a unit of work, the teacher should preview the new terms that the students will encounter and give specific instruction on their spelling. In other words, in addition to their importance in other aspects of the unit, the new words should be considered as "spelling words." Obviously, no such words should be included in the inventory.

Other types of words enumerated above are relevant only to individuals and their own specific problems. Although there will be little opportunity in the brief inventory for a systematic survey of the particular spelling problems of individual students, some of them will be revealed. In any case, the teacher will become aware of them as the year's work progresses.

(3) *Consideration of Learning Patterns.* Not everyone has the same learning patterns; nor is a pattern that proves efficient for one person in a given situation equally efficient for all others in comparable situations. Once the character of needs in spelling has been described, teacher and student are both faced with determining the most efficient and effectual ways to meet the needs.

One method of teaching spelling that has been employed is to have the learner locate the correct spelling (of a word he has misspelled) in some appropriate source such as the class "speller" or dictionary. Once located, the word is copied some magic number of times—three, five, seven, ten. All too familiar is the case in which the conscientious learner does the copying—and does it wrong! Thus, by using a technique that is inappropriate to his process of learning spelling, he not only fails at learning, but he learns error, an inefficient and ineffectual procedure.

The spelling inventory should help to determine how students' learning patterns differ; the teacher will be able to vary his instructional techniques accordingly. For example, some persons learn to spell primarily through visual means. In fact, some studies have indicated that visual learners make the best spellers.<sup>6</sup> Other studies in spelling have found that younger children learn to spell many words incidentally in connection with learning to read.<sup>7</sup> Most of

\* A person has many vocabularies, and not simply a single, comprehensive one. Generally, there is a great deal of overlap in these vocabularies. But each person will have a number of words that he will find only in his reading, use only in his speech, use only in his writing, etc. A spelling problem often arises when a word from one of the vocabularies is encountered for the first time in another.

us know people who have trouble spelling words aloud but can detect misspellings in print. Some visually oriented persons may misspell a word in writing and then, on rereading, will recognize that the word is misspelled and correct it.

There is evidence that most persons acquire the greater part of their spelling learning through hearing in their earlier years and through vision in their later schooling. The transition appears to take place for most students during the middle schooling (junior high school) ages.<sup>8</sup>

A relatively small number of persons find neither the visual nor the auditory method initially effectual. Rather, the best way for them to learn words, both in reading and writing, is through a kinesthetic method involving tracing with their fingers.<sup>9</sup>

The most beneficial approach for some students may be one combining two or three of these procedures.

### Spelling Inventory Procedures

The spelling inventory should reflect the foregoing aspects of analysis. The administration of the inventory should provide insight into the students' ability to spell words in context, to take dictation, to copy accurately, and to proof-read. The passage itself should include basic writing words, words exemplifying orthographic rules, words from the list of demons, and others.

The context of the inventory should be developed to be interesting to the students. For example, the one in this inventory is on the subject of breaking in new cars, a subject that should be appealing to ninth and tenth graders, especially since many of them are looking forward to getting their licenses. Appropriate topics for younger students might be "developing hobbies" or "baby-sitting"; for older students "applying for jobs" or "applying for college admissions."

#### INVENTORY PROCEDURES

Distribute sheets of blank paper, size 8½" x 11", and have the class fold the paper in half so that a little folio leaflet, size 5½" x 8½", is formed. The headings should be placed on the *outside* of the leaflet. Give directions approximately as follows:

"Open your leaflets so that you see two blank pages before you. I am going to dictate a short passage that I want you to write on the left-hand page. Leave the right-hand page blank; we will use it later. I will read the passage twice. The first time, you will just sit and listen to get the sense of the whole thing. The second time, I will dictate it slowly enough for you to write everything I say. You will take down my dictation on the left-hand page only. If I am going too fast, raise your hand, and I will slow down. Are there any questions?"



After answering questions, go over the instructions again, point by point, by posing questions to the class. (Examples: "Which page will you write on?" "What do you do with the other page?")

Dictate the inventory passage slowly, aiming for as much naturalness in delivery as possible at the slower speaking rate. Use your natural dialect, and take special care not to distort pronunciation. Do not let the spelling of a word dictate an artificial or unnatural pronunciation. (One reason for misspelling is that spelling and pronunciation do not match.)

Include as part of the dictation all marks of punctuation and all capital letters. (These will be inventoried elsewhere.)

#### DICTATION

Breaking in new cars requires skill, care, and knowledge about machines from their owners. Frequent oil changes are important. Clutches and brakes need attention and adjustment. Avoid a lot of fast stopping. You can't be too careful about engine overheating. A careful owner babies a new car along, taking as much time as he needs to. A careless owner's car is driven too fast before its engine is ready.

When all the dictation is completed, direct the class to make an exact copy of the left-hand page on the blank, right-hand page, *including any errors they notice*.

When the copying is completed, have the students underline twice any words they know they have misspelled. If they know the correct spelling, they should write it on the back of the sheet. Direct them to underline once any word whose spelling they are unsure of. All underlining should be done on the right-hand (copied) version.

#### The Inventory Results and Their Implications

A two-dimensional chart such as the one described in the reading comprehension inventory (Chapter 11) will prove useful in analyzing the results of this inventory. A page in the gradebook will suffice for the chart.

The first thing to check is the students' accuracy in taking dictation. Of course, there may be misspellings, but for the present, ignore them. Has every word been accounted for? Have all the punctuation marks been included? Have words been capitalized as dictated? If the student has missed dictated items, an oral-aural study method is inadvisable. If a student cannot take this simple dictation, he will probably not be able to write down spelling words accurately from dictation.

Next, the accuracy of the copy should be checked. If inaccuracies are noted, copying as a visual study method is also inadvisable. Most students, however, will display neither type of omission, their writing from dictation will be complete as will their copying. A copying study method is therefore indicated because it can be used independently.

Now the spelling is checked. Were the words that were underlined twice indeed misspelled? Have appropriate corrections been made? A person who exhibits a good pattern here should be encouraged to proofread all his written work because he is apparently able to catch errors and correct them. Are there words underlined once? Students who make this response should be encouraged to consult dictionaries in the course of their proofreading.

The teacher should then look over the left-hand (dictation) side of the page to find initial misspellings that were not detected by the student in the copying-proofreading. The teacher should try to classify the nature of the misspellings. Has the student misspelled any of the basic writing words? Has he violated any of the orthographic rules? Which demons has he misspelled? What are his own spelling idiosyncrasies?

A person in secondary school who misspells words in the basic writing vocabulary (other than the demons) has a very serious spelling problem since these words are ordinarily mastered by the fourth grade. He is therefore in need of remedial work. His immediate task is to master these basic writing words. The earlier parts of the analysis of his inventory may suggest the appropriate study approach for him to use. The teacher can supply the list of basic writing words, and appropriate materials are available commercially in workbook form. He may require help from someone at home—perhaps his mother or an older sibling. It should be emphasized that he is in serious trouble and must work conscientiously and without delay to make corrections. If he has other spelling problems, and this is likely to be the case, more thoroughgoing inventories will be needed. The teacher should consult the reading specialist or skilled elementary teachers for advice on subsequent procedures.

Should a considerable number of students show weakness in dealing with the orthographic rules, a need for class instruction in this area is indicated. If the number of students with this problem is relatively small, instruction can be limited to a group of students. If the students demonstrate that they are capable of dealing with the special orthographic regulations, there is no point in using class time for that kind of instruction. The teacher may find that his school grammar series and its workbooks provide useful lessons in this area.

The teacher will find that many students will have trouble with the demons, but this can hardly be considered abnormal behavior. Although the teacher should utilize every available approach in dealing with these words, he should not blame himself if his methods prove ineffectual to any degree. This is a pedagogical area that invites considerable attention of the scholarly and scientific kind. The classroom teacher, even the neophyte, is in a key position to do such work. Working out a nearly foolproof method of instruction in the spelling of these problem words would be a boon to the entire English teaching fraternity.

In dealing with the student's own spelling peculiarities, the teacher should motivate him to proofread in order to catch careless errors and to use the

dictionary in cases where he is uncertain about the spelling of a word. Both of these methods place the major burden on the student.

In the case of the presumed "new" word, the teacher must arrange an opportunity for discrete instruction. What form should this instruction with "new" words take? As previously indicated, the first step is a teacher preview of the content of anticipated units. The teacher should make a list of all words which will be encountered by students and can be presumed to be unfamiliar to them, including familiar words that will take on new meanings in the new instructional context. The list should be broken down into short groups of words in the order in which they will appear in the instructional context. In this way, the teacher can present a group of words immediately before the students encounter them in the instructional context, whether it be reading, discussion, or writing. The teacher should present each word separately, writing it on the board and at the same time pronouncing it. The students should copy it into their notebooks, pronouncing the word in unison when there is any doubt that students will have difficulty with pronunciation. The teacher should then indicate various appropriate contexts in which the students can expect to come across the word, including (should this serve the teacher's broader purposes) some kind of definition of the word. In other words, as many avenues as possible should be used in introducing new words.

Some new words will have associated forms that should be introduced at the same time. For example, the noun "plot" has the related participle form "plotted" that exemplifies an orthographic rule. If the class is familiar with the orthographic rules, the associated forms can be derived inductively in teacher-led discussion; otherwise, the teacher should simply present the related forms (which can be used subsequently in inductively deriving orthographic rules during the spelling lessons).

Of course, these procedures are not solely spelling procedures but relate to vocabulary learning, to which spelling is incidental. It is wise to deal with another consideration at this time. Certain words have developed around them conventionalized usage patterns that are specific to these words. For example, the noun "symbol" has generated the verb "symbolize." As indicated above, both forms should be introduced at the same time. In most discussions, the convention used when employing the third-person singular, present tense form of the verb is the form "symbolizes" in preference to such forms as "is symbolizing." This convention must be made manifest to the students, or they may use a form not ordinarily employed, resulting in awkwardness of expression—although the form may not be "wrong" in a technical sense.

Soon after introducing each list of new words, the teacher should administer a spelling drill, dictating the new words as a list. After the dictation, the students should check their own papers and make appropriate corrections as the teacher provides the correct spelling of the words on the list.

This simple procedure represents the most efficient method for dealing with spelling that researchers have yet discovered. This assertion requires some

elaboration, however. Although such dictation-correction drills may not teach the correct spelling of all the words on the list, the method is as effectual for the great majority of learners as any other and more effectual than some.\*

The foregoing discussion underlines the importance of developing spelling lists as part of the overall development of the curriculum content. The lists should include technical terms used in the course (like "anapest," "semicolon," "phrase," and "novel") as well as key "general" vocabulary in the reading, and words that might be needed for specific composition lessons. (For example, a composition about T. S. Eliot's poetry might require the use of such words as "ambiguous," "vague," and "interpretations" as well as technical terms like "image" and "metaphor.") It goes without saying that demons, whether those found on one of the published lists or those noted by the teacher as words that many students frequently misspell, should find a place on any such list.

#### DEALING WITH STUDENTS' SPELLING PROBLEMS

The individual student should also keep a word list. As he reads a student's writing, the teacher should indicate misspellings with a red pencil as he comes across them in the work. The student should find the correct spelling of these words and record them in a section of his notebooks. A word may be written a "magic number" of times, but students who do not copy accurately should *not* use this technique. (If the teacher or student is so minded, the problem of optimum magic numbers can be explored experimentally. A not very elaborate experimental design along these lines might result in a valuable contribution to the literature on spelling; such a project is within the power of even a practice teacher.) From time to time, the conscientious student can, with a little assistance from someone, drill on these personally troublesome words.

For most students, this practice is not impossibly onerous. Usually, there will not be more than 1 or 2 such occasional misspellings in a running context of, say, 150 words. But in most classes there will be a student or two who transgresses more frequently. Let us suppose that a hypothetical student who has mastery of the basic writing words consistently produces misspellings in the neighborhood of 8 or 10 per running 100 words and seems unable to detect his errors in proofreading. Such students are, happily, not commonplace, yet they are not rare. Keeping a personal spelling notebook becomes a burdensome chore for such a student. Therefore, the teacher should look for an alternative approach.

The teacher should first work with the student to try to uncover, through various analyses, the underlying reasons for the general spelling ineptness. He may have some basic perceptual disability that prevents him from making the appropriate associations between sounds and letters. The misspellings may

\* In this case effectuality is determined by how close student performance—the correct spelling of words in a specific set—comes to ideal performance—the correct spelling of all the words in the set.

*errors - misspelling or word length*

usually involve particular vowel or consonant sounds or analogous graphemic configurations. Perhaps his difficulty is associated with the use of a foreign language at home. Or he may have a general writing dysfunction. There are many possible approaches. Consultation with the school psychologist and reading and speech specialist will be helpful. But the problem of the chronic misspeller who exhibits no other intellectual dysfunction is persistently perplexing to educators, as well as interesting to those oriented to educational psychology.

#### **Some Final Words on Spelling**

We are often editorialized on spelling deficiencies in the products of our schools, the editorializing occurring in such places as P.T.A. meetings, the popular press, and informal conversations. The editorializing is voluminous, but specific documentation in support of the grievance is not often produced. One supposes that of all the areas of language usage, punctuation, organization, style, etc., that the specific character of established spelling usage renders this area one of extreme comfort for the layman. Spotting misspellings requires attention to words taken only as individual entities and consequently, requires neither superior intellectual endowment nor extensive intellectual exercise. The man-in-the-street is, therefore, well equipped to detect spelling errors.

In addition, the obvious vagaries of English spelling make good spelling appear to be some sort of superior accomplishment. ("Isn't it obvious that somebody who can't spell is inferior—at least to I, who can spell right? Furthermore, it is the job of the schools to teach spelling. Give me the good old three r's; and never mind all this modern junk. The kids today just don't know how to spell, etc., etc.") Despite the presence of some underlying relevance in such lay speculation, the problem of spelling is complex and not susceptible to pat answers.

Nonetheless, spelling error is readily noted, and many persons will base invidious judgments on both speller and schools, however unfairly, on their observation of spelling errors. In light of this, we do what we can with spelling! However, this engineer is not to be taken as *carte blanche* to preempting inordinate amounts of instructional time from other aspects of class study.

Spelling, when viewed in the perspective of the entire English curriculum—reading, the interpretation of literature, expression in speech, and such writing skills as organization and the techniques of persuasion—must not be a paramount consideration, or even nearly so for most students, although it may be for certain individual students. Therefore, the teacher should undertake most of his spelling instruction on an individual basis, meeting needs as they are found.

#### **Punctuation and Capitalization**

Often the most numerous red marks on compositions are those indicating errors in punctuation and capitalization. The teacher should use a proofreading inventory to check the students' familiarity with the conventions governing the use of capital letters, punctuation marks, italics, and the like.

A proofreading inventory is a relatively simple matter to construct and administer. The teacher merely itemizes the usages that he intends to have the class employ, or expects that they will employ, develops a passage of moderate length that contains these usages, omits some of the appropriate punctuation marks and capitals from the passage, and submits copies for class correction. If the students consistently fail to make certain types of corrections, the teacher should follow up the inventory with specific instruction in those areas. Many school grammars contain passages that would be appropriate for such an inventory as well as exercises for follow-up instruction. The teacher should, however, avoid some of the "inventories" presented in the grammars. Some of them are arranged as discrete sentences and otherwise contain too many cues for satisfactory utility. Insofar as possible, the proofreading inventory (like all the others) should try to duplicate actual experiences. Therefore, a passage containing a number of consecutive sentences must be used since this more nearly approximates the student's task as he handles his own work.

In constructing the instrument, it is not necessary to run the entire gamut of punctuation. It is far better to concentrate on the types of punctuation that the students will inevitably be using, for example, the conventions for punctuating and capitalizing titles. To some extent, the students' needs will change from grade to grade. Some high school seniors should be made aware of such niceties as the distinctions in usage that are observed in connection with the dash, the comma, and parentheses. Most eighth graders, on the other hand, would find this kind of information rather esoteric, if not downright exotic. Contrariwise, most senior English students are undistressed by terminal punctuation, whereas many an eighth grader shows some anxiety in distinguishing between the conventional choices that appear open to him in the matter of the command *vis-à-vis* the exclamation.

The scoring of the inventory can be facilitated by having students indicate the changes on a special answer sheet rather than on the passage itself. In such a case, however, the passage will have to be more carefully constructed, but the additional time used in preparation will be more than repaid by the time saved and the increased accuracy in scoring. If the teacher chooses to use an answer sheet, the students may be allowed to score one another's work.

When the teacher constructs a passage (an example appears on p. 490) for use with an answer sheet, he should observe certain procedures. For one thing, to avoid ambiguity in the order of responses, there should not be more

than one error per line. There will be some instances, however, where an error will require more than one correction. For example, the passage may include a run-on sentence like "Do you notice this message is not in code is it any wonder?" If the student does not choose to use a semicolon, he will have to insert a question mark and change the *i* in "is" to upper case. Since these changes are immediately contiguous, there is no real problem either in the use of the answer sheet or the scoring of the answer.

### Proofreading Inventory

1. Curious Correspondence Years from now
2. Reader, it was early in September, 1988 that a book bearing the interesting title, *Intelligence that conquers the World*, fell into
3. the hands of a certain friendly power. One of the chapters
4. the one called: In Cuba—This, is presented for you inspection.
5. It begins with the following letter:
  7. Office of the Chief
  8. Division of Intelligence
  9. Havana Cuba
  10. December 23, 1965
11. Operative X-13
12. Delesseps hotel
13. Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic
14. Dear sir:
15. Do you notice this message is not in code is it any
16. wonder? What else could you expect? The last message
17. the one you received three weeks ago, was very badly mis-
18. interpreted don't you think?
19. As you recall, I wrote "Put the bomb in the Ambassador's
20. car." How could you possibly have believed that I meant our
21. own Ambassadors car?
22. Also how could you possibly have misread "stick bomb" as
23. sink bomb"? Do you know what the dreadful consequences
24. Are? Now, ambassador Tequila won't be able to see anyone
25. for at least three weeks it's just terrible smelling so!
26. Answer these questions in code after all, you do need the
27. practice, dont you?
28. Yes have a Merry Christmas.
29. Respectfully yours
30. Jose Z-14 Chief of Intelligence
31. We know that its hard for you to believe a letter like
32. this one reader. There follows next, another letter, written in
33. code, decoded and reproduced here. Wait until you read that one you
34. just wont believe it.
  35. Cuban Embassy building
  36. Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Rep
  37. Dec. 29, 1965

38. Chief of Intelligence
39. Division of Intelligence
40. Havana, Cuba
41. Dear Chief
42. I received your letter of December 23 and I
43. respectfully reply. You say, why don't I learn the
44. proper code?
45. I reply, why don't you take time to work out careful
46. messages?" I followed, to the letter, the chapter, Book
47. Codes". You wrote, "Hit the Ambassador in the south." All
48. the other ambassadors were in the capitol in the North. I
49. apologize for "slink" and wish you a Happy New Years Day.
50. Your servant

Operative X-13

The lines of the passage should be numbered, and there should be corresponding numbers on the answer sheet. Some lines of the passage should be errorless. If the student notices an error in a line, he should record the words in the middle of which the error appears (usually two words, the one preceding the omission and the one following it) together with the appropriate changes on the answer sheet. For example:

22. Also how could you possibly have misread "stick
23. bomb" as sink bomb"?

Answer Sheet

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <u>As it appears</u> | <u>Correction</u> |
| 22. Also how         | Also, how         |
| 23. sink bomb"       | "sink bomb"       |

All the foregoing suggests that proofreading is a dull, mechanical process, but, unfortunately, it is one to which writers must become habituated. It makes little sense to spend a considerable period of time in planning and executing a composition and then not take a few more minutes to catch errors that tend to depreciate the value of the work, however distasteful the activity involved in those few minutes might prove to be.

We have emphasized proofreading in connection with punctuation and capitalization work. The intuition of many teachers seems to be that when the rules of mechanics are understood and learned by writers, the writers simply generate compositions that contain appropriate usages. The presumption is that punctuating can become an automatic part of the composing process. Acting on this presumption, many teachers have developed lessons in punctuation and capitalization in which they conscientiously drill their

students. Most *experienced* writers and editors, however, are not confident of their ability to generate work that is free of mechanical error. Consequently, when they have finished writing, they inevitably proofread their work to detect and correct inadvertent error.

Although many people do seem to learn the appropriate usages in school as a result of lessons in the mechanics of punctuation and capitalization, there is some serious question about the usefulness of such classroom drill as a teaching technique. Educational literature is replete with studies that purport to show the futility of instruction in many aspects of usage, including punctuation and capitalizing. At any rate, the completed composition must be proofread, even if the writer has mastered the rules and punctuation has become an integral part of his writing.

Certainly, more research is needed in connection with instruction in these matters. In the absence of pertinent research, it is fair to make some assumptions about the design of instruction in this area.

First of all, it is fruitless to introduce instruction on topics for which the writer will find no use, as with the example given above about the dashes, commas, and parentheses in the eighth grade. Continuing along the same line, if a person's writing does not make use of such structures as introductory adverbial clauses, there is little point in teaching him how to punctuate them. Possibly, many of these punctuation usages and the structures requiring them can be more strongly related to the student's own development as a writer, an instance where more research is needed.

Next, it makes little sense for those who have mastered certain punctuation conventions to have to experience lessons in them. Therefore, some individualization of instruction is inescapable. Individualizing instruction and practice proves most useful here, since such a plan enables different students to work on specific problems in terms of their own needs. All students might work on punctuation exercises, but not all on the same one at the same time.

Let us suppose that the inventory reveals that one group of students in a class has trouble with the capitalization of titles, another group is unfamiliar with the conventions for handling direct discourse, and a third group handles parenthetical clauses badly. Each student should be made aware of his weakness. The teacher, using whatever resources he has—the class grammar, workbooks, programmed materials, homemade materials—should plan a sequence of lessons designed to instruct in each of the three areas. During the same period of class time, each group should work only through the lessons on the weakness shown by its members. Such differentiation of instruction, in terms of time, should prove more effective than the whole-class, lock-step approach, which ignores individual needs and, worse, those students who have already mastered the material in the lesson.

Further, the sequence of work can be scheduled in terms of the relative importance of the students' apparent shortcomings. For example, terminal punctuation is generally more significant than internal punctuation. Therefore,

priority should be assigned to an individual's problems with terminal marks over his problem with commas.

Finally, many punctuation usages occur in clusters. Think of the cluster of usages connected with direct discourse: Each time there is a new speaker, a new paragraph must be used; quotation marks must enclose the speaker's words; commas may be used to set off the quotation; there are special conventions for terminal punctuation; the discourse must begin with a capital, and so on. Thus, whenever the writer employs direct discourse, he must bring to mind a cluster of conventions.

Many school grammar books ignore this in their organization, however. Instead of treating all these matters in an organic way, they are organized topically. There will be a section on capital letters, for example, that will include prescriptions for using capitals at the beginnings of sentences, with proper nouns and adjectives, in abbreviations, in direct discourse, in business letters, and so on. Consequently, the student must learn a series of discrete usages that are related only in that they all employ upper-case forms. Is it any wonder that only the best students will learn the rules?

The use of these various conventions of capitalizing and punctuating is somewhat more arbitrary than many of us have been led to believe. They are not bound to the Latin alphabet; they vary from country to country and from language to language. For example, German usage prescribes the capitalization of *all* nouns; Spanish usage prescribes an inverted question mark to introduce questions, as well as a question mark at the end; the French use a special marking for direct quotations. There is even extreme variation in usage among English-speaking nations. For example, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* employs such usages as Cedar river, Floyd county. Various publishers are guided by their own house rules in such matters as the use of commas after introductory adverbial clauses, using the word length of the clause as the criterion in determining whether or not the comma is used at all. Finally, established authors display great latitude in their use of these conventions. For example, William Saroyan has eschewed the quotation mark.

Possibly, it is because of the essentially arbitrary nature of these conventions that many young writers do not generate them as an integral part of their writing. Certainly, more research is needed to discover the relationships of capitals and punctuation to other elements in the writing gestalt. At any rate, an increased emphasis on the role of proofreading in the whole composition process more closely approximates real writing situations than does the practice of punctuating grammar book exercises.

### Organization

The purpose of devoting an inventory to an assessment of the students' organizational skill in writing is that expository writing is an in-

alienable feature of the English course—possibly the only kind of composition that can be so characterized—and the central feature of expository writing of the utilitarian kind is its organization. A real composition is used as the instrument in this case: the first book report of the year.

At the first or second class meeting the assignment of the first outside reading should be made. It is useful to have students select a book whose topic is generically related to the stories in the reading inventory. That is, if the stories in the reading inventory are all mysteries, the first outside reading should be a mystery. The teacher should tell the students that they are to write a book report on this book and set a tentative due date, but he should also warn them not to begin writing the report until he gives them specific instructions at a later date.

When the reading inventory has been completed, some class time should be taken to review the ways in which the stories in the inventory are related. Small-group discussion is best for this, since it is desirable for the students to arrive at their own decisions about the nature of the theme that unifies the stories. After this discussion, the teacher should give specific directions for the content of the book review and make the due date firm.

In giving the directions, the teacher should tell the students that, in addition to reviewing the book, they must tell whether its theme is the same as, or different from, that of the stories in the reading inventory. These directions are somewhat vague and pointedly so. More specific instruction would serve to cue the organizational details of the composition whereas the purpose of the inventory is to find out about the students' own organizing ability.

### The Inventory Results and Their Implications

The teacher can expect to encounter five different types of responses: a very well organized paper; a paper that shows a native skill at organization but is lacking in the finer points; a paper that is generally disorganized but understandable; a truly incomprehensible paper; no paper at all.

The very well organized paper has most of the following features:

1. A general thesis statement of some kind.
2. A statement of the plan and purpose of the paper.
3. A body that follows the plan and exhibits generalizations supported by specific examples, as well as appropriate definitions of terms.
4. A general summary.

This kind of paper suggests that the student has had previous instruction in organizational skills and that further instruction along these lines is, at best, gratuitous.

The second type of paper presents a less formal organization. It rehashes the book and, to some extent, discusses the theme. These elements are, in the

main, kept separate. Papers of this kind imply little previous instruction in organization. At the same time, they suggest a high degree of readiness for such instruction. Such a paper follows:\*

### TO SIR, WITH LOVE

For my Book report I read "To Sir, With Love", by E. R. Bathwaite. This story takes place in the east end of London. A negro teacher named Richard Bathwaite is teaching Seniors in high schools. These are not normal seniors because they are rebellious, rude, and vulgar, and they are not allowed in ordinary public schools. Mr. Bathwaite teaches these teenagers to be courteous. He teaches them to call him "Sir", the girls Miss \_\_\_\_\_, and the boys by their last name. There takes place a big change when this teacher arrives at this school.

In the four short stories we read—"This happened to me" (rubbernose), "The first proms the hardest", "Bad influence", and "Why did this happen to me", teenagers are growing up I think the authors wanted to show that each teenager has its own problems. They have to straghten out themselves. Today more than ever teenagers are getting more independent of parents and grownups and less confiding.

In "To Sir, With Love", its the same problem. The teenagers are rebellious because they have problems and don't know what to do about them. They think by being rude and vulgar there problems will vanish.

When you compare the four short story's and this book you find that they are quit similar because they all have teenagers in it.

Ninth-grade girl

The third type of paper is a rather meandering presentation built around a rehash of the book. Unless the paper is so poorly conceived that the teacher cannot understand it at all, bad organization is probably its real fault, and the writer will very likely profit from work in expository organization. The following is an example of this type of paper:

### "GOING ON SIXTEEN"

"Going on Sixteen" is they story of a young girl growing up on a farm and her curious problems, and responsibilities toward school and home.

One of the first problems she encounters is about the bringing-up of four young pups whose mother had died of a blood disease. These pups were bred to be champions. One died despite her help but she raised the

\* The compositions in this section are presented as they came to the teacher's desk in uncorrected form and before proofreading instruction.

others from eyedropper to saucer and finally into young dogs. Two of the dogs were taken to training kennels while the one she liked best stayed with Jody (the girl).

In school Jody wanted to become one of the crowd. Her efforts and good intentions were of no help to her, Jody had quite a talent for art. There was a contest in which a poster she made, won and was used in the high school play. Gradually she became more like herself and acted that way too.

She acquired more friends and even had a date or two.

Meanwhile she was worried sick that eventually they would come and take her dog away. Finally that day came and in the days that followed she grew lonelier by the minute. Even redoing the living room with the help of her art teacher didn't help.

One day she was sent some tickets for the dog show her dog (sonny) was going to be in. When she and her father (her mother died when she was younger) got there and saw the dog before the show, the would not perform right, after that. So, Jody showed the dog instead of the trainer and she and the dog won first prize. After that, Jody kept sonny and showed him every so often. This made everybody happier.

I think this story was much like the ones we read in class. When Jody's poster won the prize, she at once became more popular and startling acting more like herself.

The End

Ninth-grade girl

The next class of papers is of an entirely different order. If a paper is, in fact, incomprehensible or is so riddled with mechanical errors that comment on such things as organizational structure is obviated, then the writer should be regarded as dysfunctional.\* Such writers will have to learn to write words, sentences, and single paragraphs—in other words, to become generally functional—before they are ready for expository writing. The following report exhibits some of the characteristics of the dysfunctional writer:

This Teenager story is a bout a girl Jane who though she was in love with Charles Barbour, Jane's problem was that she dont think Charles and he wont talke to her she use to have fights like made with Joe to.

He was dirty and messy boy, who only cared in machinery. Joe moved out next door Charles moved in, Jane was so exited started takeing to Charles over the hedge. The thyme of this story is girl meets boy and likes him but its only his apereance.

Ninth-grade girl

\* See Chapter 2 for an example of the work of a dysfunctional student.

If a student does not turn in a paper at all, the teacher should determine the reason before making any decisions about future work. It may be that the student recognizes his own dysfunction and, consequently, doesn't even try to do compositions. Or he may have failed to develop good study habits. The teacher can observe his writing in class to determine which of the two possibilities is the more reasonable.

In the case of the student with poor study habits, the teacher's first job is to determine whether his study habits are generally poor—that is, he does very little outside work for any class—or whether they are poor only for his English classes, this particular class, or this particular assignment. At this point, the teacher should utilize the cumulative folder of all the student's writing, the English department folder, and the testimony of previous teachers. In addition, a conference with the student is in order. The teacher should try to find the cause of the poor study habits and, if possible, remove it. The results of the study skills inventory can be helpful in this regard (see Chapter 2).

In summary, if the teacher does not have a pretty fair idea of what the book was about after reading the book report, the student probably lacks organizational skills. After all, the book itself was organized, and the student merely had to follow that organizational pattern—a simple task.

### Originality

The final writing inventory is an optional one that attempts to assess originality in writing. Its central purpose is to determine the extent to which the teacher and the class will pursue belletristic writing in the course of the year.

Originality is a concept that is difficult to define. In assessing this nebulous quality, the teacher must rely entirely on his own judgment. He will find that originality is relative. To the beginning teacher, all the compositions of his first class will seem to be somewhat original (although even the beginner can establish situations in which he can make some reasonable assessments of originality). But as he works with more and more students, and as composition topics are repeated from class to class and from year to year, his judgment as to what is original and what is rather commonplace becomes more and more acute.

The composition to be used in the assessment of originality is the one in the interest inventory (Chapter 2) entitled "The Person I Interviewed." The rationale behind this is that a person who can display originality in treating so mundane a topic truly possesses an original flair in writing. However, if the teacher feels that another topic would be more highly conducive to original treatment, he should obviously use that one.



The teacher should give the following instructions:

"Now that you have completed your interview work up your interview notes as a composition. Try to be as original as possible in this composition. See if you can get away from strict reporting and at the same time convey all the information you have found out. If this doesn't seem possible, then a straightforward report will do. But extra credit will be given for originality."

Just as in the organization inventory, some dysfunctional compositions may be received, and some students may not turn in papers. The other compositions may be classified in three ways: straightforward accounts; deviations from these that are typical; and atypical deviations. The typical deviations retain the character of the interview but change the personae of those involved in the interview. The atypical deviations take many forms and thus represent the more original approaches. The following two student-made models, which were developed from the classroom interview, exemplify these generalizations. The first is a ninth grader's work. The second is from a seventh grader.

#### THE PERSON I INTERVIEWED

"This is Lynn Fargo here! I'm reporting from the scene of the riot, where, just now, police are moving in with fire hoses and billy clubs. Fire trucks are hopefully trying to douse the blaze which has quickly arisen.

"I'll try to get ahold of one of the rioters to find out what kind of background they have and if it affects their feelings towards the rioting.

"Pardon me, son, pardon me. Could you please tell us your name?"

"Jody Johnson."

"Well, Jody, tell us a little about yourself. Start with your family."

"I've got one brother, sixteen, one sister, thirteen, I'm fourteen. My father's a dentist."

"Where do you live?"

"In Dober, Mass."

"What are some of your hobbies, Jody, rioting?"

"Ha. Ha. I collect coins."

"What sports do you enjoy?"

"I sail and swim. In the winter I ski."

"Where do you sail and swim?"

"On the Cape at Wareham."

"I see. Where do you attend school?"

"I go to Jackson High School. I'm in the ninth grade."

"Do you have any subjects you like or dislike?"

"Yes. I like science, but I hate French. It bores me."

"Do you have electives?"

"I take technical drawing."

"Do you know what you'd like to be later on?"

"No. I haven't decided yet."

"Thank you very much, Jody."

"Well, folks, from what I have found here, this boy is an unrooted American who has yet to find his place in life. Things bore him, so he needs some excitement to . . ."

"Ah, excuse me, Miss Fargo."

"Yes, Jody, what is it? I'm on the air."

"Well, I don't mean to be rude, but I just arrived here ten minutes ago. I'm up here with my parents for the weekend. I'm visiting my aunt."

"Well, folks, as I was saying, we need more youngsters like Jody Johnson: kind, considerate, polite . . ."

Ninth-grade girl

The writer here has been unable to get away from the interview pattern, and although she has transposed herself into the persona of a radio interviewer and the situation into the scene of a teenage riot, the narrative is not essentially different from the straightforward classroom interview. Notice the title. The voice of the writer is the first person, perhaps suggesting limited maturity—self-centered thinking. This judgment is supported by the satirical tone employed toward adult critics of the writer's peer group. The composition shows some originality, but the presentation is a typical deviation from a straightforward account of the direct-life experience on which it is based.

Although the second writer is chronologically younger than the first, her narrative suggests greater maturity in composition:

#### THE LITTLE ANGEL

Once upon a time, there was a little angel up in Heaven and she was called Judy.

But Judy was the only sad angel in heaven.

All the other angels were as happy as could be. Why, there were beautiful gardens, and trees, and birds, and stars, and just everything to make an angel happy. But still she was very sad; and do you know why? It was because she was the littlest angel in heaven, and there were no other little angels for her to play with.

So one day, Judy climbed up on the "Pearly Gates of Heaven", and started to think of all the happy things she knew back on earth.

She remembered her Daddy and Mommy, her big brother Kevin and her little cat Jingles. She remembered the fun rides she had on her Daddy's bus, and how hard it was to push the big keys on her Mommy's typewriter, and sitting with Kevin while he did all the homework that he got from college.

Then she thought of going to school and ice skating in the winter, and then going to the lake and swimming all summer long. But especially she thought of all her little playmates, and all the fun they had had together.



She thought of her happy earth life all day long until it was time for evening prayers. So with a heavy heart she climbed down off the great big heavenly gates and slowly walked back over the clouds to the prayer garden. She knelt down in her place and started to pray. But soon after, she saw a little figure walking toward her. She looked up and to her great delight and surprise another little girl angel knelt down beside her.

Seventh-grade girl

The writer of this composition has abandoned the interview format entirely. She uses the omniscient viewpoint to relate the narrative, thus keeping herself out of it. The writer of the previous composition, by contrast, sees herself as "Lynn Fargo" and, for all intents and purposes uses the first person to relate the narrative. The title of this composition relates to the composition and not to the lesson assignment. The subject of the interview that led to this composition was a very little girl—even for a seventh grader—and that subject receives a far subtler treatment than does Jody in the earlier composition. The imitation of children's Sunday-school story style is in keeping with the whole approach and shows far greater internal consistency to its type than does the interview: no radio interviewer would use the questions used by Lynn. For a much older writer the piece might be considered trite; but for a seventh grader, this is an original approach. The consistency of the style, the subtlety in treatment of the subject, and the author's excluding herself from the composition are all suggestive of greater originality and maturity.

Should the teacher receive a number of compositions of the kind that deviate from the straightforward reporting type, he should consider very carefully weighting the year's work in composition in the direction of belles-lettres at the expense of utilitarian writing. A predominance of rather straightforward approaches, on the other hand, strongly suggests that utilitarian writing should be the focus of the course.

The principal function of composition in school is to communicate data, usually as part of teachers' evaluation procedures. Therefore, the immediate needs of the students are related to the techniques of clear and well-organized writing. Learning utilitarian writing will be challenge enough for most pupils. Of course, imitating belletristic forms may be helpful in learning the characteristics of those forms. But unless the students show some flair for belles-lettres, both they and their teacher will have a difficult time in a program heavily weighted toward this type of writing.

#### **Classifying Students As Writers**

We have already discussed the dysfunctional writer whose papers are of such an order that they are unable to communicate the message

he intends. They are error riddled and actually (not merely pedagogically) uninterpretable. There are two additional classifications of student writers: the functional writer and the fluent writer.

Most students in secondary school are functional at writing. Of course, they make mechanical errors. The teacher often notes on their papers cryptic messages like "awkward," "ambiguous," "rethink." Nevertheless, communication has not broken down in a fundamental way; otherwise the teacher would not be able to recognize awkwardness, ambiguity, and irrationality in expression. Such shortcomings are noticed only because these items stand out against a more satisfactory tapestry.

There are a few students who write so well that the teacher looks forward to reading their papers and often can make no pertinent suggestions for improvement. The suggestions that are made are often gratuitous or certainly very tentative. Such students can be classified as fluent.

All of the writing inventories considered together provide the basis for this classification of students, which is important in molding the teacher's thinking about the general kind of instruction that is indicated for each type.

The dysfunctional student requires remediation, and his instructional needs have been sketched. Reading has priority over writing if a priority decision must be made, and the general English teacher must be guided by specialists in developing a suitable correctional program.

Helping the fluent writer may also be beyond the power of the teacher but, of course, for different reasons. The teacher's role here is to open doors. He can expand the repertoire of the fluent writer by using literary models to introduce forms and techniques heretofore unknown to the student. He can be introduced to some critical analysis so as to lead him to insights about the hidden things that can be put into writing. And beyond motivating him to clean up mechanical weaknesses (spelling, punctuation, defining techniques, and the like), the best recourse for the teacher is to accord recognition to the writer and to provide every encouragement to him.

In general, most students will be neither dysfunctional nor fluent, although anyone may attain either such classification under special circumstances, such as in writing certain forms of poetry. The students in the general category of functional writers will benefit from a careful, structured writing curriculum. An important feature of such a curriculum is the use of composition models for purposes of both analysis and imitation. But although literary models are suitable for analysis, it may be inadvisable to have the functional students attempt to imitate them. It would be better for the teacher to develop a file of good student-made models for imitation because the functional writer should be encouraged to imitate the writing of the good student; the literary model, almost by definition, is beyond his powers.

When the teacher completes the inventories and his assessments of what they reveal, he can begin his planning of composition work.

## NOTES

1. H. D. Rinsland, *A Basic Vocabulary of Elementary School Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1945).
2. James A. Fitzgerald, *The Teaching of Spelling* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1951).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
4. E. L. Thorndike and Irving Lorge, *The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944).
5. Falk S. Johnson, "New Rules for 'E-El' Spelling," *English Journal*, XLIX, No. 5 (May 1960).
6. D. H. Russell, "A Second Study of the Characteristics of Good and Poor Spellers," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 46 (March 1955), pp. 129-141.
7. Thomas D. Horn, "Research in Spelling," *Children's Writing: Research in Composition and Related Skills* (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1960-1961).
8. Russell, *op. cit.*
9. Grace Fernald, *Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1943).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The following offer extensive bibliographies, comments and summaries on various phases of composition.

1. BRADDOCK, RICHARD, LLOYD-JONES, RICHARD, and SCHOER, LOWELL, *Research in Written Composition*. Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.
2. BURROWS, ALVINA T. (Editor) *Children's Writing: Research in Composition and Related Skills*, Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1960-1961.
3. SHANE, HAROLD G. and MULRY, JUNE GRANT, *Improving Language Arts Instruction through Research*, Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1963.

Composition is probably the most generally dissatisfying area in English teaching. The assignments frustrate the students; the results of the assignments frustrate their teachers. Educational literature is full of articles that report teachers' frustration and their attempts, successful and otherwise, to deal with it. What makes the whole situation particularly serious is that the bulk of a teacher's out-of-class time is spent in dealing with compositions.

How much time should a teacher spend reading and reacting to a composition? Suppose that this time is a function of the length of the composition, a logical supposition. Then, how much time should a teacher spend reading and reacting to a composition one hundred words long? Thirty seconds? Two minutes? Five minutes? Longer? Assuming that five minutes is not unreasonable, how long will it take to read a set of compositions from a class of thirty students? Then how long will it take to read the compositions of five such classes?

Assuming it takes about twelve hours to read very short compositions from the students, and assuming further that most of this grading is done outside school hours, when will the teacher find time to make tests and score them? Where will the time for lesson planning come from (including those lessons leading to the writing of other compositions)? Having vouchsafed answers to these questions, there is another facing the teacher that is even more pointed: how valuable is a composition only one hundred words long?

Although the intended ring of the foregoing is ironic, the irony derives from the situation that faces the English teacher in the work-a-day world. J. Nicholas Hook, in a study of teachers of the winners and runners-up of the National Council of Teachers of English achievement awards, found that the teachers (of classes smaller than thirty) spent seven to nine hours weekly reading compositions and that, in addition to their five classes, they spent two hours a day working in cocurricular activities.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that, because of this situation, the teacher had better know what he is about in dealing with instruction in composition, but it is equally clear that too many teachers do not. One reason for this sorry state of affairs is that composition teaching has been dominated by a number of unexamined traditions, the force of whose influence has weakened the whole structure of the curriculum apparatus. Let us examine some of these traditions, which connect variously with limiting the field, purposes, objectives, procedures, and theory.

#### The Limited Viewpoint

A written composition exists only as an end product of the composing process. Yet, typically, teachers have restricted their thinking about the teaching of writing to the final composition products, and little attention has been given to the process of composing.

Students are asked to write on a narrow range of topics suggested by the teacher; the due date is set. Compositions are turned in. The teacher attends only to the composition products. For example, there are no discussions about *how* professional writers write, only about *what* they have written. There is no opportunity for introspection by the students, no examination of what happens to him while he is engaged in the composing process, no consideration of the personal rewards that writing brings, and no recognition of writing and composing as a way of perceiving, of coming to know.

In short, the attention of both student and teacher has traditionally been riveted to the finished piece of work, which is viewed as an artifact without any connection to the personality that produced it.

Ordinarily, the topics the students write about spring from the intuitions of the teacher. If he has strong intuitions, then the topics and the compositions that follow from them may be interesting. However, since year after year a student's writing experience is controlled by his teachers' ideas for topics, his whole curriculum experience is almost certain to be unproductive. Such topics as "What I Did Last Summer" and "My Goals in Life" may be interesting and challenging *once*. But too many students must face such writing assignments year in and year out.

Usually, after reading a number of uninspired compositions, a teacher discards the obviously poor topics from his repertoire, and over the years he adds a few "good" ideas. But there is rarely, if ever, long-range planning of a sequential composition curriculum. The student is left to his own devices in the matter of any sequential development of his writing skill.

**Purpose of Teaching Composition**

Why do we teach composition? Since purposes condition practices, this has been a key question in the development of composition curricula. The answer that has traditionally been put forward is that the "life needs" of the student demand a high degree of writing skill. These life needs presumably are of three different kinds:

1. Some of the students may become professional writers. There are thought to be many vocational opportunities for those skilled at writing.
2. Students who plan to attend college have an obvious need to learn to write well.
3. Normal daily social intercourse demands writing as an essential communications skill.

The limited number of vocational opportunities for professional writers refutes the first point. The Department of Commerce, in its figures for the experienced labor force 1960, has listed the number of authors, editors, and reporters (considered in one group) as 132,000. Listed in the same source are public relations men and publicity writers: 31,000. Taken together, these figures approximate half the total of plumbers and pipefitters. Of the total labor force 14 years of age and over, the 163,000 professional writers account for a little more than two-tenths of 1 percent. Of the total population, 14 years and over, professional writers represent a bit more than one-tenth of 1 percent.<sup>2</sup> Thus the picture seems bleak for aspiring professional writers.

It is bleaker yet for teachers whose motivation is to turn out writers. If a teacher has a load of five classes per year, and his average class size is thirty, after ten years of teaching, he can expect to have taught 1.5 future professional writers. Of course, members of professions are routinely called upon to do writing. The writing of these adults, however, will be of a highly specialized character, and the value of their output will tend to be determined by the character of their training and experience at least as much as, by their skill in belles-lettres. Much of the writing done by most professional persons consists of exposition and argument and is highly utilitarian in intent. So, despite the fact that professional writing requirements do often exist on an occupational basis, it seems safe to dismiss this life need as a central purpose in determining course content.

What are the needs of the college-bound student? Is he typical in the English course? The imminent danger faced by any teacher, and especially the English teacher, in responding to these questions, is basing the response on the needs that he himself perceives in his own experiences. Everyone tends to think of himself as rather average. But the teacher is not representative, in any way, of the average person; nor is the English teacher the average teacher. As a holder of a baccalaureate, the teacher (of English or not) has placed himself in an extremely atypical position with respect to the general population.

If we examine the statistics on education, we find that one-third of the population that begins school drops out before completing high school. Only about one-third of the pupils who are in school in the fifth grade will even enter college. Of those who begin college, less than 50 percent will complete their first degrees. Only about 8 percent of the general population holds academic degrees.<sup>3</sup> In short, it is true for only a small proportion of the population that students must learn to write in order to go to college.

If it were reasonable to assume that only the college-bound population has life needs that are oriented to composition skills, we could discount life needs as a purpose for instruction in composition for two-thirds of the students.

But this would not be entirely realistic: everyone does some writing, whether it is a business letter, social correspondence, or a letter to the editor. There are also tax forms, business forms, and employment applications, and even notes to milkmen. But in terms of the secondary school composition program, such a catalog of life needs is certainly not imposing. Most students are amply equipped to meet them (possibly excepting business letter forms) by the time they have finished the elementary grades.

Aside from the college-bound, by what rationale do we devote so much of our instruction to composition? If the assumptions about the relative irrelevance of composition skills in terms of life needs for most students do make any sense, then instruction in composition must be predicated on other considerations.

In the traditional use of the term "life needs," there has been an assumption that life is what begins when schooling has ended; yet this is a rather narrow interpretation of life. For most of us, the decade between the ages of six and sixteen is a period in which school is the central feature of our experience. Metaphorically, school is life during these years.

School attendance is very nearly universal in our culture. Within the educational institution—and especially in the English class—the writing of compositions is a highly valued activity. The success of a person's integration into the patterns of the educational institution is in no small measure dependent upon his writing proficiency. A recognition of these conditions results in the following formulation of purpose with respect to teaching writing beyond mere functional proficiency: We teach this kind of writing in our schools because *students must do this kind of writing in our schools*. True enough, the position is somewhat embarrassingly circular. But it states the case.

At the risk of being accused of developing a position based on truisms, let us go on to consider the nature of the objectives of the secondary school composition program. In light of the statement of purpose, the objectives can be readily formulated: to write in such a way as to insure the most effective integration with the educational institution possible; to learn how to do such writing as efficiently as possible. In this formulation "efficiently" is taken to mean rapidly and with as few errors as possible.

It is likely that many students have never entertained these objectives

expressed in just these terms. But in hypothetical discussions, hypothetical students behave hypothetically.

Having established the terminal objectives of the instruction, it is necessary to determine the nature of the medial objectives upon which the attainment of those terminal objectives is contingent. This determination will rest upon a description of the kinds of writing that will be necessary for success in school, "success" here being the equivalent of effective integration. This description can be made only after an empirical survey of the kinds of writing that a person will be likely to do in secondary school and beyond.

For the purpose of this discussion, it is fair to assume that most students, by the time they enter secondary school, will have mastered, or at least have little difficulty with, the kind of writing that characterizes one- or two-sentence responses on tests as well as the skills needed in listing. If this is not the case, the immediate objective is to attain the relevant proficiencies, especially since, as noted earlier, such skills are likewise relevant for integration with the general culture after schooling has ceased. What kinds of writing are required beyond this writing, which is of a rather limited degree of sophistication?

A survey of the writing required in school reveals that a number of different kinds are needed. But the kind that is encountered most frequently and in most places is the kind that is intended to communicate information. In secondary schools—in science courses, social studies courses, and English courses, where the occasions for writing are the most frequent—the information-oriented composition is the type most frequently used. In colleges, the information-oriented composition is virtually the only kind that is encountered. The term "information" as it is used here includes the opinions of the writer when such opinions are presented as information, as, for example, in his dealing with such topics as "What I think about \_\_\_\_\_." Information-oriented papers will include such forms as have been traditionally characterized as exposition, argument, and description. The information-oriented classification also includes most business correspondence.

There are also some other forms to be found, especially in English classes: narrative, drama, poetry, and various other personalistic forms, and even occasional odd forms, such as parodies and jokes. However, the most extensively and frequently encountered kind of writing in our schools and universities is by all odds the rather utilitarian composition intended to communicate information. Therefore, in any listing of medial objectives of the composition curriculum, proficiency in the information-oriented, utilitarian forms must be assigned priority.

The reason for the occurrence of the other forms in the English classes relates to the value system peculiar to English studies in that literature is considered of even greater value than writing in English.<sup>4</sup> Persons working in English spend most of their time on works of literature. If the reading is not itself literary art, then it involves the criticism of literary art. Since

literary art is thus highly valued, it follows that some composition work will be with forms that are aesthetically designed—belletristic—as opposed to those of utilitarian design. Of course, the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive from the viewpoint of the audience or the writer, but, in general, they are differentiated by the central purpose of communication, as well as other conditions.

The dichotomy belletristic/utilitarian calls to mind another of the traditional notions in composition instruction, that there are two kinds of writing, "creative" writing and the other kind. The term "creative" applied to the class of compositions that includes drama, poetry, and the like is unfortunate because it somehow implies that the other kind of writing does not involve a creative process. Although it may not be as aesthetically rewarding for most readers to read a critical analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet as it is to read the sonnets themselves, it is absurd to assume that the critic was not engaged in a creative process in writing his criticism.

### Teaching Procedures

Another set of questionable traditions in the teaching of composition has to do with both theory and intuition as they have governed teaching procedures. For example, every teacher notices mechanical errors in punctuation and capitalization when reading a set of compositions and wants to do something about it. Relying on his intuition, he may reach for the trusty grammar book and plan a series of lessons and drills in the areas of need that the mechanical errors indicate. Yet, innumerable studies have shown that classroom drills do not eliminate error in compositions.<sup>5</sup> The evidence is disheartening. Supplementary to published evidence is the experience of teachers who, after painstaking work through lessons and units on mechanics intended to correct flaws in composition, and after finding what appears to be mastery of principles in grammar book exercises, encounter the same old flaws marring subsequent compositions. Such is the folklore of the faculty room.

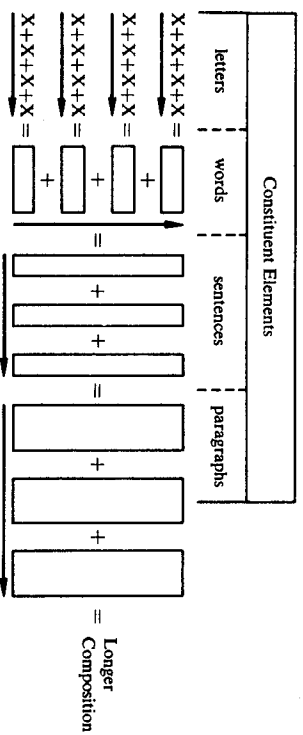
The folklore may be partly caused by reliance on impression rather than systematic enumeration and classification of errors. For example, one of the more frequently reported errors, the sentence fragment, is actually relatively infrequent in secondary school compositions (when compared to well-formed sentences) and seems to disappear as students mature.<sup>6</sup>

There does indeed seem to be undoubtedly serious question as to the efficacy of direct instruction in usage of all kinds—including punctuation, spelling, and pronoun case, among other areas. Thus, the teacher's intuitive reaction to the detection of mechanical errors—that of grammar book drill—usually does not achieve its goal, the elimination of the errors from compositions.

Another tradition that governs much of school practice is the assumption

that a composition can be best described by the model in Figure 22.1. The model suggests that compositions result from combining elements that are hierarchical in character. Letters are linked together in strings to produce words; words, to produce sentences; sentences, to produce paragraphs; and paragraphs, to produce longer compositions.

Acting on the basis of this conception, a teacher may read a set of papers and notice that some papers contain run-on sentences or sentence fragments. Despite the fact that the same papers contain many more well-formed sentences, the teacher may accept the few errors as evidence that the students "cannot write sentences." All work with superordinate structures in the



Arrows represent the strings taken as wholes. Each arrow is the equivalent of one element in the successive expression in the equation.

FIGURE 22.1

hierarchy is then delayed while the class is taught a number of lessons dealing with "sentence sense."

A similar approach is made when the teacher finds longer compositions containing paragraphs that are somehow "inadequate" in his terms. Perhaps, for example, some paragraphs may lack "topic sentences." Practice in writing paragraphs that are "built around topic sentences" ensues, and no composition longer than a single paragraph is written until the single paragraph is "mastered."

A movement downward through the hierarchy shows the weakness of this theoretical thinking. Should the teacher move below the sentence level, he might delay consideration of the sentence until no misspellings of words are encountered in his students' writing. Or if he notices badly made letters, he may delay work with spelling until letter forms are mastered. (This problem, if uncorrected in lower grades, often persists in high school students.)

It is enlightening to observe the processes employed by elementary school teachers in their work with children who are just beginning to write. Instruc-

tion in letter formation is scheduled in a sequence that is determined by the presence of analogous elements in the shapes of the various letters, the frequency of use of the letters in words, and the relationships of the words in the writing curriculum to those in the reading and speaking vocabularies of the children. Ordinarily, when the child has learned a few letters, he is taught to form words that contain only those letters. Meanwhile, he adds to his letter stock. When he has learned enough appropriate words, he is taught to write sentences. Frequently, a child can write sentences before he has learned to form all the letters in our alphabet.

This process suggests a model that is a better description of the structural elements within a composition and suggests better inferences about the generating process.

The process can be explained in this way: A person writing a particular letter is not simply producing an element of a word; rather, he produces a part of a word, a sentence, a paragraph, and a longer composition—all of these at once. This implies that the formation of even a single letter strongly

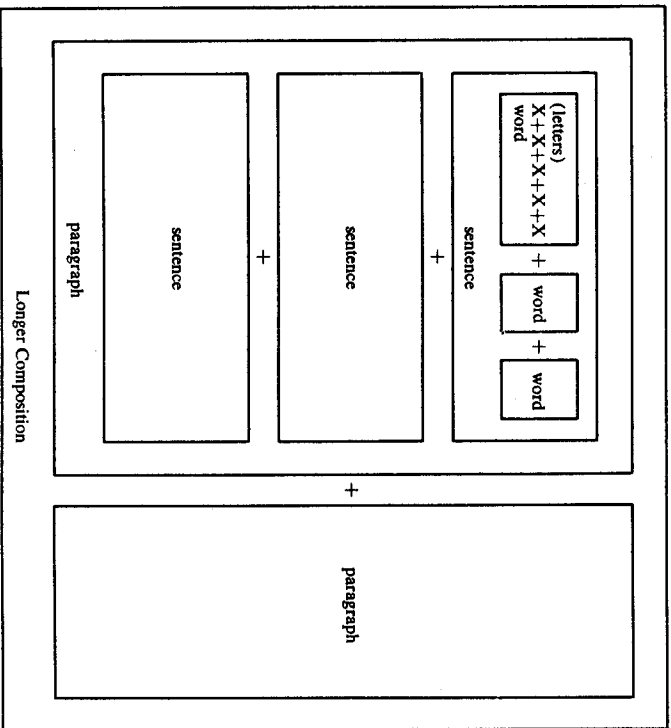


FIGURE 22.2

suggests a preliminary formulation of the whole composition as a gestalt towards which the successive production of strings of words, sentences, paragraphs, and so forth, moves.

The process hypothesis that has been thus derived from the model contains a number of interesting suggestions. Should a student exhibit such patterns as forming letters badly, misspelling words, or punctuating sentences inappropriately, his problem is not primarily one of inadequate gestalt of the component part, but rather of an inadequately developed gestalt of the complete composition.\* It follows, then, that the instructional work in composition is best developed with the longer composition units as opposed to working toward a mastery of their smaller subordinate components.<sup>8</sup>

The accident of the graphemic conventions of English can lead to the perceptions of composition writing in terms of a model of structures strung together. It is well to note, in passing, a more general limitation imposed on both the writer and his readers as a result of the graphemic system. Ordinarily, reading and writing are done from left to right in a linear way. Therefore, any ideas communicated must be expressed or perceived one at a time from left to right. Very often, however, it is the intent of the writer to express the sensations that he is aware of simultaneously: the feel, scent, and appearance of a rose, for example. Even by introducing such words as "simultaneously" into the context of his writing, he is unable to communicate his experiences in the way they happened. To an extent, the limitations of our normal graphemic conventions explain the departures from these conventions made by such authors as E. E. Cummings and the speculations on the graphemic system of Chinese by such critics as Ezra Pound.<sup>9</sup>

Another difficulty caused by the left-to-right generation is with the matter of spelling. The writer in generating a string of words may be temporarily or totally blocked by being unable to produce a word whose spelling he does not know.

### The Rhetorical Tradition

Two traditions of rhetoric have significantly influenced composition teaching practices. The first is the familiar "class" concept, which holds that there are four types of composition: narration, description, exposition, and argumentation.

According to this view many pieces of writing may be characterized as

\* In the description made by Loban of children's speech<sup>7</sup> the occurrence of mazes (structures in which the speaker halts his forward movement, goes backward to change what he has said, moves forward, goes back again, and so forth) strongly suggests an editing process. This in turn suggests a preliminary formulation of broad verbal patterns toward which the speaker works. This seems to support the view of the structure of composition expressed in this chapter.

one of these four types. Some compositions are predominantly one type but contain elements of any or all of the three others.

Acting on the basis of this concept—or what is more likely, using a textbook designed along lines suggested by it—the teacher limits class consideration only to those kinds of compositions that fit it. Although many pieces of literature can be included among these four types, a great many cannot because the concept lacks generality.

Many works of literature that display great power are, for various reasons, difficult, if not impossible, to classify into any of the categories named in this fourfold scheme. Is Lincoln's Gettysburg Address essentially argument, exposition, or description? Is the "Parable of the Sower" (Luke 8:5-8) a narrative, description, exposition, or argument? What is the essential nature of any allegory? Is the *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch narrative, descriptive, or expository? How does one classify any biographical or historical work? Is Harvey's discussion of the circulation of blood mainly descriptive, expository, or an argument in opposition to Galen's view?

Many contemporary authors have exploited such techniques as stream-of-consciousness and surrealism. There is no place for these in the fourfold classification. Beyond such imaginative prose, many examples of drama and poetry do not yield to classification.

If the teacher limits his work to the compass of this theory, he rejects much that is valuable from curricular consideration.

The second rhetorical view that has exerted considerable influence is the concept that a piece of writing must display the three principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis. Many teachers have used this concept as a basis for criticizing and evaluating composition work.

The unity principle indicates that all the elements of a composition must contribute to the central idea or display a consistency of viewpoint and that this singleness of effect must be maintained by a consistent style. The composition is considered to have coherence if all its elements have a logical connection or congruity arising from a common central relationship. Emphasis is the appropriate prominence given to one or more of the elements contained in the piece.

Teachers who use this concept in their work sometimes make faulty evaluations because of the internal inconsistencies in the formulation.

Although it may be possible to conceive of a work that is coherent but not unified, a unified work could not be incoherent. Yet this rhetorical scheme regards unity and coherence as conceptually parallel. Further, should elements of a work exhibit emphasis, such emphasis need not pose a threat to coherence but might readily threaten the unity of the work.

Let us consider two examples of the dream genre of writing in terms of this theory. The first will be hypothetical; the second, real.

Many teachers encounter from time to time a composition whose final paragraph reads: "And then I woke up." Their ultimate evaluation, whether or

not this is conveyed to the writer, is that the piece is of low merit. Triteness aside, the evaluation is made on the basis of the unity, coherence, and emphasis theory.

The final paragraph is certainly emphatic. Without it, the whole composition, in terms of the writer's intent, is incoherent. The difficulty seems to be that in introducing "And then I woke up," the writer violates the principle of unity. By introducing the note of a dream experience, he shifts from developing one narrative to developing two, possibly, and the original unity as perceived by the reader is spoiled. Should the writer have "played fair" with his reader and "gone to sleep" before he began his inner narrative, the narrative frame would still be present. Thus, although if the "I went to sleep" device is used and emphasis shifts, the coherence is unaffected, but the disunity still exists because the dual nature of the narrative is maintained, perhaps even intensified. The composition is still devalued because of the violation of the principle of unity.

In the same way, our second example, a real composition—*Pilgrim's Progress*—suffers from a lack of unity because the writer places one narrative within another, a journey within a dream. In these terms we must reexamine much of our literature that involves the device of the narrative frame. Does *The Ancient Mariner* lack unity? Does the medieval poem *The Pearl*? *The Arabian Nights*? *The Decameron*? If these works do indeed lack unity, are they the worse for it?

Beyond these examples, some contemporary practices seem to contravene these principles. For instance, the "slice-of-life" genre often appears to avoid the emphatic image or statement. Surrealism demands incoherence. Stream-of-consciousness lacks unity. Yet there are examples in all these genres that exhibit artistic integrity and a high degree of aesthetic value.

Should we apply this second rhetorical principle to the first that states that argumentation is one of the four types of composition and ask about where the emphasis is placed in a well-made argument, on the premises or on the conclusion, we will have succeeded in embarrassing both points of view.

Both rhetorical principles suffer from a graver flaw than any suggested up to this point because their analyses and descriptions relate only to the finished composition. As such, they are more properly guides to reading compositions than to writing them. Granted, the writer must know the characteristics (criticism statements, if you will) of a good composition in order to write one, but knowing what those characteristics are is in no way the equivalent of knowing the process that generates them. At best, the information furnished by concepts such as those discussed here is only peripherally helpful to a writer when he is engaged in the actual process of composing.

All the foregoing traditions have been influential in general composition curricula in the past. Partly because of their influence, composition teaching has been, in the main, generally unsatisfactory.

The traditions do not represent a unified point of view at all. They do not



support one another in any organic way and, as shown, may work against one another. Experimental research in composition also presents a patchwork picture containing many holes and many overworked areas. Nor is intuition a reliable guide for long-range planning of instruction.

As a result, composition instruction must proceed on the basis of a theory that encompasses the composing process as well as the composition products in a unified field. In addition to a general theory of composition itself, the teacher will need a theory of composition teaching. Theories of both kinds are examined in the next chapters.

## NOTES

1. J. Nicholas Hook, "Characteristics of Award Winning High Schools," *English Journal* 1 (January 1961), pp. 9-15.
2. Based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 86th Edition 1965, (Washington, D. C., 1965).
3. *Ibid.*
4. For example, in the report of the Commission on English, *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), about 75 percent of the paper discusses literature and literary criticism.
5. Ingrid M. Strom, "Research in Grammar and Usage and Its Implications for Teaching Writing," *Bulletin of the School of Education of Indiana University*, XXXVI, 5 (September 1960).
6. Kenny, Anna W., "Instruction in Remedial English: A Suggested Program Based on the Analysis of Certain English-Usage Difficulties Among Students in Chicago Public High Schools and Colleges." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1945.
7. In Walter D. Loban's description of children's speech in the monograph "The Language of Elementary School Children" (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English NCTE, 1963).
8. Francis G. Gilchrist, "The Nature of Organic Wholeness," *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, 12 (September 1916) pp. 44-45.
9. Ezra Pound, *Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1954), pp. 292-293.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For some alternative views in teaching composition:

1. FOWLER, MARY ELIZABETH. *Teaching Language Composition and Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965.
2. GORDON, EDWARD J., ed. *Writing and Literature in the Secondary School*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965.
3. MOFFETT, JAMES. *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13; A Handbook for Teachers*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1968.
4. ROBERTS, HOLLAND DE WITTE, ed. *English for Social Living*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1943.

5. SAUER, EDWIN. *English in the Secondary School*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961.
6. SHERER, PAULINE and LUEBKE, NEAL. *Writing Creatively, Lessons for a High School Class*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1962.
7. STRUNK, WILLIAM JR. *The Elements of Style*, rev. by E. B. White. New York: Macmillan, 1959.



What can a composition teacher base his work on? Although he can get some help from educational literature, he will not find it as helpful as he may hope. Many researchers have worked over such areas as the teaching of spelling and the mechanics of punctuation, capitalization, and the like, and the literature provides many suggestions and implications for teaching them. But these areas are comparatively trivial when they are viewed against the whole tapestry of what a writer must do and what a teacher can do to help him learn to write. As a teacher gains experience, he will discover many assignments that work well for him and a number that do not work at all. In his beginning years at teaching, he has only intuition to guide him. If his intuitions are good, he is in luck.

The best plan is for the teacher to develop or adopt a general theory of composition based on his own writing experiences, his observation of his classes, work, and the reading that he does in literature, criticism, and in the education journals. A composition theory will give direction to his work by helping him to order lessons and units, to generate lessons, and to avoid pitfalls. In addition to a theory on how writing is done, he must have a theory of how writing is *taught*, what the techniques and steps are that help a student to learn to write.

Let us first consider developing a theory of composition. (Perhaps a more rigorous statement would be "a composition hypothesis.") At the outset, it seems fair to assume that not all persons write in the same way. Obviously, compositions as widely different as a dissertation about chemical compounds and a love sonnet are both produced by writers. Any theory must account for composition products as well as composing processes. Thus, it must have two parts, one dealing with the process and the other with the product.

#### Elements of the Writing Process

Most of us, when we write, bring our writing under conscious control—or, at least, we think we do. We usually have a clear purpose in writing, and, generally, the clearer that purpose is, the greater the control we have over the writing. Moreover, we usually have a particular audience in mind. A writer with any sophistication at all tries to vary his message to suit his purpose with his audience. For example, a lawyer writes in one way when addressing a justice, in another way when addressing a letter to his client's legal opponent, and in yet another way when writing to his sweetheart. No one can raise a question about the generality of these elements in a writing situation *where communication is the intent of the writer*. These basic elements of the writing process can be described by a communications model:

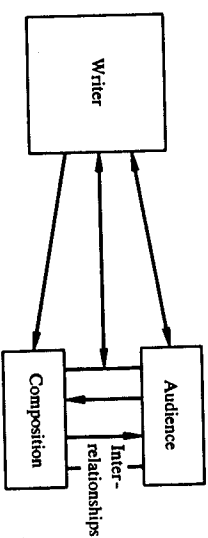


FIGURE 23.1

This model indicates that the writer analyzes his audience, thinks about the effects that alternate kinds of compositions might have on it, decides on the most appropriate composition in terms of the desired effect, and finally writes the composition. Thus, his audience influences him, and the presumed interrelationships between the audience and his composition influence him as well.

There is another, more subtle dimension involved in purposive writing. The writer may see himself included with the other elements in the model in some "situation." For example, a lawyer who writes letters on behalf of a client hoping that his letters will avoid litigation is definitely involved in the situation as he sees it. On the other hand, many writers will not see themselves included in a situation involving their audience and their compositions; biographers, historians, and advertising writers are examples. The model must be expanded to include the new element:

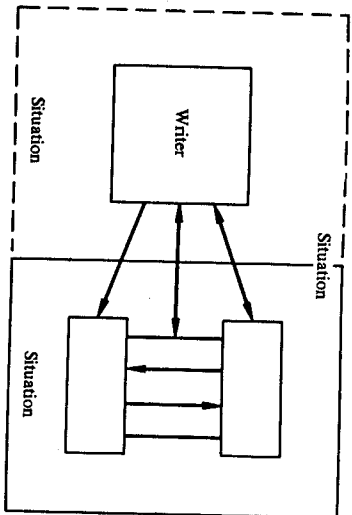


FIGURE 23.2

The extension of the situation block by *dotted lines* so as to include the author indicates that sometimes he may include himself in the situation but at other times he may not.

What specific reactions does he anticipate from his audience? Whenever he writes, he wants his reader to read his work and react to it internally, perhaps understand it, perhaps have some passion aroused, but to have some internal reaction. This is called the primary effect. He may also want his audience to take some direct action as a result of reading and reacting internally—answering a letter, voting Republican, or buying a product. This is called the secondary effect and is not always part of a writer's purpose.

Whether a writer wants his composition message to result in both effects or simply the primary one, something made him decide on writing in the first place—he had an impulse to write. This impulse may have arisen as a result of his perception of the situation, regardless of whether he saw himself involved in it. It may have arisen from some mysterious inner prompting or from a need to show some new accomplishment (as when a student “spontaneously” produces a number of compositions of a new type he has learned), or it may arise in response to something in the broader environment (even broader than the situation). Or the impulse may stem from all these elements working in concert.

How can the writer produce his composition message? Suppose he decides that the most effective composition will be a business letter in one case and a sonnet in another. He can write either one, only because he knows what the forms generally are. He knows that a business letter contains a heading, an inside address, salutation, and so on, and that a sonnet is fourteen lines of rhymed iambic pentameter. These forms are in his writing repertoire as general types of composition. Any specific composition of a particular type is

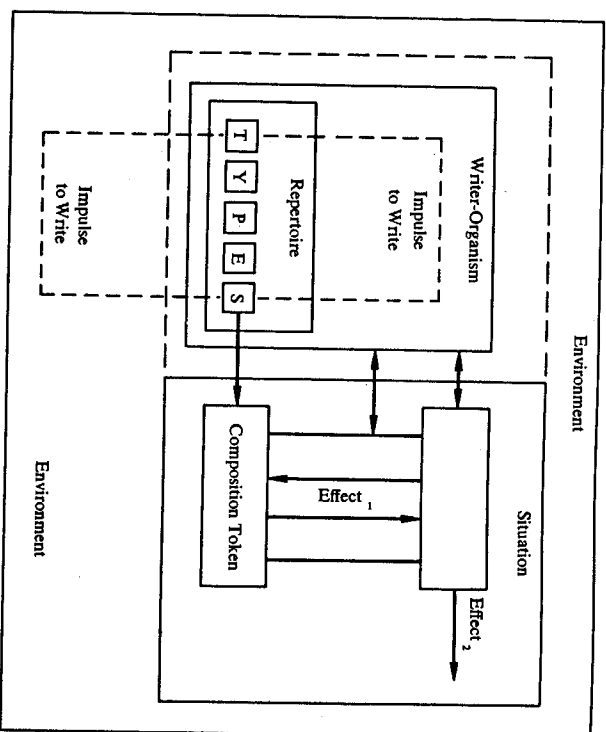


FIGURE 23.3

called a “token” of that type. The letter or sonnet he finally writes will thus be a token of that general type.

Let us expand the model so as to include all the new elements: primary and secondary effects; impulses to write; the repertoire; the types included in it; and the broader environment.

Let us analyze the model now somewhat more carefully. The arrow leading to the composition token moves from a type in the repertoire. This indicates that any token is limited to whatever general types the writer has in his repertoire. How did the types get into the repertoire? Two ways: either he learned them, whether through direct instruction or indirectly, or he invented a type (as Adelaide Crapsey invented the cinquain, basing it on other experiences).

The repertoire contains types other than conventional composition forms. For example, words and syntactic structures are also included. Writers can learn these, or they can invent them. Shakespeare, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ogen Nash, and Walter Winchell all have invented words, as have many others. Gertrude Stein and E. E. Cummings, among others, have invented

structures, syntactic and otherwise. (Perhaps these "inventions" are really discoveries or realizations of language potentials.)

The double-headed arrows entering the writer indicate that his perceptions influence him.

The writer now is seen as an organism containing a repertoire and other things, including impulses—an organism in contrast with an environment.

Many writers find their environment extremely important to their productivity. Some, for example, must have background music in order to work, whereas others need absolute quiet. Some can write only at night; others work best in the morning.

Tolstoy has written:

I always write in the morning. I was pleased to hear lately that Rousseau too, after he got up in the morning, went for a short walk and sat down to work. In the morning one's head is particularly fresh. The best thoughts most often come in the morning after waking, while still in bed or during the walk. Many writers work at night. Dostoevsky always wrote at night.<sup>1</sup>

Their physical condition is highly important to some writers. Some must be well-rested, alert, or newly awake for writing, whereas others work best at the end of the day with their senses a bit dulled. Some need artificial stimulants such as coffee or tobacco. Some need to be depressed as with alcohol. T. S. Eliot has written:

I know, for instance, that some forms of ill health, debility or anaemia, may (if other circumstances are favorable) reproduce an efflux of poetry in a way approaching the condition of automatic writing—though, in contrast to the claims made for the latter, the material has obviously been incubating within a poet and cannot be suspected of being a present from a friendly or impertinent demon.<sup>2</sup>

This influence of environment or physical condition on writing is a dominant consideration for many writers. This observation introduces a new element into the composing theory: compulsion in writing. There are many elements that work to compel a writer, some of which he may not be aware of. There is abundant evidence that, with some writers, much of their work is entirely compulsive. The above quotations from Tolstoy and Eliot imply compulsion. Let us examine some of the other evidence for compulsion in writing.

The character of the language that the writer must use and the character of the culture in which both the writer and his language exist exert powerful compelling pressure on him, even though he may be unaware of the nature and extent of these influences. Benjamin Lee Whorf has indicated the power of language in limiting thought itself and thus compelling certain aspects of writing:

And yet the problem of thought and thinking in the native community is not purely and simply a psychological problem. It is quite largely cultural. It is moreover largely a matter of one especially cohesive aggregate of cultural phenomena that we call a language. We are thus able to distinguish thinking as the function which is to a large extent linguistic.<sup>3</sup>

Many critics, particularly of the school of Myth Criticism, have opined the existence of a "collective unconscious" (the idea deriving from the writing of C. G. Jung<sup>4</sup>) as a compulsive cultural force in composition. In particular, Northrop Frye has written:

The fact that revision is possible, and that the poet makes changes not because he likes them better but because they are better, means that poems, like poets, are born and not made. The poet's task is to deliver the poem in as uninjured a state as possible, and if a poem is alive, it is equally anxious to be rid of him, and screams to be cut loose from his private memories, and all the other navel strings and feeding tubes of his ego.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Conrad testified to the power that the English language exerted over him:

The truth of the matter is that my faculty to write in English is as natural as any other aptitude with which I was born. I have a strange and overpowering feeling that it had always been an inherent part of myself. English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption—well, yes, there was an adoption; but it was I who was adopted by the genius of language, which directly I came out of the stammering stage made me its own so completely that its very idioms I truly believe had a direct action on my temperament and fashioned my still plastic character.

It was a very intimate action, and for that very reason it is too mysterious to explain. The task would be as impossible as trying to explain love at first sight. There was something in this conjunction of exulting, almost physical recognition, the same sort of emotional surrender and the same pride of possession, all united in the wonder of a great discovery; but there was on it none of that shadow of dreadful doubt that falls on the very flame of our perishable passions. One knew very well that this was forever.<sup>6</sup>

When a culture develops a written language, the writing conventions themselves add compulsive elements to the composing process, and the very act of writing introduces compulsive potentials. Writing has been seen as deriving from the spoken language. On a historical basis, in terms of the experience of a linguistic community as a whole, this is undeniably the case. However, this general view of the relationship of writing to speech tends to obscure certain phenomena involving individuals' learning and use of writing.

Notice of these phenomena can lead to valuable insights into the nature of all writing.

Many persons deaf from birth have never heard or spoken any language. Yet these persons learn writing and employ it appropriately. This observation indicates that writing, when viewed in a synchronic way, is not necessarily secondary to speech.

Some persons stricken with aphasia display the following pattern: Although unable to express themselves in speech, they are able to do so in writing.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon indicates that, within some individuals, writing is dissociated from speech; metaphorically, the written language assumes a life of its own.

The failure of the written language to correspond to the spoken language has often been noted. Even as many conventions of speech are inadequately expressed in writing, many writing conventions are not reflected in speech. The colon, for example, which inevitably predicts an explanatory or specifying discourse of some kind, is a feature of English writing. Speech, however, lacks such an unambiguous, particularizing counterpart, since superfixes in speech that signal following explanatory comments also signal other things. Similarly, paragraphs are a feature of writing only, as are capital letters. E. E. Cummings was influenced by the extra emphasis suggested by the capital letter, and he varied his typography accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

In some cases the written language has asserted a primacy over the spoken. People sometimes mispronounce words because of the way they are spelled.<sup>9</sup> In many ways writing manifests a life of its own. A peculiar occurrence, associated with various, somewhat exotic states indicates how powerful this "life" can be. There are many reports of *automatic writing* in various literatures.<sup>10</sup> Without doubt, some of the instances of this phenomenon are fraudulent.<sup>11</sup> But automatic writing has been reliably associated with forms of hysteria<sup>12</sup> and with induced hypnotic states.<sup>13</sup> The writer of automatic writing often seems oblivious to any of the writing content.<sup>14</sup> This phenomenon strongly indicates that some writing may be almost entirely compulsive in character.

Many professional writers have reported influences on themselves that are interpretable as elements in their experience that have compelled writing.

A. E. Housman has written:

Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon—beer is a sedative to the brain, and my afternoons are the least intellectual portion of my life—I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague notion of the poem which they were destined to form a

part of. Then there would usually be a lull of an hour or so, then perhaps the spring would bubble up again, I say bubble up, because, so far as I could make out, the source of the suggestions thus proffered to the brain was an abyss which I have had occasion to mention, the pit of the stomach. When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day. Sometimes it was, if I took my walks in a receptive and expectant frame of mind; but sometimes the poem had to be taken in hand and completed by the brain, which was apt to be a matter of trouble and anxiety, involving trial and disappointment, and sometimes ending in failure. I happen to remember distinctly the genesis of the piece which stands last in my first volume. Two of the stanzas, I do not say which, came into my head, just as they are printed, while I was crossing the corner of Hampstead Heath between the Spaniard's Inn and the Footpath to Temple Fortune. A third stanza came with a little coaxing after tea. One more was needed, but it did not come: I had to turn to and compose it myself, and that was a laborious business. I wrote it thirteen times and it was more than a twelvemonth before I got it right.<sup>15</sup>

Goethe has described a similar experience:

At other times it has been totally different with my poems. They have been preceded by no impressions or forebodings but have come suddenly upon me, and have insisted on being composed immediately, so that I have felt an instinctive and dreamy impulse to write them down on the spot. In such a somnambulistic condition, it has often happened that I have had a sheet of paper lying before me all on one side, and I have not discovered it till all has been written, or I have found no room to write any more. I have possessed many such sheets written crossways, but they have been lost one after another, and I regret that I can no longer show any proofs of such poetic abstraction.<sup>16</sup>

William Blake has written:

I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme, similar to Homer's *Iliad* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the Persons & Machinery entirely new to the Inhabitants of Earth (some of the persons Excepted). I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against My Will; the Time it has taken in writing was thus render'd Non-Existent, & an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of long Life, all produced without Labour or Study.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, some writing is wholly or in part the result of impulses that motivate a compulsive reaction from the writer.

Many persons keep diaries without any conscious intent that these be seen by eyes other than theirs. This practice seems open to interpretation as compulsive writing, although in some cases an intent of private historical record-

London  
1800  
written  
by  
the  
author  
of  
this  
book

ing may be hypothesized. Most of us know writers of letters who seem to do their writing compulsively. Perhaps such characterization is not simply in the nature of hyperbole. Certainly there is doubt as to whether letters of the *billet-doux* genre are executed compulsively or purposefully. Certain walls of public places bear mute testimony to the likelihood of a compulsion for writing.

Teachers have long been aware of the potential power of introducing elements that project compulsive writing into composition situations. The use of reactionnaires reflects this awareness. When a teacher plays music, or shows dramatic pictures, or the like, and asks the class to write about how they feel or what they think about these experiences, he encourages writing that is at least partially compulsive in character.

Because of a good part of the composing process and some composition products may be described as compulsive, the theoretic model must be again expanded to include these elements as part of the process theory. Notice that the arrow labeled "compulsive writing" arises from the repertoire: A person writes only what he is capable of, even if he is wholly or partially unaware of his capacity.

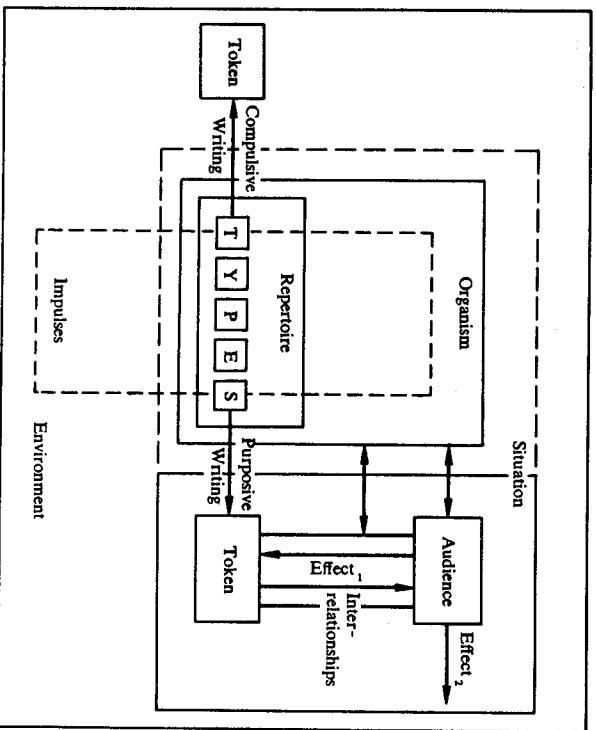


FIGURE 23.4

Let us summarize the elements of the composing process as it has been analyzed to this point:

The writer experiences an impulse to write, which may originate within his organism or may enter his experience from his environment. He may write in a compulsive way, or he may have his writing under conscious control. However, all of his writing is limited by the conventions of the language he uses and by his repertoire of linguistic and formal types. Consciously controlled writing is directed by the writer's purpose and his analysis of his audience. The composition product that results from the process is a unique token of some type that has been internalized as part of the writer's repertoire. The token becomes a real element in the communications situation.

#### The End Product

Thus, we arrive at the token, the end product of the composition process. Let us consider composition products in terms of a model. The product model begins with the dichotomy, compulsive and purposive writing. Both these categories derive from the writer's repertoire and will reflect it. The category purposive writing subsequently dichotomizes into types that are differentiated on the basis of the intent of the author. (Compulsive writing may not be strictly characterized as intentional since *intent* connotes purposive control.)

The dichotomy of the second level, responses characterized by detachment vs. those characterized by involvement, indicates the general type of response that the writer intends the audience to make. Involvement, in this formulation, indicates a response of the kind in which a reader (audience) psychologically projects himself into the token, perhaps identifying himself with elements in it; ordinarily, his response is emotionally charged. A detached response is one that, in its initial stages at least, keeps the reader psychologically outside the reading, although he may experience an emotional *reaction* to it. (For example, the reader of a critical theory may become angry as a result of reading and disagreeing with the theory. The anger is possible only as a result of the evaluation he makes, which is initially as a remote viewer rather than an involved participant.) Of course, the writer may not anticipate the response of the audience accurately, but any such wrong judgment on his part is distinct from his intent.

Writing intended to elicit detached responses is of two kinds. The first expects the reader to respond to elements of data contained within the token; thus the token is *information-oriented*. For example, the writer of a business letter ordering a number of parts intends that his reader attend to the heading, inside address, the description of each part, billing directions, and any other particulars of information piece by piece. The author of a learned treatise presented as an argument intends his reader to consider his presenta-

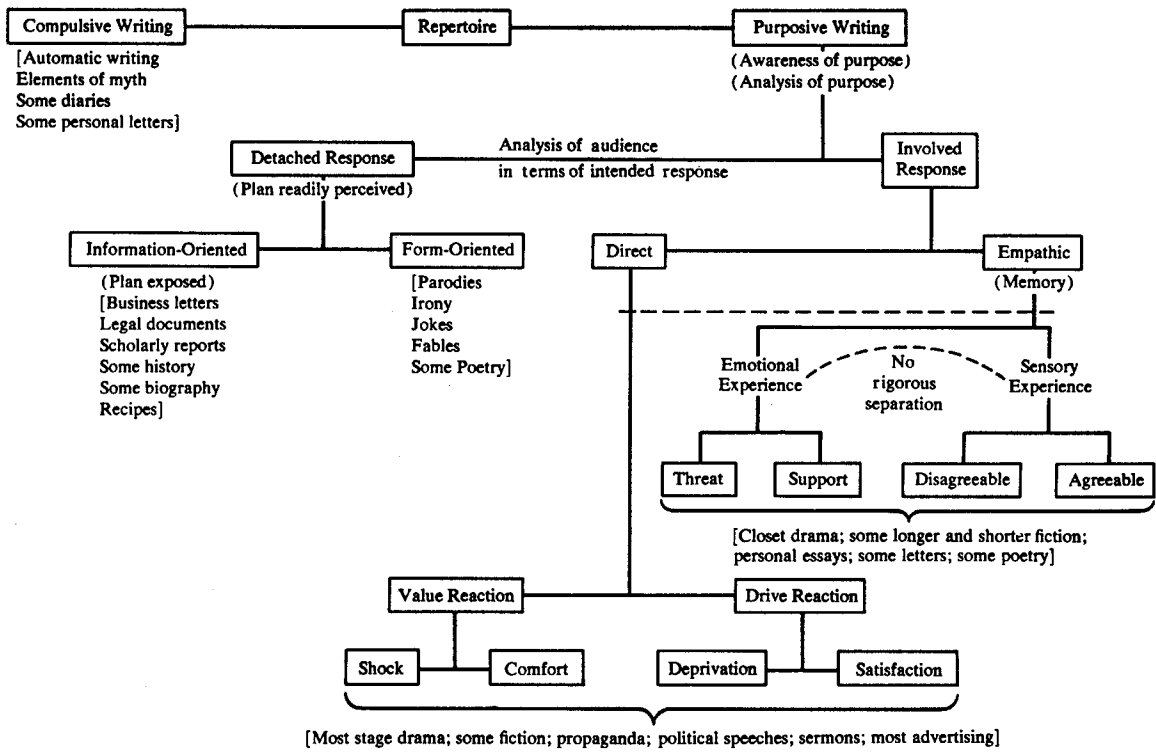


FIGURE 23.5 A General Theory of Composition, Product Model

Tokens representative of each type are bracketed. The arrangement of purposive dichotomies is from left to right. Material above the broken line equals ease of analysis.

tion point by point, examining each premise, then the conclusion. If the argument must be finally considered *in toto* because of the interrelationships of the parts, this need and the reasoning behind it will likewise be presented as specific data to the reader.

The second kind of detached response is that made to a work taken as a whole. For example, the author of a fable that includes a moral intends that the reader consider both the narrative and the moral together; either element is incomplete without the other. Although it is doubtless the intent of many writers of belles-lettres to have each of their works considered as a whole for purposes of critical aesthetic evaluation, the work is not classified as *form-oriented* unless they have intended that the reader at no point experience empathy. Thus these tokens have two intentional markers: the reader remains detached and the response must be made to the whole work.

The detached response is essentially intellectual; the reader is not emotionally pulled into the work. The involved response, on the other hand, is essentially emotional. There are two kinds of responses requiring emotional contact that the writer may intend to elicit from his audience.

The first kind is direct: The reader responds immediately to the token itself without extensive intermediate memories being evoked by it. Strictly speaking, memory of some kind must trigger the response, but ordinarily the reader is unaware of any memory mechanism. For example, if a person reads, "No Smoking. Danger. Explosive," he extinguishes his cigarette—without conscious memory of the experience implied by the message. Such direct responses are controlled by the reader's value system or his drive system. Tokens aiming at the value system will provide either shock or comfort to that system; those aimed at the drive system will suggest either deprivation or satisfaction. Much advertising copy is intended to obtain a direct emotional response.

The second kind of involved response is vicarious: The empathy is contingent upon memories of experiences that the message evokes in the readers. The memories will be of either emotional experiences (threatening or supporting) or sensory experiences (agreeable or disagreeable). Emotional and sensory experiences in a person's memory are often closely interwoven. For example, the memory of nearly drowning involves disagreeable physical sensations and concomitant emotional threats. Popular novels intend empathic responses.

Tokens that result from compulsive writing may resist any further classification. Their generation, necessarily through the repertoire, must reflect it. However, compulsive writers are motivated by some arcane need to express themselves through writing; communication is not a central conditioner of their behavior. Therefore, further classification of their work by the reader is invalid. Unless the reader *knows* the intent of the writer, he may classify writing as purposive and then further subclassify it only by inference.

Although a rigorous classification of a token by the reader is not strictly

possible without knowledge of the writer's intent, the token may yet be analyzed on various bases:

1. On the basis of *presumed* intent.
2. On the extent to which the token reflects the reader's model of the type from which it apparently derives.
3. On the power of the token to compel any effect on the critic as part of the intended audience.
4. On its power to compel any effect on the audience as the critic observes this, the critic not being himself a part of the intended audience.

All of these underline the essentially subjective nature of both composition and criticism.

A perhaps apocryphal incident dramatizing the efficacy of these theoretical formulations is related about Abraham Lincoln's being introduced to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. On that occasion Lincoln remarked, "So this is the little lady who started the War."

Perhaps Lincoln, as audience, was prompted to the remark on the basis of an analysis of the process analogous to that presented here. Many writers of the period who were then, and are still, regarded as better authors (Emerson, Alcott, Bryant, and Lincoln himself, as examples) had used various tokens—essays, sermons, and political speeches—to produce the secondary effect of arousing their audiences to eliminate slavery. The most successful of all such tokens was Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, albeit our contemporary critics would probably devalue the work. (After all, our contemporary critics were not part of Stowe's intended audience.)

In light of this, Lincoln might just as well have said, "So this is the little lady who developed the most appropriate analysis of the situation and the audience, had in her repertoire a suitable type, and produced the most effective token in terms of both primary and secondary effect." Admittedly, in terms of style, such a pronouncement could not be regarded as very Lincolnesque.

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Before beginning instruction in composition, the teacher must take into account many elements that will influence the instruction. First, he must consider the implications that his theory of composing brings to his teaching. Next, he must have some idea of what his students are like and what their needs are. The composition teaching must be articulated with other parts of the English curriculum. The structure of the lessons, and their sequence must be planned. Finally, he must anticipate the ways in which he will deal with the papers when they come into his hands. When he has thought through these problems and has perceived their interrelationship, he will have developed an instructional theory.

#### What the Curriculum Should Cover

The composing theory suggests various elements as topics for discrete instruction in the curriculum. The program must include lessons on the nature of purposive writing developed along the lines suggested by the communications model around which the theory was built. For example:

1. The students must learn how to analyze consciously the situation that gives rise to the written communication.
2. They must learn to specify their purposes in writing each composition.
3. They must learn the technique of audience analysis, with especial emphasis on the anticipation of primary effect. This implies lessons on alternative types to use in particular situations.

The most conspicuous weakness of most composition curricula, even those that pay lip service to the idea that composition is a form of communication, is the absence of

lessons and writing assignments dealing with the elements that are present in communication situations. Students should learn how to analyze an audience and how to vary the same messages to suit their purposes with different audiences, in other words, how to slant their writing. In addition to preparing the "same" messages for different audiences, students ought to explain how they thought out the alternatives.

The following is an example of how a seventh-grade boy slanted his writing by using affective connotations (see pp. 434-437) in word choice and how he analyzed his technique:

The leaky, condemned barge was finally going to be sunk. It carried a cargo of rot and filth to take to the river bottom. Its companion was to be the slimy mud. There the slime would rot what was left of it and that would be the end of its smelly life.

The barge, faithful to the last, was going to its final resting place. For many cold winters, it had towed coal and oil to the townspeople to keep them warm. Now, the cargo was only the stains of service. The only one that would be company to it was the river bottom. There, it would be forgotten and would slowly cease to exist with nobody caring.

(Student self-analysis of his writing process)

These two paragraphs are two different viewpoints of the same thing, getting rid of the barge. The first one is a memo from an ex-charge captain who is now the president of the company, written to stockholders. The second is a description written to another ex-charge captain who retired. In the first one I wanted the writer to seem practical. In the second one I wanted him to be cheering up his friend. Some of the contrasts I used (in their paragraph order) to get the right slanting were "leaky, condemned" against "faithful to the last." I contrasted "cargo of rot and filth" with "cargo was only the stains of service." "The end of its smelly life" is against "cease to exist with nobody caring." I also said "slimy mud" instead of just "river bottom." The first examples are negative affective connotation, and the second examples are positive.

Seventh-grade boy

The next example written by an eighth-grade boy shows how undefined technical terms mark a message aimed at an audience experienced in a field in contrast to a message aimed at a more general audience:

The race is about to start, five four, . . . one, zero. I'm off on a starboard tack flying through the water but boats are passing me to windward and leeward as if I were standing still. I then split tacks with the fleet and got



a lift in towards shore. I now could just make the marker and pulled in front of the fleet once more. As I rounded the mark, my crew took the tiller and I yanked up the spinnaker, and it set perfectly; and it seemed like I was moving right along when the second place boat caught up to me and by the time I got to the mark I was in last again. It was a beat back to the finish. I tried that same tack again and got another lift. At ten yards from the finish I was winning. All of a sudden I got a header and by the time I got over the line four boats had passed. I got a fifth with only a hope of doing better tomorrow.

The race is about to start, three, two, one, bang. I'm off with the wind coming over the right side of the boat. The boat is flying through the water but boats are passing me to the right and left as if I were standing still. I then took off in the opposite direction of the other boats and got a lot of wind in towards shore. I now could just get around the marker (the point which you have to round which makes up a sailing course) and pulled out in front of the fleet once more. As I rounded the mark my crew took the tiller (which you steer with) and I yanked up the spinnaker (a balloon like fore sail which can only be used when the wind is coming from in back of you). It set perfectly and it seemed like I was moving right along when the second place boat caught up to me and by the time I got to the marker I was in last place again. To get to the finish we had to turn back and forth against the wind. I tried the same tactics as before and got the wind again. At ten yards from the finish I was winning. All of a sudden I lost my wind and by the time I got over the finish line four boats had passed. I got a fifth with only the hope of doing better tomorrow.

(Student self-analysis of his writing process)

My audience in the first paragraph knows about sailing. The audience in the second paragraph doesn't. In the first paragraph I could just call things by their names. I had to make changes in the second. You cannot change a word like "spinnaker", so I defined it in parentheses. It's too complicated to define "leeward" so I changed "leeward and windward" to "left and right sides" because it amounts to the same thing anyway. Some of the terms stay the same because anybody knows that you "set a sail" for instance. As for abstraction, "other boats" is more abstract than "fleet" because this fleet was only the club fleet and "other boats" includes many other boats.

Eighth-grade boy

The foregoing exercises are an introduction to audience analysis. Next, specific criteria that differentiate audiences should be studied; sex, whether male, female, or mixed; age range; social status; place of residence—urban, suburban, or rural; interests and background experience, including educational level, vocation, religion, hobbies, and race. The next step is to collect advertisements that are designed to appeal to a specific audience and analyze what in an advertisement provides specific appeal.

The types of appeals in the advertisement should be classified—for example, testimonial, plain folks, bandwagon, snob appeal. Next, the appeals should be analyzed to show the probable purposes of the authors as well as the intended audience. Other kinds of propaganda such as newspaper editorials and political speeches should also be analyzed in terms of their appeals.

The final step is for the students to develop original advertisements (or other types of propaganda). The most useful technique is to have a committee of students work together on this. The group work affords give-and-take in discussion that is more effective in the learning than is individual work.

The advertisements produced should be uniform in size. Each group should have some particular problem to serve as a hidden purpose—for example, the product they are advertising costs more than competing products—and this problem should be kept confidential. When the class evaluates the finished advertisement, they should try to determine the nature of the hidden purpose. All advertisements should be displayed at the end of the unit together with analyses of the intended audience and the content. The analyses should show influences of the unit's work: connotations of words, slanting, specific appeals, and so on.

Much of the curriculum should be devoted to expanding the students' repertoire. This expansion involves not only the learning of such conventionalized forms as the business letter and the sonnet but also an extension of vocabulary, and the use of various devices ranging from puns to figures of speech and rhetorical tricks. Techniques of stylizing must also become part of the repertoire. Obviously, the curriculum for any single year will not complete the job of expanding the repertoire. The teacher must determine what has been done along this line previously and what this logically suggests for his year's work. Ideally, intergrade curriculum committees ought to deal with the scope and sequence of this phase of the program.

The teacher must decide on how to include compulsive components of the composing process in his instruction: which elements to use in his own purposing and which to bring to the direct attention of his class.

Finally, the discussion of the process hypothesis in Chapter 22 indicates that all composition work should deal with complete composition patterns since the hypothesis is that the writer visualizes a complete work before he starts writing, although he may modify his vision as he works along.

#### Considering the Students' Needs

The results of the inventory battery and his follow-up procedures (see Chapter 21) enable the teacher to classify his students in terms of their demonstrated skills. He may find himself faced with dysfunctional, functional, and fluent writers in the same class; or he may find that administrative grouping has segregated his students homogeneously.

Among the functional group he is sure to find students who will write only reluctantly—who will consistently deal with composition assignments in a minimal way, trying to get the work finished as quickly as possible or not doing it at all. These reluctant writers evince comparatively little mechanical difficulty with their writing; they simply seem to lack interest in most composition assignments. It is possible to use techniques with these students that will motivate compulsive writing.

In addition to classifying the students, the inventories will yield information about their deficiencies in punctuation, capitalization, and the like. Chapter 21 suggests ways in which the teacher can plan instruction in these areas.

The students' needs will give the teacher some indication of the appropriate sequencing of study. Since most of the student's writing needs, at least his most immediate ones, derive from the necessity for written communication in school, the types of composition that he will be frequently called upon to produce in school must receive first priority. These will usually involve the communication of data; therefore, the early part of the instructional sequence should concentrate on the information-oriented type of compositions. Any preliminary writing experiences must be developed only because they lead to the goal of learning to write information-oriented compositions.

Of course, in this early stage the students may also work with forms designed to give them a feeling of success and achievement with writing in a general way. This can mitigate any undesirable emotional concomitants to the perhaps more demanding kind of composition experiences involved in working up information-oriented tokens. Should a student experience frustration and undue anxiety in connection with any writing, he might avoid any experience with writing at all costs or limit such experience to the smallest possible amount.

Another consideration has to do with the maturational level of the student. In a broad way it is obvious that maturation controls many aspects of a person's writing abilities. Consequently, the teacher should ask himself such questions as, "At what age does a person write good narrative in the omniscient voice? How old will someone be before he can write sonnets? Are tenth graders really capable of writing sophisticated criticism of poetry?" It is unfortunate that educational literature has not discussed questions of this kind to any great extent. On the very crucial issue of composition type as it relates to the student's maturation, the teacher, at this point in the development of our profession, is left to his own devices of observation and analysis for many of the decisions he will have to make.

The final general consideration has to do with motivating devices. Because publication is probably the most powerful single extrinsic motivation for writing, the teacher should consider developing classroom publications as well as school-wide publications to get his students' work into print. School-wide publications, such as the school literary magazine, tend to be selective and ordinarily contain only choice pieces from the most talented writers. Class-

room publications, on the other hand, can include work from all class members and can be designed to contain work from a single lesson or unit (say a limerick from each student) or selected work gathered over a long period. Students should do as much as possible of the editorial work and mechanical work on the publication. In addition to publications, bulletin board displays of compositions are useful in rewarding those whose compositions get displayed.

Resource speakers from the community can provide good motivation for writing: reporters, stringers, editors, publishers of house organs and trade papers, copywriters, teachers who have published, and parents who are authors are all sources. The teacher can obtain leads to these resource persons by including appropriate items in the interest inventory (see Chapter 2). In passing, this inventory can also locate parents who can do typing for classroom publications.

Students from previous years provide another reservoir of resource speakers. A twelfth grader who wrote especially good free verse when he was in the tenth grade or who is writing it in the twelfth grade, for example, can come into a present tenth grade class and discuss his techniques, a tremendously valuable experience for the speaker as well as his audience.

#### Composition and the Total English Curriculum

In what ways does composition articulate with literature and language study? At what points does the articulation occur? The most obvious points of articulation are in the evaluation procedures. Student compositions reporting on their work in literature and language form one kind of evaluative instrument in these areas. Information-oriented compositions are used in these cases. Composition may also play a part in concept development. For example, when working on a semantics unit, students may practice slanting in composition exercises as a way of learning what "slanting" means. A useful technique in teaching a literary form is to have the class imitate the form in original writing exercises. Compositions analyzing the form are likewise useful, but they will be information-oriented.

Work with style articulates all three curricular areas. Both connotations of "style"—the more mechanical aspects as well as expression—are relevant here. What is ordinarily called "style" in the handbooks—punctuation, capitalization, spelling, case agreement, and so on—is in the domain of usage and is, strictly speaking, apart from the analysis of syntax and phonology. Syntactic, semantic, and poetic analysis are all involved in the study of literary styles of professional writers as well as of school students.

"Style" in both its connotations can also feature the study of dialect and idiolect. When a student studies his own writing style, he is elevating to conscious control an otherwise compulsive element in his writing.

*subject - the language or speech pattern of an individual at a particular period of his life*

**Lesson Structure**

Like Gaul, all composition lessons are divided into three parts: preparation for writing, independent writing, and follow-up procedures. When they make composition assignments, many teachers, especially beginners, know in only a general way the characteristics of the finished compositions they wish to receive from their students. It often happens that only after the work has been turned in and they have read it, do they know precisely what they were after in the first place. In this situation a student must rely on his intuition in doing his work. If he can "psych out" his teacher, he does "good" work. Otherwise, he works in the dark.

A certain period of such trial-and-error teaching may be necessary in a teacher's experience, but its results are of dubious value to students, who may learn considerable error. The obvious implication is that, whenever possible, the teacher should provide models of the type of writing under consideration as a part of the preparation for writing.

In addition to the practical values of using models for writing, their use has important theoretic value, which derives from the fact that the writer's repertoire develops through his conceptualization of types, and this conceptualization will turn on his experience with models.

Needless to say, the choice of the models must reflect the principles being considered during composition instruction. This is especially true in the early stages. But limiting consideration to models of a "pure" type can result in the development of a distorted view of literature. As the students show mastery of principles, they must be introduced to models that appear to deviate from the norms developed by theoretic principles.

As an example, consider the haiku, a simple poem form that originated in Japan (see pp. 109-115). Its normal structure is three unrhymed lines, the first containing five syllables; the second, seven; the third, five. Many effective haiku deviate from this pattern, however. As students master the form, they should be introduced to deviant examples and engage in appropriate discussion about the author's or translator's probable reasons for deviating.

In general, the use of models should be conditioned by the observed proficiency of the students. The models should be first analyzed and then imitated. Three kinds should be used: literary models (tokens); student-made models (tokens); theoretic models generalized by analysis of tokens that usually, but not exclusively, are student made. Ordinarily, the original analysis that leads to the development of this last-named kind of model is done by the teacher.

(See Chapter 29.)

In view of the analysis of composing suggested by the theoretic model and discussion in Chapter 22, all work should be with models of complete literary forms. Because some of them will contain shorter complete forms as constituents, it is possible to develop sequences in which the shorter constituents are studied first; these, too, can be treated as complete forms. For example, in-

formation-oriented tokens often contain definitions of terms. Therefore the definition can be studied as a composition problem in itself before the study of information-oriented forms.

The beginning teacher will have no student-made models unless the department has a file of them. One source is back issues of school-wide publications. As the beginning teacher works through various lessons, he can save and make copies of good compositions for use as models in subsequent years. The writers of these compositions can be speakers to later classes.

The types of students in the class indicate which kind of models are appropriate as well as how the students should use them. Fluent writers should concentrate on literary models, and their talent may enable them to approach the quality of these models in their own writing. They should be allowed to use their own judgment in deciding whether to imitate the model directly or to base their writing on an analysis of it. Such an analysis can, in part, result from teacher-led classroom work, but very likely there will be a high degree of intuitive analysis. In dealing with these students, the teacher should select models that are appropriate to the assignment and appropriate to the natural propensities of the students as well. In other words, by virtue of his wider experience with literature, the teacher acts as a resource person or consultant for fluent writers. He can also encourage them to seek and use models from their own experience.

Functional writers may also use literary models for analysis. But it is folly to hope that they can approach the quality of the published work of professionals. They can, however, approach the work of other students. Therefore the analysis and imitation of student-made tokens should be prominent in the preparatory instruction of the functional group. In the early stages of dealing with a particular literary type, they will imitate the model closely, but when the principles become familiar, they will move away from mimicry. Dysfunctional writers present special problems and these are discussed at length in Chapter 29. Briefly, the teacher should make special models for them to analyze and imitate.

Some students who are fluent at particular kinds of writing, but not generally fluent may present a peculiar problem for the teacher. For example, some may write only free verse fluently. Others may handle all kinds of poetry very well but be merely functional at prose. Some are fluent in information-oriented forms; others, fluent with empathic types. Consequently, the particular model to use in these cases may depend upon the individual student. In general, the teacher should specify which models are to be used only in those lessons that are intended to expand the writer's repertoire. When the class does its writing in the broader context of analyzing the whole communications situation, selecting the best approach should be part of the analysis. Consequently, the teacher should not indicate which specific model to follow, but he might lead a discussion on the available alternatives and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

In addition to work with models, any content work in literature and language should be part of the preparation for writing that is used either in concept development or evaluation. Since information-oriented compositions are used in evaluation, the teacher must be careful to give instructions in the appropriate form *before* he makes an assignment that presumes competence in that form. Otherwise, he will find that he must comment on such things as organization, techniques of defining, and so on, when he should be commenting on the ideas that the writer is expressing. If he tries to deal with both kinds of content, he will probably experience frustration, and his students certainly will.

The next phase of the lesson is the independent writing of the students. As the year's work progresses, the students should be introduced to more and more of the compulsive elements in composition—such as under what environmental conditions they do their best work. These things can themselves be composition topics. Additionally, there must be a continuous awareness of the need for specifying purposes, analyzing the audience, and selecting the appropriate approach from the repertoire.

The final phase of the lesson has to do with follow-up procedures, editing and proofreading the completed composition.

Perhaps because spelling and mechanics are secondary, writers generate compositions that will include errors in spelling and mechanics; for many writers, an appropriate use of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization is not integral to their writing. Therefore, in order to correct such errors, they must reread what they have written and make appropriate changes. In the course of this kind of revision, they may edit the semantic and structural content of their work as well. In doing this editing, they must approach their writing from the point of view of the audience.

Any teacher will testify that such editing all too often does not get done; and when it does get done, it is not done very thoroughly. (In this connection, the teacher may recall the image suggested by Frye, which was presented earlier, of the author giving birth to his work and wanting to be rid of it.) Many find such editing of "completed" papers a disagreeable business. But one who aspires to composition must do it, disagreeable or not. The teacher who functions mainly as a proofreader, not only does a disservice to himself but hinders his students in their total development as writers. Instruction in proofreading and proofreading itself must be an integral part of instruction in composition.

A more esoteric kind of review of the finished writing is also in order. When a student has worked through the composition process, he should have an opportunity to make a critical comparison of his work against that of others. Perhaps he is aware of certain inadequacies in his analysis of the situation. The opportunity for comparing notes with his peers in this regard should serve to sharpen his self-criticism and help to develop more general critical powers at once.

The following classroom techniques can be employed after the composition writing has been completed but before papers are turned in to the teacher:

1. Time should be set aside for the students to proofread and revise their own work carefully. They should read their papers twice, the first time to detect undesirable semantic and syntactic content and the second time to check the papers for mechanical errors, reading word by word, line by line, using some pointer or marker such as a pen or finger, and silently reading so as to include "capital," "period," "comma," and the like as an integral part of the reading. Enough time should be provided so that this can be done slowly and carefully.
2. The students should be paired off in terms of their ability and rapport and treat one another's work in the manner indicated above. After reading, they should discuss their work with each other, questioning elements in the work when necessary.
3. Groups of four or five students should be formed, and each student should read his composition to the group. The paper representing the best overall approach should be chosen to be read to the class. This practice provides experience with a number of good models close to the writer's potential level of achievement.

And after the papers are turned in:

4. In marking the student's papers, the teacher should not characterize each error specifically but rather use some general device such as a marginal check mark on any line in which he sees an error and then return the papers to the students for revision. A comparison of the first paper with the revised version will indicate which areas in spelling, punctuation, and the like need attention via direct instruction, since a fair assumption is that a student's failure to correct errors indicates that he is ignorant of their nature.

#### **Dealing with the Finished Papers**

The last-described technique opens for consideration the whole topic of the teacher's red-marking of papers as well as other kinds of responses he makes.

When teachers mark mechanical errors in punctuation and the like, it is their hope that the writer will attend to each specific error and eliminate the faulty usage from subsequent compositions. But there is some evidence that students respond otherwise.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, students generally believe the red marks to be deprecatory of the *whole composition* rather than of the particular errors. Heavy red-marking usually results in subsequent compositions that are shorter and that contain shorter, less complex sentences and simpler

word choice. Presumably, when students face a teacher who uses the red pencil excessively, they "play it safe" and the teacher's broader purpose of improving writing is frustrated.

In most cases not much is gained by marking each and every error on each and every paper. It is not in any way lazy or unethical to refrain from marking every mistake. Ordinarily, it is more useful to be discretionary and selective when using the red pencil. The guiding principle is to mark only the errors that are persistent with each individual and only those that there is some hope of remedying.

For example, a student may write a composition in which he discusses *The Odyssey*. Let us suppose that he consistently makes two mistakes in his employment of the form "*The Odyssey*": First, he misspells "Odyssey" throughout the paper (an easy thing to do), and he misspells it the same way each time; second, he never signals through punctuation (such as quotation marks or underlining) that the term is a title. Should the teacher conscientiously mark both errors with his red pencil each time they occur throughout the paper? Certainly marking the errors *once* ought to be sufficient to point out that the usages involved are ill-advised; this marking practice must, of course, be supported by a marginal comment to the effect that the ill-advised usages have been employed throughout the paper.

Consider another hypothetical case, one in which the student, who is generally characterizable as a functional writer, nevertheless makes a number of different types of mechanical errors on his papers—but not to the extent that interrupted communication is interrupted by them. Suppose that among his persistently recurring errors there appear the following: (1) he confuses "to" and "too," (2) he leaves out commas after introductory adverb clauses, and (3) he uses sentence fragments. The teacher, after noting that these things (along with some others) represent recurrent patterns in his writing, develops a priority list in which items that he feels to be the most serious breaches or the most easily remedied are given first priority. He will mark these items *whenever they occur*. Other items will remain unmarked until the first-priority items show very definite signs of clearing up. In conjunction with the red marking, he will hold conferences with the student and will remind him of the error under attack during proofreading activities. Also, he will be careful to write notes of praise on papers that do not display these errors (or on papers in which many opportunities for errors are present but only very few have been forthcoming).

Praise for good work is an extremely effective practice. A high mark on a paper is, of course, a general symbol for good work and is, as such, a mark of praise. Probably more effective is a short note at the end of the paper (and, of course, appropriately placed in the margin). A useful technique in commenting in writing at the end of a student's paper is to sandwich negative comments between positive ones. Another strong technique is to use the writer's name in connection with good comments, thus:

"I enjoyed your humor very much, Tony. It shows you used a thoughtful approach. Such good work was spoiled a bit when you failed to underline your titles; keep working on this. Your papers continue to get neater. Keep this up, by all means."

The composition theory developed in the preceding chapter was formulated as a foundation that proves useful for the work of *teacher as critic*. It cannot be construed as a general theory of criticism because of the importance in the formulation of the author's intent in writing. In most literature we cannot be certain of the intention of the author of a work. When the intent of a piece of student writing is not clear, the teacher can ask about it.

Generally, when reacting critically to a composition, the teacher should base the criticism on the intent or apparent intent of the writer. This has the distinct instructional advantage of consistency of viewpoint no matter what type or specific form is under consideration. When criticizing any purposive paper the teacher should ask:

1. What was the writer's problem as he analyzed it?
2. How suitable was his approach in terms of his purpose and perceived audience?
3. Has he produced an appropriate and effective token?

Thus, the teacher can make the students aware of the evaluative criteria. These criteria relate to them and their work rather than to some rhetorical canon of which they may be entirely unaware.

To summarize, priority in composition instruction must be assigned to work leading to the mastery of information-oriented writing because the need for that form of writing is foremost in school. Since use of this type will be determined by the student's analysis of the writing situation, lessons in situation analysis must precede lessons in writing information-oriented forms. If the inventory gives evidence that students lack organizational skill, lessons in organizing must precede work with information-oriented tokens. To the extent that the type includes other complete forms, such as definitions, lessons in these forms must come first.

Work with other forms should precede work with information-oriented writing insofar as such work will support writing as an activity, that is, provide feelings of success associated with writing.

As students master information-oriented forms, the other forms should be introduced into the curriculum. The study of any form should be controlled by similar principles:

1. Easier forms should be studied before harder ones.
2. Generally, the ease of a form should be determined by the ease of analyzing it, since the first step in learning to write it is to analyze a model of it. The second element conditioning ease is its length. Obviously, the shorter ones are easier.

3. If a form is composed of, or contains within it, shorter forms, these should be studied first. And they should be studied as complete forms. For example, quatrains should be studied before sonnets.
4. As "ideal" models are mastered, effective deviants should be studied.

Many diverse elements enter into the teaching of composition. All must be accounted for in planning. Taken together, the planning and the elements represent an instructional theory. Should the teacher proceed without a guiding theory, he must rely on intuition. His instruction will probably not relate to his students' development as writers in a sequential way. Even if their writing skills were to develop well, it would not be as the result of his instruction.

#### NOTE

1. Gladys C. Halvorsen, "Some Effects of Emphasizing Mechanical Accuracy on Written Expression of Sixth Grade Children." Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, 1960.

### Information-Oriented Compositions: Utilitarian Writing

# 25

The most important kind of writing for students is the rather utilitarian type that is intended to convey information. This is the type of writing that they are required to use in school not only in their English classes but in most other classes as well. Those who go on to college will continue to use it in their term papers.

Traditionally, writing of this kind has been called expository, a classification that would presumably include not only term papers and their secondary school progenitors—book reports, critical essays, and the like—but also such diverse works as essays appearing in "The Talk of the Town" in *The New Yorker*, UPI news stories, The Declaration of Independence, *The Spectator*, *Origin of Species*, real estate advertisements, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and Johnson's *Dictionary*. The traditional classification asserts that these are all of a piece, all exposition. Yet, it is clear that from the point of view of their author's intent, they are vastly different.

Basing instruction in this type of writing on models of one kind or another is a common enough practice in composition texts. The models are usually seen in the light of presumed (and often demonstrated) arrangements of their contents in terms of a highly specific principle such as "cause/effect," "time sequence," "size order," "internal/external," and the like. One such text offers nine analyses of ten different arrangements in the area of exposition and seven in the area of argument.

Imagine the student's problem if his writing is done along the lines suggested by such an organization. He must first decide whether his paper is to be one of exposition or argument. Then, he must remember sixteen different models and their analyses. Next, he must choose the one to follow and then follow it appropriately.

Although some students might find such an instructional approach useful, most would be better served by a single, all-purpose model that could serve for either "exposition" or "argument." Most compositions written in school course

work, whether traditionally classed as exposition or argument, share many features, the most important being the intent of the writer to convey information (including his opinions) to the reader as unambiguously as possible.

#### Model for the Compositions

Martin Joos in his monograph "The Five Clocks" discusses a speech style that he calls "formal." His discussion serves as a basis for the all-purpose model for the utilitarian, information-oriented composition:

Beyond its code-labels, formal style is strictly determined by the absence of participation. This absence infects the speaker also. He may speak as if he were not present, avoiding such allusions to his own existence as "I, me, mine," with the possible exception of "one"—a formal code-label—or "myself" in desperate situations. The speaker protects both the text and himself from involvement; presumably he will be absent if the roof collapses.

Lacking all personal support, the text must fight its own battles. Form becomes its dominant character. Robbed of personal links to reality, it scorns such other links as the stone painfully kicked to refute an idealist philosopher; instead, it endeavors to employ only logical links, kept entirely within the text, and displays those logical links with sedulous care. The pronunciation is explicit to the point of clattering; the grammar tolerates no ellipsis and cultivates elaborateness; the semantics is fussy. Background information is woven into the text in complex sentences. Exempt from interruption, the text organizes itself into paragraphs; the paragraphs are linked explicitly: thus this is the third of a quadruplet.

Formal text therefore demands advance planning . . . the formal speaker has a captive audience, and is under obligation to provide a plan for the whole sentence before he begins uttering it, an outline of the paragraph before introducing it, and a delimitation of fields for his whole discourse before he embarks on it. One who does all this currently, keeping the three levels of his planning under continuous control, is correctly said to think on his feet; for clearly it calls for something other than brains; and intelligent persons do not attempt it but instead have the text all composed and written out at leisure.

The defining features of formal style are two: (1) Detachment; (2) Cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the information-oriented paper will contain the following features:

1. The plan of the paper should be explicated as part of the paper. Usually, the plan will stand first. Failing a complete initial explication of plan (as this may not always suit the author's purpose), the elements of the plan are introduced appropriately before the text described by the plan appears.

*Sedulous*

2. The presentation is governed by logical considerations:
  - a. possibly ambiguous terms are defined before they are employed extensively in the context;
  - b. generalizations are explicit;
  - c. specific illustrations support generalizations;
  - d. ambiguity of any kind is generally absent.
3. The first person pronoun is avoided. In addition to tradition, such avoidance is dictated by psychological considerations: The reader should focus on the data and not be distracted by the author.

In addition to these criteria suggested by Joos' monograph are the following:

4. The second person pronoun is avoided.
5. Longer papers should feature some sort of summary.

It is clear that by expressing his plan in his paper, the writer is forced to think out any arrangement he may wish to use before he starts writing at all. Therefore, it is not necessary for him to spend time and effort in learning any number of hypothetical models purported to exemplify arrangements of various kinds.

A more or less traditional feature of school composition programs has been instruction in outlining as a corollary to instruction in composition. Doubtless, many writers have found the outline to have great utility in helping to plan papers, especially those that are information-oriented. But many, especially writers of shorter papers (of six to ten paragraphs), do not use outlines. Sometimes, well-meaning teachers have insisted on the presentation of an outline along with the finished paper, and after completing the paper the student has written his outline in order to conform to the assignment. Obviously, this order in doing the work defeats the purpose of the assignment. Just as obviously, someone who can do the work in the reverse order doesn't need an outline at all; requiring one places an unnecessary (and unrealistic) burden on him. An expression of plan serves the same purposes as an outline for the writer and increases the value of the paper to the reader at the same time.

#### Teaching Procedures

The character of the information-oriented composition suggests the general instructional plan that should be used in dealing with it. In the preliminary lessons, the students should make definitions of various kinds as composition exercises. Other exercises should include writing a plan for some model that is presented without a plan; outlining the contents of some essay for which a plan is presented; writing a summary for a model pre-



mented without a summary; making a generalization based on a series of specific illustrations; and writing a short series of illustrations to support a model generalization (for example, "Driving can be dangerous").

After mastering these separate elements, the class should analyze models of complete forms and then imitate appropriate ones in producing original compositions. Since a new learning is taking place during this period, the papers must be returned to the students as soon as possible. If the composition is found to be defective in meeting the criteria, it should be revised.

The feature that generally gives the greatest trouble to young writers is avoiding first and second person pronouns—for example, "I think *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is partly allegorical." Typically, students will avoid the objectionable pronoun usages by substituting such locutions as "This composition will show that *The Rime* . . ." Others of the same genre: "This paragraph affirms . . ." "This last sentence proves . . ." It is a good idea to place these usages on the proscript list in the initial phase of instruction. There are times, of course, when a writer's style in expression is greatly simplified, or perhaps made less formal, by using the first person. Therefore, as these information-oriented forms are mastered, the teacher should introduce models that are not "pure" in this respect. In reading the students' papers written in the first person, however, he must consider whether the first person actually does improve the style. In any case, he must comment on the usage as part of his written appraisal.

The following two eighth-grade\* examples of data-oriented compositions, the first from a functional writer and the second from a fluent writer, treat the same topic. The marginal analyses show how they meet the criteria that have been established for this type of composition:

#### Euphemisms

"Our" is unavoidable here.

In our ever-changing language, one of the most common examples of figurative language is the euphemism. It is a very widely employed and necessary part of the English language.

A euphemism is a word that can be used in place of another word, but

Early definition of term "euphemism."

\* The use of eighth-grade examples here does not imply that this form has been mastered by students at higher levels. On the contrary, many college freshmen are innocent of organizational techniques. Rather, the examples from this grade level suggest that with appropriate instruction, most students can master the form. Further, the fact that later examples in this chapter are from ninth and tenth graders does not imply that the instructional sequences described here must take place over a three-year period. They can be presented at a single grade level if the students are ready. Some seventh graders will be; some twelfth graders will not be.

is considered more dignified and "better" sounding. For example, one of the more common euphemisms is the use of the word "attorney" as a substitute for "lawyer."

Euphemisms are more prevalent in the following areas: (1) Occupations, as seen in the previous example; (2) In naming a place of work; (3) In naming a room; (4) In the case that one would want to cushion a particularly sorrowful occasion; and (5) In avoiding the direct naming of the deity.

In the case of occupations, many euphemisms can be found in the yellow pages of a telephone book. Some examples of euphemisms dealing with occupations are sanitary engineers for garbage men, beautician for one who works in a beauty shop, etc.

Also, there are many examples of euphemisms in everyday use of the employment of euphemisms to dignify a particular piece of work. A men's clothing store has become a haberdashery, a beauty shop has now become a beauty salon and so on.

In the instance of improving the degree of dignity given to a room via the use of euphemisms, a euphemism employed by some hotels is the substitution of "boudoir" for "bedroom."

This euphemism is very effective in this case because French is considered such a continental and flowing language that it very naturally improves your impression of the room.

Probably the most common case in easing the pain of a particularly sorrowful or distasteful subject is death. There are a vast number of substitutes for "died." Just a sampling is "passed away" and "passed on." These are all very frequently employed.

The plan of the paper is laid out.

Following the plan, the student first discusses *occupation*. He generalizes. Then he provides specific examples to support his generalization.

In the subsequent paragraphs he follows the plan expressed earlier. Each paragraph begins with a generalization. Then the writer provides supporting specific examples.

The use of "your" should be avoided. This is noted as a marginal comment on the composition.



One of the most frequent uses of euphemisms and one of the times when people least realize they are employing them is using euphemisms in masking a cuss word or a direct naming of the deity. As an example of a masking or disguising of a direct naming of the deity, one often hears "For goodnessake" or another phrase resembling that one. In this case, the word "goodness" is used to avoid directly naming the deity.

So, as is seen from these examples, euphemisms play a very colorful and important role in our always progressing language.

#### Euphemisms in Today's World

No person has a desire to be regarded as unimportant, nor do they wish their everyday acts to be thought of as being trivial. "Ordinary" has become a dirty word in American society. For this reason the American people have developed more distinguished and high flown terms for various occupations, businesses and stores of all sorts, organizations, and even sections of the home. These terms are called Euphemisms.

As American civilization has progressed men have taken on names referring to the work they do. The men whose job it is to keep the schools in top condition were known as janitors, a term which was fairly well respected years ago but today, this same term has become a derogatory expression in the eyes of the *Building Superintendent*.

Composition ends with a brief summary. This composition was written by a functional writer.

A more subtle explication of plan.

The student follows his plan but the whole effect is smoother.

Many people avoid words pertaining to certain kinds of clothing. For this reason companies no longer deal in women's underwear but rather in *Ladies' Lingerie*. The women of today would never stoop so low as to purchase underwear!

When women, excuse me, ladies, go to have their hair styled they no longer go to the Hair Dresser but rather the Beauty Salon, Beauty Parlor, or Coiffures Shoppe. Any shop owner with a sign reading "HAIR DRESSER" had better go into the construction business; he certainly has no future in *Ladies Coiffures!*

People have gone so far as to apply Euphemisms to parts of the home. Never ask where the bathroom of a friend's house is located or you will find yourself regarded as a member of the inferior class; rather, inquire as to the whereabouts of his *restroom, powder room, or lavatory*.

Euphemisms never leave the English language but instead continue to be added to it. A *Building Superintendent* will remain a *Building Superintendent* only until the average person realizes that he is, in truth, a janitor. When this happens a new Euphemism will be formed for janitor. In this manner euphemisms come and go until the average American is so thoroughly confused that it is impossible for him to decipher their reference, let alone understand their connotations.

This section is not predicted in the plan. Probably, it was added because of the pun in the last sentence.

The writer is inconsistent in his use of italics. This is brought to his attention with a note.

This composition is the work of a fluent writer.

Some elements of instruction have now been established. Analysis of models should be in terms of criterion statements about the structure and style of finished compositions. Additionally, some elements in the instructional sequence have been named: For example, the student learns to write definitions as complete composition exercises before learning to write compositions con-

taining definitions. But a deeper analysis of the type is required before the whole instructional design is completed.

Up to this point, it should be clear that the teaching sequence is determined by the relative complexity of the successive forms. The general nature of the assignment should determine the structural complexity of the completed composition. For example, the above compositions were written in response to this assignment: "Write a composition explaining how some figure of speech is used." This assignment predicts a simple problem because the writer concentrates on a single controlling idea—any *one* figure of speech.

The next assignment in a sequential series should force him to deal with two ideas in some way. An assignment involving a comparison is a good one for this. The plan he expresses will demonstrate, by itself, the more complex nature of his problem. Consider the following two examples:

**A Critical Comparison of the "Adams Family" and "The Munsters"**

Most people would consider the "Adams Family" and "The Munsters" alike as television programs in terms of the writers' purposes. Yet, actually, both programs have different purposes.

The writer's purpose in the "Adams Family" is burlesque, and the writer's purpose in "The Munsters" is parody. Burlesque is when the writer is ridiculing something through exaggeration, but he doesn't necessarily want the thing changed. A parody is when the writer's purpose is to imitate the characteristic style of some other work or of another writer. The writer does this in a humorous manner but he doesn't necessarily want the style changed.

The writer's purpose in the "Adams Family" is burlesque because the writer is making fun of people in general through exaggeration, but he doesn't want people to change. Most people want their children to be happy at play. The parents in the program are very gay and creepy. They always

The plan contains a thesis statement as well as definitions. The whole plan is laid out at the beginning.

The definitions are weak because they are introduced by "when." This defect is noted marginally.

want the children (if they are playing with a train set) to crash up the trains and make an explosion. Everything they do is abnormal compared to what modern parents do. Almost all parents allow their children to have pets. Little Wednesday's pet is a black widow spider! Many people get excited when they hear a foreign language, especially French. Everytime Gomez hears French he goes wild and starts kissing Morticia's arm. Double take is often used in the "Adams Family." An example of this is: the Adams family has a box in which a hand pops out when called for, named Thing. Every time a visitor is in the house and Thing pops out of the box, the visitor has to look twice.

The writer's purpose in "The Munsters" is a parody, because the writer is imitating the old horror movies in a humorous manner, yet he doesn't necessarily want the movies to change. Herman Munster plays the part of Frankenstein, Grandpa Munster plays the part of Dracula, Eddie Munster plays the part of the Wolfman. Herman works in a funeral parlor, and Grandpa works in his laboratory and often turns into a bat. Pratfalls are often used in "The Munsters." An example of this is: Herman Munster would fall over something and would break everything and get himself all banged up. Take and double-take are also used, an example of this is: Herman or Grandpa would be walking down the street and all the people passing would look a second time and their eyes would practically come out of their heads.

As is seen from the above, the "Adams Family" and "The Munsters" are really two different types of programs.

Ninth-grade girl

The composition was the result of work done in a unit similar to that outlined in Chapter 1.

In the next sample the author varies his strategy with respect to expressing his plan. The plan is broken into two parts. After demonstrating his original thesis that the two works have much in common, he goes on to show that the elements they have in common raise a question about them: Are they allegories? Then, following his original sequence in discussing the elements, he completes his argument. He has, of his own accord, moved away from the lines of the original model:

"Rhinceros" and "Masque of the Red Death"

Both the play "Rhinceros" by Ionesco and the short story "The Masque of the Red Death" by Poe contain many symbols, morals, and characters who represent types of people.

The symbols in both "Rhinceros" and "The Masque of the Red Death" are plentiful. Of course, the most prominent feature of "Rhinceros" is the fact that each character in the play except the supposedly stupidest of all, Berenger, turns into a rhinceros, a symbol of stupidity. Similarly, in "The Masque of the Red Death" there is a prominent symbol, or rather symbols, these being the variously colored rooms, each symbolizing something different.

Each work contains a moral or more than one moral. These need not be discussed since they are quite clear. Finally, in each work the characters

An example of "functional" writing.

Brief explication of plan.

A marginal note to the writer suggests that he specify the morals.

represent types. In "Rhinceros," Berenger represents a "dum," who although a drunkard, thinks rationally. Jean represents the well-dressed, well-to-do know-it-all. And the bystanders represent the common people who have one idea in most matters, perhaps only one idea. In "The Masque of the Red Death," Prince Prospero represents the high-society show-off who acts brave and really isn't. The others who attend the ball are high-society people who are followers.

Both of these works, as has been pointed out, contain three like elements. The general structure of both is also the same. But now, let us move to another problem: are both like established allegories such as *Aesop's Fables*? If they are essentially the same, we can label both allegories.

In all of *Aesop's Fables* there is symbolism. For instance, in "The Grasshopper and the Donkey," the dew which the donkey ate symbolizes knowledge.

Certainly, all of *Aesop's Fables* have morals. This is what they are noted for. In "The Grasshopper and the Donkey" the moral is: "Be happy with what you are."

The characters in the *Fables* represent types of people. The grasshopper is one who has some special skill, and the donkey is a status seeker.

When "Rhinceros" and "The Masque of the Red Death" are compared to known allegories and are found to be the same, it can be safely said that both are allegories.

A new problem and an extension of the plan.

Ninth-grade boy

Subsequent composition problems involve dealing with more than two ideas, as with the following:

#### Literary Analogues

Although there are several analogous elements in "The Masque of the Red Death" by Poe, "The Seven Stages of Man" by Shakespeare and "Brahma" by Emerson, the three cannot really be considered literary analogues. For even though there are quite a few similarities in them they cannot be paralleled. The analogies are not strong enough.

#### The plan.

In "The Masque of the Red Death," Prince Prospero and his men put themselves under quarantine to avoid catching the disease known as the Red Death. This disease consisted of bleeding and sores, especially on the face. The whole period of the disease lasted one half hour. In order to quarantine themselves the Prince and his men (and women) stayed in an old but magnificent castle. In this castle there was an apartment of seven rooms. These rooms, all except one, had stained glass windows to match the furnishings of the rooms. The colors were as follows: blue, purple, orange, green, violet, and white. The seventh room had black furnishings and red stained glass windows. In the room was a great grandfather's clock which chimed every hour, on the hour. During the time of the quarantine, the Prince and company were having a masked ball. It took place in the first six of the seven rooms of the apartment. As the dancers danced the clock would chime on the hour and momentarily the dancing would stop,

for the noise was a very sudden and stirring sound. When the clock chimed twelve mid-night, the dancing ceased. But this time when it started up there was one more person among them. One masked as the Red Death. When the Prince, who was in the blue room, saw him he ordered him unmasked and hung at sun-up. When no one obeyed his command, the Prince himself chased him back through all the rooms. In the last room though, Prince Prospero caught the Red Death and died. The others followed immediately.

In "The Seven Ages of Man," Shakespeare talks about the world as a stage with the people playing the seven stages of life and life development. These seven stages are: the infant, school-boy, lover, soldier, the justice, pantaloon, and one dying.

The analogy in "The Masque of the Red Death" and "The Seven Stages of Man" is that in both, it talks about six things someone goes through before dying. In "The Masque of the Red Death" Prince Prospero goes from the blue room, which is the first one, straight through, to the black and red room in which he dies. In the other one, man goes through the six stages of infant to "slipper'd pantaloon" and then he also dies.

Other than this, there are not any analogous elements in the two of them, and it is not strong enough to say that the two are literary analogues.

Of course, when deciding whether or not some things are analogous or not, one must understand the different compositions. Therefore one must understand "Brahma" and to understand "Brahma" one needs to know a little about Hindu philosophy.

Is the fragment permissible here? A marginal comment to the writer on this and "hung."

Again, since organization is mastered, comments relate to stylistic lapses.

The life background of this student, child of missionaries to India, enables her to bring special critical insights to her work. This is possible only in composition.

It is the Hindu's belief that life is a dream, an illusion, that nothing in life is real. This illusion is known in Sanskrit as "Maya." The Hindu, therefore, is constantly trying to realize that life is a bad dream, for when he does, he will wake-up and find that he is Brahma. Brahma is the most divine of the Hindu gods. In fact, most Hindus don't worship him directly because they are not worthy. They worship seven gods under Brahma. In Sanskrit, this awakening and finding oneself is referred to as "TAT TUAM ASI," meaning: "That am I." Another belief of the Hindus is the cycle of history and the reincarnation of life. This means they believe that history keeps on turning and therefore repeating itself constantly. The reincarnation is the rebirth of all animals and people. When someone dies, it is believed that he has gone on to a new life, a new form of living, maybe as a fly or maybe as a Brahmin, who is the highest caste as a Brahmin, who is the highest caste Hindu. In the first stanza of "Brahma" it says, "If the red slayer think he slays . . ." etc. referring to the reincarnation or the awakening of a Hindu. For even if one is killed one will either be reincarnated to a new form or will wake up from the dream of life. In the second stanza when it says "Far or forgot to me is near . . ." etc. it is talking about the unreality of life. Since life isn't real there is really no difference between shame and fame, shadow and sunlight, far and near. As Brahma is everything and everything centers around Brahma, people who leave him out of their philosophy (stanza 3) aren't intelligent, don't think straight and since Brahma created everything (in his dream) when

people fly, he is the one who gives them power, "is the wings." In the last stanza it says, "The strong gods pine for my abode . . ." etc. This means the gods who get worshipped, the sacred seven are trying to wake-up from their dream but cannot for they are not meek or lovers of the good. For the good find Brahma (me) and respect him.

There are not really analogous elements in "Brahma" and "The Masque of the Red Death," but in "The Seven Ages of Man" there is the idea of illusion and unreality in that the world is just a stage on which the people perform. Since this is the only analogous element the two poems are definitionally not literary analogues.

Tenth-grade girl

Another factor that controls the difficulty of writing—and thus the structure of the composition and the order of scheduling in the curriculum—is the difficulty of the material to which the writer must respond in solving his problem. For example, taking a problem of the simplest type (single idea), it can be readily seen that if the writer is writing about a one-act play such as *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* by James Barrie, his job is not nearly so complex as when he writes about *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller; and again, this is not so complex as writing about *The Tempest*. (Of course, there are various elements of difficulty germane to the contents of these three plays other than their mere length, but length alone would suffice as a measure of difficulty.)

At this point, the teacher should introduce another dimension of the compositional structure of the composition, that of documentation. Especially in the course of critical writing, the writer should employ various pieces of evidence, both those that are internal to the problem he is considering and those that are external to it. In both cases he will have to learn appropriate techniques for documenting his material. The problem arises very early in the production of compositions of the type under discussion here.

Because he wants to provide good definitions for his terms, the young writer will very often use the definition provided by his dictionary. Generally, this is a defensible practice (although if the teacher asks such questions as

"What is literal meaning?" the young writer who employs the dictionary—any dictionary—as a source for a solution will run into difficulty).

It is at this point that he should be taught to document his source. He should not be given the idea, however, that it is wrong to use outside help. On the contrary, he should be strongly encouraged to seek authoritative support of all kinds for positions he develops. The only caveat is that *he should develop his position first*. A well-made literature program will have him ultimately criticizing the views presented by authorities (including those presented by the editors of dictionaries). The use of documented support for a position is a feature of information-oriented articles presented by and to scholars. Rather than discouraging any such practice, the teacher should structure appropriate documentation techniques into his composition instruction. The sooner the principle of intellectual honesty is learned in this regard, the better for the learner: it ought to be second nature to any writer.

There is yet one dimension to the problem of the production of information-oriented tokens that must be dealt with before the instructional sequence can be regarded as being completed. Up to this point, the discussion has indicated that the writer writes in response to *a problem*. Very likely the reader has inferred that the problem is developed and presented by the teacher. In the initial phases of instruction, this is more or less the case. In learning the elements that are featured by these types of compositions and producing the compositions themselves, the students have quite enough to occupy them. One suggestion is in order at this point. It is a good idea for the teacher to present a variety of problems of comparable difficulty in any one lesson. This procedure has two advantages: the student can select the problem that interests him the most (perhaps a compulsive element in the writing situation), and the teacher will be able to read a variety of compositions. Imagine reading upwards of a hundred compositions on the theme of "Crossing the Bar," say. In that way lies madness.

The following are six different writing problems connected with an analysis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. An adequate response to any one of them will result in an analysis of the whole play.

1. One of the chief production problems of this play is casting the roles. Suppose yourself the casting director. Analyze the characters physically and psychologically. Now name stage, movie, or TV actors or personalities who would be suited to play each role and support your choices.
2. At least three forms of humor are used in the play: parody, satire, and burlesque. Where is each form used? Which is used most successfully? Which humor-producing devices have helped in its presentation?
3. Shakespeare is often inconsistent in the way in which he deals with time. Discuss the inconsistencies in this play, determining (1) if they could be changed, (2) if they *should* be changed, and (3) how they might be changed.

4. Shakespeare reveals many of the features of the superstitions of the European folk in the Elizabethan age. Develop a guidebook to help a reader interpret the references to superstitious belief and behavior encountered in the play.
5. A large part of Shakespeare's reputation rests upon the way he uses language and upon the way in which he develops character. In this play he has his characters use four different types of language: prose; blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter); heroic verse (rhymed iambic pentameter); and trochaic tetrameter (also other sing-song verse). Generally, characters use only one of these patterns, but occasionally a character will deviate. Why do the characters speak the way they do, and why do they deviate?
6. As does most comedy since Aristophanes, this play deals with love as an important theme. We see many developments of this theme from Pyramus and Thisbe and their "tragedy" to young love, to mature romance, to long-time "wedded bliss"—and there are other types. By examining all these relationships, show Shakespeare's attitude towards romantic love.

Although some mature writers, such as reporters and advertising copy writers, must write in response to a problem dictated by somebody else, ordinarily the mature writer uses his writing to analyze a problem that is of interest to him primarily—a problem that he has seen for himself or has developed in connection with elements peculiar to his own experience. At any rate, such is the case in ideal situations. The teacher can work toward the development of such an ideal situation in his classes. After the students have learned the formal aspects of writing information-oriented compositions, they should be taught to develop questions that can form the basis for composition topics.

Such work can be effectively integrated with the study of literature. For example, if there is a unit on poetry, the students can formulate questions that will provide a basis for analyzing the poems. The following procedure is suggested:

1. Following work with appropriate model questions and poems, each student should choose a poem for which he will construct a series of guide questions to aid another reader in the analysis of the poem.
2. A committee of students should read one another's questions and the poems they were based on and criticize the questions, which should then be revised by their authors.
3. Each student should exchange his questions with a partner who is not in his criticism group. Each of them then writes an analysis of the poem, working along the lines suggested by his partner's questions.
4. The finished papers should be read and criticized by the authors of the questions. The results are discussed by the partners.

5. Finally, each person should choose a new poem and write an analysis of it which should be read and criticized by the teacher.

The following examples from one student illustrate this sequence:

**GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR "ULALUME" by E. A. Poe Student A**

1. What is/are the central meaning(s) of Ulalume? How is/are the meaning(s) represented?
2. What is/are the central image(s) of the poem?
3. Name some of the less important meanings and images.
4. Where is the poem taking place? Does it have any effect on the poem? How?
5. Why is the person or thing describing the poem? Who is Psyche? What do the two represent?
6. What or who is Ulalume?
7. What were they (Psyche and the person describing the happening) doing in the poem? What happened at the end?

Because writing guide questions of this kind is difficult, the instruction should proceed in four stages. The first is part of the teacher's instruction in the analysis of poetry. Each time he presents a poem, he should present guide questions leading toward the analysis. As far as possible, the questions from poem to poem should be parallel in structure—that is, the same types of questions asked in the same order. The next stage is a teacher-led analysis of a poem without the customary guide questions. After the discussion, committees should work together to develop a set of guide questions. When they have finished, the questions should be compared. In the next stage, which also features group work, each group should work on a different poem and, using the guide questions produced, teach the poem to the class. The class should criticize the questions when each lesson is finished. Finally, each student should work independently on his own poem. When he has finished, he should submit his questions to his fellow committee members for criticism, and then revise them.

The following compositions, which are characterized by awkwardness in organization and expression, are unrevised versions of the work. It often happens that a new kind of writing assignment produces compositions that are awkward, probably because of the general frustration involved in learning something new. As exercises with the new type of assignment are repeated, the awkwardness diminishes.

**ANALYSIS OF "ULALUME" Student B**

Having an unhappy life, Poe shows it in his writing. "Ulalume" was written with a lot of this personal feeling.

Poe had a very sorrowful life which was climaxed by the death of his wife. He was very depressed about it, and took up heavy drinking, dying two years later. His morbid feelings are found in his writing. "Dim Lake of Auber," "Misty midregion of Weir," "dank tarn of Auber," and "ghoul haunted woodland of Weir" are morbid description of unreal places. This probably described the type of life he lived "in."

Then "r" (Poe is I) says he walks and talks with Psyche. This is metaphorical because Psyche is a personified soul. Therefore when it says he talked with Psyche, it meant he was thinking deeply and Psyche's responses are his conscience.

As the "journey" is taking place, there comes a great light ("orescent" moon which is personified) which is to show the way from these morbid surroundings. In other words, he would be taken from this unhappy life. Psyche, his conscience, doesn't want to follow this light. "Oh, let us not linger." But, I, (Poe) wants a way out. "With hope" "will lead us aright." Thus they follow it to the end of the "vista." (This again shows the metaphorical because vista is a mental view and Poe writes of it as a journey with his Psyche.)

The finale is the two coming across a tomb and Psyche crying "Tis the vault of thy Ulalume." This brings Poe back to his morbid state again. The tomb probably symbolizes his wife's death. I, myself, have no verification of the latter point, since there is no meaning for Ulalume, but the implication, particularly "thy lost" points to the idea of it being his wife.

To sum up, this poem tells of Poe's trying to escape from his morbid life. Any time he tries to be happy, he always feels the pang of sorrow about his wife's death.

**CRITICISM OF STUDENT B'S ANALYSIS OF "ULALUME" Student A**

I think that Student B's interpretation of the poem "Ulalume" is completely valid based on her reasons which are very interesting.

When I read the poem, I knew that Poe was the person relaying the happening and that Psyche was Poe's conscience. Student B agrees with me on these points but she also opened two new concepts to me, which were very important in the poem.

One was that Poe's life affected his writing quite a bit. Apparently his existence was an unhappy one, and this shows in a lot of his work. Another important relationship in the poem that Student B brought out was the tie-in between the death of Poe's wife and the grave towards the end of Ulalume which obviously affects "I" (Poe) very deeply.

The one problem which both Student B and I had was trying to find the meaning of the word Ulalume. Neither of us succeeded, so I am supposing it to be one that Poe invented.

That is the only criticism that I have of Student B's interpretation of the poem except to say that I think she did a good job. It was a difficult poem to understand but I think she handled it well.

During the course of this discussion, the examples that were given related to the explication of literary topics. Naturally, information-oriented papers can treat other kinds of topics. But certain considerations of English class culture tend to direct this kind of writing toward criticism undertaken at various levels of sophistication.

The central value of English studies is that attached to literature, and the study of literature becomes increasingly sophisticated. One measure is the critical attack made on a work. Since a reader can read anything "for enjoyment" at any time he wishes, why is such reading a feature of the instruction in English classes? The only pertinent reason for such practice concerns motivation, and this in turn relates to otherwise reluctant readers. However, this position involves a paradox: If a student is reluctant to read, it is because he has not found enjoyment in reading. Perhaps, in many cases, the intellectual problems connected with the analysis of meanings (or form) in literature can provide the motivation for readers who find no pleasure in reading.

The unreluctant reader, needless to say, does not need class-related opportunities for "enjoyment" reading. Therefore, instruction should be devoted to experiences of the kind that require the guidance of a teacher; in other words, instruction that leads to literary criticism.

Assuming, then, that a sophisticated approach to literature is the key feature of the English course, some evaluation is possible through the use of objective tests, but they fail to take into account the life experience that the critic brings to his reading, which is an important dimension of criticism at any level of sophistication. This ingredient can, however, be revealed in compositions. Therefore, information-oriented compositions, most of which will be written in connection with the critical approach being developed in the study of literature, are an inalienable feature of evaluation in a literature program.

Although there are other types of information-oriented writing that are legitimate features of an English course—business letters, for example—they present no real instructional problem. The traditions that surround them dictate the appropriate patterns of instruction, and school grammars supply numerous models and exercises. Therefore, treatment here is unnecessary.

#### NOTE

1. Joos, Martin, "The Five Clocks," *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 1962), pp. 25-26.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

1. For technical background in terms, devices, definitions, and so on, in analyzing literary materials, two good general books are:
  - (a) BLOOM, EDWARD A., PHILBRICK, CHARLES H., and BLUSTEIN, ELMER M. *The Order of Poetry* (New York: Odyssey, 1961) and

- (b) SANDERS, THOMAS E. *The Discovery of Poetry* (Glencoe: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967).
2. For deeper analytical techniques in handling prose fiction see BOOTH, WAYNE C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961).
  3. A collection of essays that surveys many facets of rhetoric, contemporary and and historical is BAILEY, DUDLEY. *Essays on Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford, 1965).



One rather simple critical position held by many is that prose and poetry are polar opposites. If that is true, we move now from the minus to the plus side of the scale in considering the content of composition lessons. The previous chapter dealt with the most coldly formal kind of prose; let us now consider instruction in the writing of poetry.

The poetry under consideration falls in the form-oriented class of compositions. In addition to poetry, the category includes some prose forms.

In form-oriented writing, in contrast to the information-oriented composition, the reader is expected to respond to the work taken as a whole. A fable, for example, is form-oriented because its story and its moral cannot be dissociated if a complete meaning is to be communicated, although it may be the case that each element if presented separately might convey some meaning. The intent of the author is that in the reader's experience both elements support each other. Either part alone, however, is ambiguous, that is, liable to more than one interpretation.

Jokes often turn on ambiguity; the reader is also expected to respond to the joke taken as a whole. Much poetry, especially shorter forms—and most especially *imagiste* forms—makes the same demand of the reader, that of responding to the piece as a whole. Kenneth Pike has noted that some jokes and some poems suggest that their grouping together is rational.<sup>1</sup>

Irony is another example of form-oriented literature. In the case of parody, the whole piece is ironic. In some other works, such as O. Henry's "The Cop and the Anthem," the irony is interspersed throughout the piece, whereas in others, such as Maupassant's "The Necklace," it is not revealed until the end. Whatever the case, such work will require a response to the whole piece.

This type of writing displays another characteristic in that the reader does not empathize with the characters. Metaphorically, he stands away from the work. Although

he may sympathize with Soapy in O. Henry's work, or with Mme. Loisel in Maupassant's, he does not feel as one with them or with any other element in the presentation. He may, however, *reflect* that some deeper meaning within the work has immediate pertinence in terms of his own experience or philosophy.

Thus, the category contains such superficially diverse types as poems, short stories, essays, fables, parables, many other kinds of allegories, parodies, and jokes. But these share many features: The reader does not become involved; the parts cannot be separated from the whole without destroying the central meaning; ambiguity will often be created by the relationship of the parts; and the works involved are usually shorter.

### Poetry

By what rationale do teachers have adolescents write poetry? The discussion of purpose in the composition curriculum outlined in Chapter 22 argues that extensive instruction in composition in the secondary school is very nearly unsupported on any pragmatic basis. If the pragmatist grudgingly yields to the necessity for learning to write rather formal prose—and this only because of its importance in the school itself and the university—he must surely throw up his hands (and possibly other things as well) at the suggestion that poetry be included in the curriculum. Many teachers—even English teachers—agree with him on this. Unbelievably, many English teachers are suspicious of poetry, nay, even afraid of it—and *not* the writing of poetry, the *reading* of it.

We hear that poetry is too "hard" for adolescents. Poetry is too delicate. Poetry should be delayed. Etc. Etc. Everyone has heard this faculty-room folklore; again not with reference to writing it, but to reading it.

Heavens! Only poets write poetry (poytruh?). When it is indicated to some teachers that the writing of poetry necessitates the analysis of poetry, one observes further throwing-up of hands. (Don't you know that analyzing poetry ruins it?)

An even worse breed of folklorist is the kind who agrees to teach poetry, but who agrees to teach it "on a developmental basis": *Casey at the Bat*, *The Highwayman*, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. And you know what we write: Limericks.

There is certainly nothing wrong with reading works like those named, nor writing limericks. But *limiting* the consideration of poetry, even in the fifth grade, to work of this kind presents such a distorted view of the nature and value of poetic art that it would be better for everyone concerned if these reading and writing poetasters joined forces with the pragmatist and threw the whole thing up.

Why teach poetry as composition? Some forms of poetry are easy both to

analyze and to produce. The haiku (see Chapter 5), for example, all but insures success in composition even for dysfunctional writers. The following were written by fluent, functional, and dysfunctional students (but not in that order):

Rain in the night time  
Comes knocking at my window  
Keeping me awake.

The nightingale's song  
Makes the hot summer  
A sweet lullaby.

Red is full of life  
Like a swiftly flowing spring  
On Fugl in May.

Since writing of this kind brings success at composition, it provides general support for all composition experiences. Beyond this, the writing of various forms of poetry helps the student to appraise these forms critically in the literature program.

Some teachers say that adolescents are too young for poetry. Yet Thomas Hardy was writing poetry when he was nineteen. By the age of eighteen, Longfellow, Byron, Poe, and Arnold had had poetry *published*. Schiller published at seventeen; Keats and Emerson were writing by eighteen; Milton, Pope, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Goethe were writing verse by age sixteen. Gerard Manley Hopkins began his versifying in English grammar school. Blake, Tennyson, and both Brownings had written poetry by the age of twelve. Beyond these considerations, adolescents are ripe for experience with poetry. In fact, it appears that students produce more work of higher quality in poetry than in any kind of prose.

The general pattern of instruction in poetry parallels that of prose. A model of the form should be analyzed inductively, with particular emphasis on its structure and meanings. Then the students should compose a poem that either imitates the model directly or is derived from the analysis of it. The following poem by an eighth-grade boy, which imitates a model closely, displays an effective, if odd, imagery:

A noisy restless cricket.  
Chirping on flowers made of gold  
Sometimes down depressed, head bent,

Then suddenly launching like a bullet into the unknown  
Never tiring, chirping madly.

Oh, my heart beating.  
Always alone in your happy way  
Then sometimes down depressed like your life is broken  
Always rebounding in a joyous way,  
Beating wildly, happy again.

The writer has imitated the lines of his model very closely. That model is a fragment from Walt Whitman:

#### A NOISELESS PATIENT SPIDER

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vast surrounding,  
It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself.  
Even unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you I my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the  
spheres to connect them.  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the  
ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere,  
O my soul. 2

The next poem is based on the analysis of the same model, rather than being a direct imitation of it:

A fire burning  
There—thriving upon wood, twigs,  
Igniting, burning, consuming the fuel which strengthens it  
Spreading quickly to vulnerable places  
Leaving destruction behind.  
And there, there is hate.  
Living on hearts of men.  
Catching, kindling, eating the everlasting food  
Attacking and influencing the undecided ones.  
To ruin and destroy goodness of mankind.

Eighth-grade girl

Because figurative language is a key component of poetry, the students must be familiar with figures of speech before they can analyze poems. Work with figures should be completed as part of an introductory unit. As a few figures are mastered, the work should begin with poems whose models employ these figures. The haiku is a good place to start.

It is difficult to make statements about the language of poetry. The principal caveat is to avoid the trite. Yet there is no way to recognize triteness other than as a result of experience with language, and younger writers, by virtue of their youth, lack such experience. The teacher as critic walks a tightrope in handling triteness and best deals with the problem in conference with individuals.

One other note on things to avoid. Traditionally, poets enjoy "poetic license" in their use of language. In the past, this license has led to the overuse of such forms as "tis" and "twas" and inversions like "thought I." Unsophisticated writers tend to imitate such usages, believing that they are a mark of poetry. Generally speaking, the teacher should warn the students to avoid poetic license of this sort.

Other experimental work with language should be encouraged, however. Very often, poets use language that is far in advance of the usage of their language community. Shakespeare, for example, borrowed and coined words as he needed them. Blake used an incredibly simple language, for his time, both in terms of his vocabulary and his syntax. Hopkins was as complex in his language as Blake was simple, coining compounds on the basis of Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon patterns and generally developing difficult rhythm and syntax. E. E. Cummings' poetry features any number of advances in the use of language and typography. Poetry in general is marked by an unrestrained employment of linguistic innovation. Students should be encouraged to experiment in this regard. Although some of their experiments may work out badly, many more will not, as in the following poem.

#### WITH NO REGARD FOR MY SOUL

As I walked along the ocean, the  
wet, cool sand moistened my sun-  
patched feet,  
The winds which came off from  
the ocean, refreshed my spirit and  
soul  
A red ball of fire hung over my  
head—hot violent.  
just beat-red.  
The sun sucked up what moisture  
I had on my body with no  
regard for my soul.

Seagulls flew over the sea  
occasionally driving down  
to the depths of the ocean.  
The sun left no prey on land,  
And the bodies were strewn  
over the sands.  
The ocean, so vast and wide,  
was a friend to all, who stayed  
in motion.  
The sun was heartless, the only  
songs it knew were those played  
by a dead band.

Eighth-grade girl

#### Long-Range Planning of Poetry Instruction

The work should be scheduled over the year—and longer periods—on the basis of the relative difficulty of structures. The difficulty is determined by the number of different formal components the writer has to consider in his model analysis and his production of the poem.

The first forms should be unrhymed and rather short, like the haiku. Next should come rhymed forms in which the meters are not rigid, the blues stanza, for example. After these come the shorter rhymed forms containing a fixed number of syllables with a rigid pattern, such as quatrains in iambic pentameter. Then come the longer forms containing shorter ones as structural components, like ballads and sonnets.

Free verse should be studied late in the sequence. It must be emphasized that free verse is not undisciplined verse. The students should learn the disciplinary conventions *first* as a way of emphasizing that free verse requires care, thought, and work.

Usually, as with their other writing, the students will first imitate the models closely. As they gain familiarity with the forms and confidence in writing them, they will move further and further away from the mere aping of the model.

A typical scope and sequence chart for three years' work, which might begin at any grade level or even be telescoped into a specialized advanced course in college, follows:

- |             |                |                   |                           |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. haiku    | closed couplet | quatrains         | ballads                   |
| 2. cinquain | blues stanza   | any "French" form | typographical experiments |
| 3. tanka    | terza rima     | sonnets           | Arnold stanza patterns    |

Let us first consider the types of poetry in the first vertical group:

*Haiku.* These are poems containing three unrhymed lines: the first is five syllables in length; the second, seven; the third, five. The poem presents a unified image that alludes to a passage of time and contains a figure of speech.

*Cinquain.* The *cinquain* form, invented by Adelaide Crapsey, is modeled on Oriental syllable-counting verse. There are five lines, two, four, six, eight, and two syllables long respectively. Ordinarily, the poem contains two images, the second either a contrast to the first or an echo of it.

*Tanka.* Another form derived from the Japanese, the *tanka* contains five lines, five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables long, respectively. The first three lines constitute a *haiku*. Often, the form contains a poetic paradox.

Thus, the poems in the first vertical strand, all involving syllable counting as the central formal feature, advance in length and difficulty, from *grade* to *grade*.

In the same way, the first horizontal row develops a sequence of forms that is progressively more difficult. The *haiku* is followed by work with closed couplets in any convenient meter; the new element is the rhyme. Quatrains are next in sequence, and the writer may use a choice of rhyme-schemes, *abba, abab*, consecutive couplets, or four rhyming lines. Finally, the ballad is introduced. This narrative form begins the writer's experience with planning a longer form and adds the refrain to his repertoire.

In the next year, after the *cinquain*, the writer again encounters a verse form demanding rhyme as a discipline. The blues stanza is essentially a couplet with a repeating first line, but the meter is not rigid since only the accented syllables are significant. For example:

Where are you, baby, so far away from me;  
Where are you tonight, baby, so far away from me;  
Why can't they mail you, baby, across the deep blue sea?

In addition to rhyme, refrains complicate the pattern. A French form such as the *triolet* also uses repeating lines as well as rhyming lines. The rhyme-scheme is *ABaAabAB*, with capitals indicating lines which are either repeated or have repeated rhyme words. The form is clearly more complex and longer than the *quatrain*. The final experience in the sequence is the imitation of such "shape" poems as those by E. E. Cummings ("Portrait," for example) in which the typographical arrangement supports the imagery.

In the last year, the second sequential element is the *terza rima* series of three-line stanzas—*aba, bcb, cdc*—in iambic pentameter ending with a couplet. Next is the sonnet. (The vertical sequence is arranged so that it moves from quatrains through longer rhymed forms to a fourteen-line form.) Finally,

there is the Arnold stanza, a type of free verse that is characterized by blank verse lines mingled with rhyming lines and lines of unpredictable meter.

Of course, a student's classification by the school as an eleventh or twelfth grader does not imply his readiness for writing the forms appearing at the end of this sequence. While one or two students in a senior English class might write fairly successful sonnets without experience with the earlier forms, many more will not. They will experience much frustration and irritation. Some students who have had success with the simpler forms will not be able or willing to attempt the more complex forms. Thus, although this series of forms is described as a three-year sequence, it is wise with many twelfth-grade classes to use only the forms on the first or second levels. As with the other subject matter aspects of English, the teacher must make the judgment about what is appropriate for his students as learners, a judgment which cannot be made on the basis of meaningless grade-level classifications.

#### Fables

In addition to poetry, the class of form-oriented writing should contain prose forms.

Fables are easy to analyze and serve as a good introduction to narrative writing. When the form has been studied, the teacher should suggest some ideas that will help the students to start writing fables, for example, a dog asking a bird to teach him how to fly. The student should then develop a complete narrative and supply a moral. The following are other typical ideas for fables:

- A squirrel sees a cat near a tree where nuts are hidden.
- A scarecrow and a telephone pole discuss sparrows.
- A young tadpole and an old mosquito talk about their pond.
- A circus horse and a plough horse consider tractors.

The following is a fable written by a dysfunctional student in a remedial writing program (only misspellings are corrected in this version, a first draft):

A dog didn't know what he wanted to be. One day he saw a bird and he said that's what I'll be a flying dog.  
He said to the bird, "How did you learn to fly?" The bird said my mother taught me and the dog said how and the bird said she pushed me off a tree.  
So the dog said, "That's too bad. I can't climb trees."  
The bird told him there's a pretty good cliff over there, just jump.

So the dog went over to the cliff and he did but he didn't fly because it was a dog.  
moral: Be satisfied the way you are but try to improve.

The didactic influence of the school guidance program that is so obvious here gives this composition added poignancy. Because the fable form is short, readily analyzed, and carries humorous undertones, it is useful even in work with the weakest students. That the resulting composition is ironic and a parody was not the intention of the writer.

### Parodies

An intentional parody is form-oriented, that is, it imitates another work taken as a whole. One problem sometimes not perceived by beginning teachers in dealing with parodies in the literature program is that the work that is being ridiculed by the parodist must be familiar to the reader in order for the parody to be successful. The same is the case when teaching parodies in composition.

Work with parodies should begin by having the students analyze one and also the work, genre, or style that it is ridiculing. The whole class should then imitate the parody under study. The primer parodies of George Ade and Eugene Field and the parodies of Will Cuppy are good for this purpose, since each work is rather short. Here is a parody in imitation of Will Cuppy by an eighth-grade boy:

### THE DUCK

The duck walks around on very flat feet. He sings through his nose. His song is that of a quack. The duck is ambiguous. He likes to swim in the briny deep.<sup>1</sup> Ducks glide through the air with the agility of an elephant. If you happen to ask a duck why he has flat feet his answer would be something like this: "All the better to stamp out Beatles with."<sup>2</sup> One of the duck's many worries is the hunter. The hunter always likes to have the duck as the guest of honor at the dinner table.<sup>3</sup> Ducks live on eelgrass which they like quite a bit (the ducks that is). All that they do is hang-around the hunters.<sup>4</sup> If you happen to have a pet duck at home you will know what they like to eat—quackers.

<sup>1</sup> Of mud puddles that is

<sup>2</sup> Water beatsles is what I mean

<sup>3</sup> As the main course

<sup>4</sup> They are often called decoys!

The next step in working with parodies is the imitation of various writing styles. In preparation for the assignment, the class should read a number of highly stylized models: stories by Poe, poetry by Ogden Nash, articles from *Time*, essays in "The Talk of the Town" in *The New Yorker*, confession magazine stories, passages from the Bible, scenes from Shakespeare's plays, fairy tales, Howard Pyle, and so on.

After several days' reading, the class should be told that they will be imitating one of these styles and that each person should select the one that he thinks he can do best in the assignment, which will be to select a well-known story told in one style (such as Rumpelstiltskin) and rewrite it in another (such as Poe's style). When the students have decided on their styles, committees should be formed on the basis of the style they will imitate—for example, a Poe group, a Bible group, a *Time* group.

After the group discusses samples of the style to illuminate specific characteristics, each person should write his parody.

When the teacher receives the papers, he should give them a general reading, group by group, to determine which students have mastered the styles chosen. These students should then serve as editors in their groups to help weaker writers correct their stylistic shortcomings. The following composition parodies the style of primers and first grade readers.

### NOAH'S ARK

God was mad. He did not like man. "Oh, oh, oh," says God. "I wish that I did not make man. Bad, bad man."

"Look," said Noah. "Look, look, look. See the funny man. Hear him talk. His name is God. God is mad. He only likes Noah. Lucky, lucky Noah."

God says, "I am very mad. I will make it rain. Rain, rain, rain. Build a boat. A big, big boat."

"Look, look," says Noah. "See me build the boat. It is a big, big boat. See the boat. It is a pretty, pretty boat. I can hit a nail. I can saw wood. It is a nice big boat."

"O Father, look, look, look," says Noah's son. "See all the animals come in our boat. See the dogs. See the cats. I see two dogs and two cats. See the other animals. Funny, funny animals."

"Yes, yes," says Noah. "See the animals. See the food. Look at all the food."

"Good, good," says God. "That is good."

Soon it rained. Noah got in his boat. The animals got in the boat. Everybody got in the boat.

"Oh, look," says Noah. "See it rain. See it pour. I am safe. The funny animals are safe. See it rain, rain, rain."

Tenth-grade girl

Obviously, while students can write successful parodies in imitation of Eugene Field's primer parodies and of Will Cuppy's or George Ade's parodies at any grade level from seventh upwards, depending on their background, most students have more difficulty writing parodies which are based on the analysis of style. At higher grade levels, functional and fluent writers can focus on more complex aspects of style and on more complex styles through their work on parody. Many twelfth graders will be incapable of making the analysis of even a style as distinctive as Poe's to produce a parody such as the example in Chapter 13 on pp. 306-307. However, functional and fluent writers can learn a good deal about the nature of style in making the analysis in preparation for writing parody. The teacher can control the difficulty of the exercise by his suggestion of materials. For instance, analyzing and parodying J. D. Salinger's style in *The Catcher in the Rye* is far simpler than doing the same thing with Milton's style in *Paradise Lost*. A good source of parodies, by the way, is Dwight MacDonal's *Parodies, An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerholm—and After* (New York: Random House, 1965).

### Irony

The most difficult kind of form-oriented composition is the piece that leads to an ironic conclusion. Many short stories and some poetry (like Shelley's "Ozymandias") have such a conclusion; their final lines or image are ironic counterpoint to the bulk of the composition. After a number of literary models of this type have been read and analyzed, the teacher should give the following assignment:

"From your own experience or knowledge of current events or history, reconstruct an incident as a narrative or a poem in such a way that the very last part of the composition makes an ironic comment on either the whole incident or the central image of the incident."

Examples of some appropriate imagery or incidents should be elicited and suggested, such as:

Scraps of paper blowing in the wash of a modern jet airliner.

Oklahoma farms of the 1920s and the Dust Bowl.

An empty stadium after a World Series game.

A military conqueror who surveys his conquest, a city he has razed in a long siege.

A school building after a severe fire or the day after summer vacation starts.

A model for this type of writing appears in Lesson 12 of the "Courage" unit in Chapter 14. The model was composed in an independent writing assignment by a very fluent ninth-grade student. While the lesson appears in a unit designed primarily for seventh and eighth graders that particular

writing lesson has been used successfully, apart from the unit, with tenth- and eleventh-grade functional writers. In examining the structure of the model, which tells of a volcanic eruption, the students should particularly note the two main sections of the essay, what might be called before and after descriptions in which the writer treats the same details, first in tranquility and then as the volcanic eruption takes place.

In addition, compositions of this type are appropriate in "The Outcast" unit which appears in Chapter 9. Students imagine themselves as outcasts telling of their own feelings from the first person point of view as they experience rejection by others. The speaker in such a story experiences some change in attitude as he discovers the attitudes of others. Students can have considerable success with such writing because they can deal directly with a change in feeling, which is usually ironic, yet do not have to work out the personalities of characters in detail, or develop dialogue or complex plots.

An assignment that is interesting to both teachers and students, and one that can provide valuable insights to both, is having the students discuss—in corollary compositions—how they did their writing. Invariably, the discussions that are turned in with the work that is form-oriented will tell about planning the composition—and *that is all*. The same emphasis is present with discussions about the writing of information-oriented compositions—to the extent that the teacher reads what is virtually a sentence outline of the composition. Planning and analysis are necessary even with poem forms that might ordinarily suggest esoteric composing processes. The following example is from a ninth-grade girl:

### Tanka and Analysis

#### DAWN

The air, like a cloud  
Is from the day. Yet the owl  
Still sings his night song.  
What art thou, Dawn, day or night?  
Gray Dawn, thou art night and day.

This poem is a tanka. Tanka is Japanese poetry composed according to strict rules:

1. The first three lines must conform to the rules for haiku.
2. Two lines consisting of seven syllables each are added.
3. The tanka must contain a paradox.

I will tell you how I composed mine. First, I thought of two opposites—day and night. I then contrasted day and night to form a paradox, the resolution of this being the time when day and night meet, dawn. I then arranged my thoughts in poetical form, according to the tanka rules.

Ninth-grade girl

Apparently, with information-oriented writing, the entire organism is so focused on planning that, even with introspection, the writing experience seems to be entirely defined in terms of the content of the token and the way in which it is laid out.

With form-oriented writing, on the other hand, the work seems to be seen in two stages that are clearly separate to the writer: planning and execution. There is little resistance to writing about how the piece was written (unless the token itself is lengthy and the introspective writing imposes a real burden).

Presumably, the central feature of the writing of both types is in the planning.

This contrasts strongly with responses that are obtained from "side" assignments with other kinds of writing (to be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). In Chapter 24, student comments on their work with slanting inevitably relate to how and why particular words and images were chosen, and usually there is a discussion of expected reader response. But there is little discussion of overall planning per se.

#### NOTES

1. Kenneth L. Pike, "Beyond the Sentence," *College Composition and Communication*, XV (October 1964), pp. 129-135.
2. Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless Patient Spider" in *Immortal Poems of the English Language*, ed. Oscar Williams. New York: Washington Square Press, 1960, p. 411.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

1. The following books are useful as background for the analyses required in teaching form-oriented writing:
  - (a) BLOOM, EDWARD A., PHILBRICK, CHARLES H., and BLUSTEIN, ELMER M., *The Order of Poetry* (New York: Odyssey, 1961) and SANDERS, THOMAS E., *The Discovery of Poetry* (Glencoe, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1967).

### Empathic Writing

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The two broad subclasses of compositions characterized by emotional involvement of the reader include the *direct* and the *empathic* types. With the type eliciting *direct* response, the intent of the writer is to trigger an immediate emotional response to the writing. On the other hand, the *empathic* types evoke response that is more complex. The reader is reminded of elements in his own past experience and psychologically "enters" the work as a result of his remembered experience.

With just a little training even relatively unsophisticated readers can be made aware of the mechanisms involved in responding to tokens that elicit *direct* responses. Their awareness of the quickly triggered emotions is the touchstone of their analysis.

The analysis of *empathic* tokens is quite another thing. The writer develops his token with a great deal of subtlety since one secret of producing the desired responses is to keep the reader unaware that he is being manipulated. Consequently, the techniques used in manipulating him must themselves be hidden. Very likely, production of the most successful of these tokens is the result of the intuition of the writer as much as of any conscious planning. Suggesting that much of the "planning" is intuitive—and certainly the techniques are not made obvious—then, these tokens resist analysis. In contrast, tokens eliciting *direct* emotional involvement are, ordinarily, readily analyzed.

**DIRECT EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT** The class of writing that intends to evoke a direct response will be marked, in the main, by the connotations of the words and images that the writer employs. There are, in various literatures, lists of words that have been shown to have the power to invoke rather immediate and direct responses of the type that can be empirically measured with verbal reactionnaires and even more directly with laboratory instruments such as the sphygmomanometer, the psychogalvanometer, and the like.<sup>1</sup> Various tests have been standardized on the basis of verbal responses made quickly to words and images of various kinds.<sup>2</sup>

The responses will derive from either (or both) the value or the drive systems of the audience. George Orwell, in *1984*, depicts the effect of communication intended to evoke such responses; at the same time, *1984* threatens the value system of many in Orwell's own audience.

Other writing in this category is advertising copy, political, religious, and other kinds of propaganda, such as sermons, political speeches, and safety messages. Many love letters and much poetry can be so classified, as can the greetings on many greeting cards.

Whenever one of his students chalks certain messages on his blackboard and sits in class awaiting a response, a teacher is involved as audience in a communications situation defined by the writer's (usually) threatening his value system. This is not to be confused with the compulsive writing of such messages, since in this classroom case the intent of the writer is largely positive, although it may be colored by compulsive elements.

Most of the writing in this classification is covered in the introductory unit described in Chapter 24. The emphasis on audience analysis and the resulting care in word choice have a general carry-over value for all writing. The production of mock advertisements is fun for the class and illustrates the principles involved in this kind of writing.

One other type of assignment bears mentioning in connection with this category. When the class has finished work with parodies as discussed in the previous chapter, they can do some work that is based on the skills they have learned:

The teacher should lead a discussion on satire and the attitude of the satirist. A number of broader satires (such as some of the work of Mark Twain) should be read and discussed in terms of the probable motivations of their authors.

Next, the students should suggest some subjects from their direct experience that invite satire: current demagogues, the school staff, hypocrisy in their churches, status seeking in their neighborhoods, and the like. The next step is to describe the behavior and speech of persons involved in a typical situation that invites the satire. After a typical vignette has been described, it becomes the central element in a composition. The composition should be written in a highly stylized way, reflecting the work done with parodies.

The intent of the stylization is to burlesque the target of the satirical attack. For example, a football coach who gives especially unctuous talks in school assemblies about school spirit and the uplifting values of sports but who violates the ideals of sportsmanship in his coaching might be attacked through a composition in this vein:

He saith unto them:

"Bring unto me the heroes who are numbered among ye. Bring unto me the youths of an hundred weights and heroes will I make of them. Bring unto me the youths four and five cubits high and them will I make mine ends. Deliver unto

me thy youths of comely grace and surpassing speed and them will I make like unto the stars that shineth in the firmament. Stars of the night will I make them yea, verily, and stars of the day."

And he added saying:

"Unto the youths will I not give succor but labor. For from labor the spirit springeth forth; and by the spirit wilt thou be known."

And they did as he had commanded them and brought unto him the comely youths of many shekels and surpassing speed. And when they had been delivered unto him he spoke again saying:

"Behold thine enemies. Go out unto them with the talon and the tooth. Meet them with thine ears unafraid, and fire in thine eyes and evil in thy soul. Fear not for the officials and the sheriffs. For is it not written that when their heads are turned away, their eyes are blinded? Go then unto thine enemies with malice and with hate. The bones of men were made but to be broken and the faces of men but to be striped. Know ye that by their stripes are we healed. Peace be unto you."

**EMPATHIC WRITING** The writer of empathic tokens intended a response produced from the memory of the reader that is, as such characterized as vicarious, may, perhaps, choose the first person to involve the reader in the work.

Whatever befalls "I" or "we" happens immediately to the reader. Additionally, the writer tries to convey emotional and sensory experiences directly. Often, he will employ figurative language to intensify the reader's involvement. Burns' often-quoted "My love is like a red, red rose . . . My love is like a melody" is of different order of comparison from "the controlling mechanism of a telescope is like a watchworks." Because of their power in invoking empathic responses, symbols are often employed. The writer may even, at times, use some of the more blatant stylistic devices that are used in direct empathic writing. This class of writing includes much of both longer and shorter fiction, drama, personal essays, personal letters, and many forms of poetry.

Probably, the writing in this category that is featured most frequently in English curricula is the short story. Within the context of English classwork, the short story is considered a longer narrative form. We have already considered some types of narratives.

In teaching narrative writing, it is best to begin with form-oriented writing because it can be readily analyzed. For example, the structure of the fable is obvious. A short story with an ironic twist, presents no difficulties in analysis. Parodies are relatively simple to analyze. Because these forms do not seek to involve the reader in an empathic way, they have an additional advantage in that the writer need not concern himself with techniques for gaining reader involvement. In addition to being relatively easy to analyze, these forms are readily imitated.

This is not the case with the type of narrative under discussion here. Since



such narratives involve the reader, usually from the outset, they are easy to read. For that reason, people are misled into thinking they are also easy to write. But this is hardly the case.

As an extreme example of the failure of readability to reflect "writability," consider the income tax form. Such a document is anything but easy to read. How many readers are there who aren't certain they could write a better document? Works by Hemingway, on the other hand, are not nearly so difficult to read as works by various governmental tax agencies. Yet how many of his readers think for a moment that they could improve upon him in their own writing?

### Analysis of Models

The first difficulty that faces the teacher and students is that of analyzing the work, and the first analytical problem is to determine the probable purpose of the writer. However, aside from the obvious desire to obtain the primary affect of reader involvement, the author's purpose in terms of the secondary affect can be obscure, sometimes deliberately so.

Let us consider as an illustration (although it is not narrative prose) *Androcles and the Lion*. The uninitiated reader would probably assume that any secondary affect relates exclusively to the readers' reexamination of the Christian ethic in terms of Shaw's characterizations. Yet it is almost astonishing to read a commentary on the play made by the author himself:

It was currently reported in the Berlin newspapers that when Androcles was first performed in Berlin, the Crown Prince rose and left the house unable to endure (I hope) the very clear and fair exposition of autocratic Imperialism given by the Roman captain to his Christian prisoners. No English Imperialist was intelligent and earnest enough to do the same in London. If the report is correct, I confirm the logic of the Crown Prince, and am glad to find myself so well understood. But I can assure him that the Empire which served for my model when I wrote *Androcles* was, as he is now finding to his cost, much nearer my home than the German one.<sup>3</sup>

Who but the very perceptive reader would see in this play an attack on British imperialism?

Another example where the author's purpose is possibly ambiguous is Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Many readers see the book as an attack on the meat-packing industry. According to Peter Finley Dunne in the persona of Mr. Dooley, even Theodore Roosevelt interpreted the book in this way and moved quite dramatically to change the situation. No doubt effecting such a change was part of Sinclair's purpose, but the last four chapters of the book suggest that one of his central purposes was to propagandize for socialism.

To take another example, is Conrad's *Secret Agent* mainly a close analysis of depraved and inept revolutionaries or a biting satire directed against the theory of anarchy?

If it is difficult enough to analyze purpose in fiction, it is even more difficult to analyze its structure. Traditionally, there is a general feeling that the structure of most fiction can be expressed in a diagram showing a line of "rising action," a "turning point" (crisis), and a line of "falling action:"

Many works, however, appear to be designed on other structural models. De Hartog's *The Inspector*, for example, seems cyclical or spiral in design. Picaresque works seem to be modeled on a chain. The "slice of life" genre seems to be virtually "formless."

How does one analyze the function of characters? It seems clear, for example, that Dr. Watson in Conan Doyle's stories is intended to represent the reader. In the *Gold Bug*, does the Negro slave have the same function? What is the function of Le Grand? After all, Poe might have had the protagonist find the scarab.

Thus, because the plan of this kind of writing may not be open and obvious, the teacher of composition is faced at the outset of instruction with a tremendous obstacle.

It is also difficult to analyze the technique used to obtain the desired empathy from the audience. In nonempathic works the technique is readily apparent: the summary within the information-oriented piece; the moral within the fable; the figurative image within the poem. But in empathic works the technique is not so obvious. How is empathy produced while the plan for producing it is obscured?

One means of arousing empathy is the voice the author chooses to use. For example, younger authors often write narratives in the first person, and some of them are indeed powerful in compelling empathy. But is the use of the first person the result of a deliberate stylistic choice by the authors, or is it a compulsive element in their writing?

### Student Compositions

Besides being difficult to analyze, this type of narrative prose is perhaps the most challenging of all compositions. Yet, how many teachers blandly assign the writing of short stories when they themselves have never seriously attempted the form, let alone completed one? Is this question an echo of the anathematic: "Them as can't do, teach!"?

Most students must be classed as functional, but not fluent, writers. If the teacher has never—or only rarely—successfully completed a short story, how can he expect them to do the work? Generally speaking, then, the composition of short stories is best delayed until later years.

A general teaching principle arises at this point. Before he decides to teach any kind of writing, a teacher should himself attempt the form. If he has a great deal of trouble with it or cannot handle it, he should not have his students try it because when he reads their papers, he will not be able to see the problem from their viewpoint. His own failure indicates that he cannot deal with the composing problem, although he may be able to deal with the problem as a critical reader. Even if a critic sees flaws in a work, however, that in itself is no indication that he is skilled enough as a writer to put flaws into a work of his own, let alone eliminate them from the work of others.

Let us examine the work of one ninth-grade girl in a belletristic writing program having as its terminal objective the completion of a short story.\*

### YOU HAVE TO GROW UP SOMETIME

The air inside the classroom was stifling hot, and moist, and although the windows were all wide open, not even the slightest breeze stirred the atmosphere. The kids sprawled, dazedly, in stiff chairs, drowsed before propped open textbooks, barely hearing the droning, disinterested voice of the teacher, who, himself, was bored and lethargic. Glazed eyes wandered to the window, mouths gaped like vast pink canyons in wide yawns. It was June, and school was nearly over; it was the time when everyone felt classes were an imposition, and school was now stealing precious summer freedom.

The shrill shouts of the gym classes below on the playing fields watted up. Wasps and flies buzzed angrily in corners of the ceiling. A flushed, perspiring boy crushed beetles under his feet, and ground them into the floor, his heels making a rough grinding noise. Outside, the leafy green maples were motionless against a cloudless, deep azure sky.

Peter Haley was certainly not concentrating on the solving of radical equations. He was planning, in complete, intricate detail, how to ask Julie Newman to the ninth grade Prom. He phrased and re-phrased his invitation, imagined himself slavely delivering it, and Julie graciously, delightfully, accepting.

"All right, you can start on your homework now," the teacher raised his voice and broke in on Peter's reverie. "Page 327, Part B and C, and Page 328, Part One—odd numbers. I'll put the assignment on the board. Get a good start now, and it'll only take a few minutes to finish tonight. Steve, Barry, pass out papers please. No talking."

Absently, Peter flipped to page 327 of his math book and wrote his

\* She was a student of a gifted teacher of composition, Mr. Gary Elliot, of Warren Junior High School, Newton, Massachusetts.

name and class, and the date at the top of his paper. He numbered the examples, and the page number, put down his pencil and yawned. Glancing at the clock, he saw that there were 15 minutes left in the period. Then he'd have to face Julia and ask her. But he wasn't ready yet. A pang of fear and apprehension caught at his throat. Just relax, he told himself. Over and over, on the page intended for his math homework, Peter traced Julie's name. He printed it in block letters, decorated it with curls and designs, wrote it in flowing script, backwards, forwards, every variation he could dream up.

"Hey, Pete!" someone hissed.

Hastily, he covered the paper, and looked up. He caught a flying folded square of composition paper, and the tail, freckled red-head three seats away grinned and made a "V" victory sign.

Peter opened it and read the scribbled contents:

"Pete,

Have you asked Julie to the Prom yet? Are you going to? I asked Susan and she accepted. Naturally. Michael and Audrey are going, and Roger and Pamela. We can all go out before the dance. Okay?? Hurry up and invite someone. Good luck, Romeo.

Write back.

Joe"

Peter tore off a strip of notebook paper and addressed it. Just then, the student bell clanged the end of classes. Thirty chairs slammed against thirty desks, thirty voices rose in a noisy chorus, and thirty students surged eagerly toward the door.

Peter and Joe met at the door.

"I guess I'll go ask her now," Peter said casually.

"Good, man" Joe slapped him across the shoulders. "Give her a sexy smile and promise her orchids."

"Cut it out, wise guy. See you after school in the breezeway."

Joe turned into his homeroom but Peter cut through the crowding, jostling mob in the third-floor corridor, making slow but steady progress toward the lockers across from the Music Room. At the water fountain he paused and shoved his books on the top of the row of lockers. He gulped a long icy drink, then dipped his fingers under the spray and splashed cold water on the damp, sticky hair plastered to his forehead. He then carefully combed his hair, to the side and a little forwards, and tucked his wrinkled blue shirt into his trousers. Stretching his sixty four and a half inches as far as he could he assumed an expression of nonchalance and friendly aloofness.

"What the hell are you primpin' for, Princess?" taunted a tall athletic boy, with mocking eyes and long blond hair.

Peter blushed self-consciously, and noticed the blond boy, and several friends regarding him with scornfully amused eyes.

"This ain't a beauty parlor, y'know," the boy jeered.

The others laughed, adding to Peter's embarrassment. Instantly, Peter felt dull and plain, and very young and unpopular. Compared to the slen-

der blond athlete, with sharp, good looks and carefree easy manner typical of the "in crowd," he felt like Porky Pig. Peter grabbed his books and hurried away from his tormenters, from the cool green eyes that made fun of his masculinity.

He found Julie easily, standing by her open locker, unloading a pile of books. He stole himself, and sauntered up.

"Hi, Julie," he began.

"Oh, hi Peter. How are you?" she seemed mildly surprised to find him coming right up to her.

"Okay." He couldn't remember how he had planned to broach the dance. Panicky, he sought for conversation topics. She rescued him unknowingly.

"Have we got French homework tonight?" she asked.

"Uh, just to, uh, study for the v-verb t-test tom-tomorrow," he stutered. Ashamed and angry at himself for stuttering, he plunged in.

"Um, Julie—uh, would you, uh, go to the Prom with me?" he gulped.

She faced him then. Was that surprise, amazement in her expression? "Oh, Peter, I'm sorry. I'll be away that weekend, with my family. I put up a fuss—of course—I didn't want to miss the Prom—but I couldn't get out of it, and I still can't. The arrangements are made, of course, and can't be broken . . ."

"Are you sure?" he tried desperately.

"I'm afraid so," she shut the green metal door firmly, and locked it. It changed, and echoed hollowly, and Peter was surprised to find the hall nearly vacant.

He shifted his books to his other arm.

"I'm sorry, Peter, really. I would've loved to go with you . . ."

Well, those were the breaks, Peter thought.

"It's all right," he said, pretending not to care. "I'll see you around." "Good-bye."

He rushed to his homeroom, just in time for the dismissal bell. The hordes of kids tore for the outdoors, and liberty, but Peter loitered, hoping to avoid the curious, probing questions of his friends. Somehow he didn't like to admit the refusal, even though there was a plausible, truthful reason. It wasn't as if she didn't want to go with him, but, still . . .

Peter slowly strolled towards the end of the corridor. Just as he reached the drinking fountain, near the corner where the two halls intersected, he was stopped by a high, giggly voice.

"Who asked you?" shrieked one girl.

"Peter Haley?" giggled another. "Can you believe it? That baby, that utter *child*. I'll bet he's never even made out, or smoked, or anything!"

A third girl burst into wild laughter.

"I don't believe it! As if you'd go with him. He must've had a crush on you, Julie, he must've worshipped you from afar, and then got the nerve up to invite you—"

She broke off in a gust of merriment.

The second girl spoke again. "He stuttered and blushed and everything. He was so serious, so embarrassed. It was *funny!* Too bad you missed it."

Dully, he recognized the voice as Julie's. A hotness rose to his cheeks and spread all over his body, a thick aching lump lodged itself in his throat. He groped for the wall, and leaned, dizzily, against its coolness, hidden from view in a little nook. His heart beat rapidly, and he could not move from the spot.

"I told him I was going away for the weekend. The dumb little thing naturally believed me."

The girl snorted.

"Anyway, Dennis will be asking me soon, probably. If he doesn't, I'll go with Jerry or Buck. I'm not desperate enough to go with Peter Haley."

The laughter burned his ears again. He had made a gross error, he realized, a dreadful mistake. Everything between Julie and himself had been in his imagination. The time they walked home together—he saw it now not as a show of affection for him, but just something she couldn't avoid, and didn't really care much about.

And Dennis, he knew Dennis. A cool, popular blond boy—an athlete. A boy who made him feel like Porky Pig, who taunted him and shamed him. By tomorrow, Dennis would have material for more jokes, new taunts. He couldn't stand it any more. Desperately he wheeled and raced down the hall, away from the girls' voices. Blindly, he bounded down the stairs, and burst out into the sweltering afternoon.

He avoided all people, and kept running, although it was so hot. Sweat poured down his cheeks, and glistened on his neck, but the physical discomfort was nothing compared to the emotional pain.

He climbed the brick steps and pulled open the screen door, letting it swing back and slam jarringly against the house. He stood in the cool vestibule, waiting.

"Mom?" he yelled hoarsely.

"I'm upstairs, Pete."

Pete, she called him. He went upstairs anyway.

"How was your day, son?"

"Oh, okay."

"Everything go all right?"

"Yeah."

"Get an A on your history quiz?"

"A—"

"That's good. Want any lemonade?"

"Later, maybe."

"Are you sure you're all right, Pete?"

"Yes, I'm all right," he raised his voice angrily. "I told you, I'm fine."

"All right, all right. You'd better go make your bed now."

He went to his room. It was cool and dim and sheltering; the curtains were drawn. He gazed in the mirror, seeing for the first time the pimples on his chin, the pale, dull eyes, mousy brown hair, the plump cheeks. Before, he had always looked all right; only girls worried about being good-looking and boys just had to look decent.

But—he was short and unattractive. It *did* matter. Julie's cruel phrases still rang clearly in the chambers of his mind. He saw again her amused,

plying face, Dennis' knowing scornful sneer. He could even picture his own red, chubby, naïvely hopeful face as he stammered out the invitation. His cheeks burned.

He leaned his elbows on the window sill. Peering through the curtains, he could feel the hot, relentless sun. He could feel the humid warmth. He pressed his face against the screen, still and silent, turbulent, disjointed thoughts tumbling in his mind.

A rude awakening to life and truth, he thought grimly.  
But it was too soon. Peter knew that if he were a girl, he would cry.

A story of this quality is unusual among high school students, but it certainly did not come as the result of the sort of assignment that far too many teachers make: "Now that we have read several short stories, you write one of your own for next Friday." Such an assignment produces little except frustration for students and disgust for the teacher when he reads the papers. Stories such as the one above are likely to be produced only after very careful preparation extending over several days.

First, the student chooses a story idea that he thinks he would like to write about. The teacher should encourage simple plot lines, since complex plots in student stories frequently result in terribly unconvincing resolutions. The teacher should consult with students about the initial story idea and at each step during the preparation leading to the final product. However, at this point the student idea need be only a story germ.

Next, the student selects a story which he will study as a general model. His selection should be made after thinking about the probable general content of his own story and after reading a number of short stories by established writers. But the choice is largely intuitive. The students should analyze their models by writing an outline of the story elements. The elements represent a list of the minimal components of narrative fiction: character, point-of-view, structure, and theme.

A short story will contain characters, which the author may develop in many ways: introspectively, through the use of the first person and/or stream-of-consciousness techniques; objective description from the omniscient point of view; the objective (reader) point of view; or from the viewpoint of one or more of the other characters. Thus, the development of character relates strongly to another element: the point of view of the author.

Dialogue is another aspect of character development that is technically very important in connection with reader involvement. Because of this, it should be considered as a separate element in the analysis. Good dialogue helps engage the reader; inadequate dialogue may keep him distant. A fineness of perception for dialects of various kinds and for idiolect is required for the production of good dialogue. This implies the need for both student and teacher to have some linguistic background.

Of course, the story structure must be analyzed. If the narrative turns on

conflict, as most will, all conflicts must be explicated as must their interrelationships. Often, key symbolic and thematic motives are placed at critical structural points in the narrative: in the title itself, at the inception of the action, at the crisis, at the climax, or at the conclusion. Therefore, pertinent imagery at key points must be discussed in the analysis.

Finally, the theme or underlying philosophical generalization must be uncovered since it is the theme that gives substance to serious literature.

These are minimal elements. The pattern for the independent analyses by the students should be set in a preliminary lesson by a teacher-led analysis of some story. After the oral analysis, the teacher should present a duplicated version of that analysis—and this in turn should be analyzed. A student analysis in outline form of "Paul's Case" by Willa Cather follows:

#### Short Story Outline

**PAUL'S CASE** by Willa Cather

- I. Significance of title
  - A. General idea of the story—it is a brief but poignant study of a boy.
  - B. The word "case" is apt, used to give the idea that the story is a study almost like a write-up of "cases" of delinquent, mentally retarded children, or student, like a psychiatrist or social worker or teacher might write—concise, brief but thorough.
  - C. Resembles a counselor's report on an abnormal character
- II. Point of View
  - A. Consistent—objective
  - B. Paul's thoughts are especially emphasized and open yet there is a deep part of Paul that is left closed and hidden for the reader to find himself.
  - C. The thoughts of the other characters are generally exposed, although not in detail.
  - D. An example:  
"He felt grimy and uncomfortable"  
"As he felt, the folly of his haste occurred to him with mercifully less clearness, the vastness of what he had left undone."
- III. Character and Characterization
  - A. Paul
    1. Misunderstood
    2. Dreams, his fantasies
    3. Unsure in common life
    4. Worships music and drama, loses himself in it
    5. Cannot stand (is truly repelled) by people, school life, home, family and neighborhood
    6. Puts on false arrogance, cannot communicate, nervously jaunty and seemingly brash and merry to cover up feelings of hurt, anxiety, misery, loneliness, confusion

**B. Minor Characters**

1. Father
    - a. Doesn't understand him
    - b. Criticizes him for lack of down-to-earth spirit and normal behavior
    - c. Does not sympathize with boy's fantasies and love of music
  2. School teachers and principal
    - a. Same attitude as father
    - b. Are puzzled, chagrined and angered by Paul
    - c. Cannot stand his queer traits
- D. All minor characters seen *only in relationship* to Paul.
- E. His conflicts are the focal point of story
- F. Paul is characterized almost totally in the round, all the characters enter only briefly with description only in regard to their actions towards Paul. His father and several neighbors and teachers are characterized in profile.

**IV. Plot**

- A. Conflicts: Paul in conflict with society (school, home), Paul conflicting in his mind
  - B. Paul is a high school boy living in Pittsburgh
  - C. Called before teachers who are considering Paul's case—as he is abnormal and irritating
  - D. Paul does not care for petty troubles and runs to his job as usher in an open theatre. He quits school, gets a job.
  - E. Cannot tolerate coming home, being scolded, Sunday school; the ugliness of his house and neighborhood—his life—hit him harshly
  - F. Runs away to New York, goes on a spree, lives like a gentleman
  - G. When his father comes in pursuit and his stolen money runs out, Paul jumps onto the track in front of a train and is instantly killed
  - H. Climax: His suicide
- V. Theme
- A. Paul represents the extreme case of people who do not fit in with society and cannot be understood, are somehow repulsive and pathetic. He is wild, reckless, deranged, but is somehow still like more normal individuals who have difficulty adjusting.
- VI. Dialogue
- A. No dialogue employed
  - B. Everything is defined as narrative
  - C. Author will say what so-and-so said but a character will not speak directly

The next step is an exercise, a character sketch. The sketch should be developed so that the subject bears some characteristics parallel to those in the incubating final short story.

**CHARACTERIZATION**

I immediately noticed the man getting on the subway at the third stop. He stumbled on, limping heavily, and tumbled with his wallet and cane. He was a tall, gaunt man, very thin and with a premature, old, worn out look. He stooped, and bent his head like a man of eighty though he was probably only in his early thirties. Perhaps he was trying to hide the black aprivate patch covering his left eye, or the puckered reddish scars—like ridged caterpillars—that disfigured his skin. His face was creased and leathery, weatherbeaten to a dull tan. I noticed his expression, the mouth drawn in a painful grimace of strain and the eyes wild and hard with frustration.

As he tapped his way up the aisle, hesitant and embarrassed, I saw that his right arm ended in a hook, a dull iron hook which he constantly pushed into a fold of his coat. Several times, he poked his bad leg with the hook.

He groped at a seat and found it vacant. Sliding creakily and slowly into a corner of the seat, he turned his eye upon me and I saw the glassy stare of the partially blind. Conscious of the stares and feelings of pity and revulsion, the man turned from the passengers to the window, to escape from reality as best he could.

The obvious parallel element here is the self-consciousness about physical appearance. Not so obvious is the importance of the element of containment or entrapment: the character is forced to be inside something and seeks escape, symbolically, by looking out the window. The window detail occurring in this sketch (and twice in the short story) emerges as an important symbol. In both, it has been placed at conspicuously important structural junctures. A notable weakness in the sketch results from the choice of point of view. The writer deliberately chooses the first person voice and in the last sentence attributes motives to "the man" in a way that is impossible to her narrator, even though she has successfully avoided this earlier.

The next exercise is the development of a dialogue through which a conflict is presented. Once again the exercise must embody elements that will parallel elements in the anticipated story. The obvious element here is the parent-child conflict. Not so obvious is the sense of alienation of the daughter.

**DIALOGUE**

"Joanne, I don't want any more of your insolent backtalk at the dinner table. You are rude and cruel, and to your father; you should respect

him. I won't stand for your fresh remarks any longer and I am demanding just a peaceful evening meal!"

"I was simply stating the fact, mother. You and he are so antiquated—so medieval and his phoniness and preaching makes me ill. Why should I stand for that? Maybe you forget that I'm a person too!"

"Don't talk to me that way, young lady. You know it's your attitude and your impudence. You deliberately misinterpret me."

"Mother, I'll talk to you the way I want to and have any attitude I please. You and he aren't going to boss me around!"

"After all I did for you, sacrificing and guiding, you repel me and hate me. Your father would die for you, he does whatever you wish, gets you things without being asked. I get a job to provide you with luxuries. We all cater to you. And what happens? You treat us like dirt."

"Listen, if I just had freedom and no responsibility to 'the family' I wouldn't care about material things. Don't work if you don't want to. Don't cater to me. Just let me be."

"You're not ready to cope with independence. You'll thank me someday. You'll realize I was right—you're stewing roses on my grave. It'll be too late then. At least when I was young, I was more tolerant, and I would never dream of—"

"Okay, okay. So you were an angel, I'm human."

"You must have no feelings! You abuse your father, you hurt your sister and you stab my heart with your chatting tongue. People have feelings, Joanne, haven't you? Can't you understand? Oh, you're so hard, so heartless . . . you don't love anyone."

"You sound like Billy Graham hollering about sin. But I've got—"  
"Listen to me. We could have such a warm relationship. You and your sister, too, she wants to look up to you. And you should love your father!"

"The less I see of this family, the better. You're always yelling at me to help or clean or set the table or practice the piano. My dear sister tattle-tales on me at every chance, the little two-faced rat. My father never ceases blaming me for something and complaining. A loving family!

Hah! That's a laugh!"

"You make me sad."

"You make me sick."

"Just leave me alone now, please—go!"

"Gladly."

"You always have to have the last word."

The final exercise, before writing the short story, combines the elements of description, dialogue, and conflict and introduces some minor related conflicts. In this exercise, the window image is a central detail, probably a symbolic one since inside the building are the constricting rules of the adult world, while outside is freedom. The major weakness is an uncomfortableness of dialogue. "Okay, just a moment. I hafta get a book." The "moment" doesn't fit well. However, the idiolect "Okay" is very strong as is the ear for adolescent speech

generally. The obvious parallels are the plotting between the girls and the lack of communication between the girls and their parents.

#### LIBRARY VISIT

At six-forty, Shara and Laurie pushed open the heavy wooden door of the Westwood Free Library and entered the musty, quiet building. In a distant back office, a single typewriter clacked rapidly. Two old men hunched in the chairs studying the newspaper. Near them, several high-school boys conversed in rough, hoarse whispers and shuffled through a pile of papers spread out on their table. It was only mid-April—just before daylight savings—but outdoors the setting sun still provided much light, and sunlight poured inside through the windows on the west of the building.

Shara and Laurie walked over to a table in the corner furthest from the librarian's desk. The chairs squeaked across the scuffed floors as they sat down.

"Did your mother give you any trouble?" Laurie asked.

"No," replied Shara. "I told her I had to do a social studies project and had to use a lot of research books. And I said I'd be home by eight-thirty. Of course, she hated to let me go but she couldn't think of a reason to keep me in."

"Yeah . . . my old lady's not home so I got out easy. I have till nine o'clock if I want."

"What time are they coming down?" Shara asked.

Laurie grinned. "Impatient, huh? Well, Jerry has to babysit while his parents go shopping. Then he's picking up John and they'll be down by seven-fifteen or so."

The librarian threw them a disapproving look. Shara sighed and nodded her head. "Laurie, we've got twenty minutes to waste. What are we supposed to do here? We can't even talk."

"Want to read?" Laura giggled.

"You kidding?" croaked Shara. "Let's go to the drugstore for a coke."

"Jerry and John are meeting us at the bridge. I know—I know it's near your house, but we won't stay there."

"Okay. Now I can say I went to the library with a straight face," Shara said. "Hey, how about that coke?"

Laurie stood up.

"Okay, just a moment. I hafta get a book or else my father'll get suspicious. Just let me grab one and we can go."

Shara followed Laurie to the book shelf. She moved into the sunlight by the window and leaned against the radiator, her eyes closed.

"Tell me about John again," she murmured.

"Again? I've described him fifty times. Well, all right. He's got dark hair, see, kind of reddish brown and long, of course, as long as his parents will allow. And he has freckles and light blue eyes with really long eye-

lashes. His nose is kind of wide, though. John's kind of quiet except when he's mad. Then, he yells his head off. Oh, here's a new tip—Jerry told me last night. He hates to be tickled because he goes absolutely hysterical with laughter."

"Will he understand that I have to watch out for my parents and be careful about being seen?"

"Probably. Just don't make too much of sneaking around and avoiding your parents, okay?"

"Okay." Shara agreed.

They padded over to the librarian's desk and lounged against the desk as the stiff, grey haired librarian expertly stamped Laurie's book and slipped the card out.

Shara shoved open the heavy, squeaky door and the girls emerged into the dusky twilight. Neon signs dotted the shopping center and bright vividly colored lights lined the turnpike. A cool wind chilled the mild air and ruffled the leaves of tall elms and maples standing like sentries around the library. The sky was a cloudy dark blue-grey, spattered with tiny blinking diamonds already, although the horizon was still a blinding streak of crimson.

The two girls sauntered down the sidewalk, tingling with delicious fear and a sense of impending action. They were ready to live.

Generally, the short story, "You Have To Grow Up Sometime," does not sustain its quality as well as the shorter exercises, and in some places the influence of the phrasing of adolescent fiction is evident. But short story writing is by all odds the most difficult of all the potential assignments in secondary school composition. This one was worth the effort. In most classrooms the effort is better directed elsewhere.

#### NOTES

1. Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*. (New York: David McKay Co., 1957), p. 8.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
3. George Bernard Shaw, *Nine Plays by Bernard Shaw* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935), p. 980.

#### SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER READING

1. A good background source for the analysis of narrative is BOOTH, WAYNE C., *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961).

## Introspective Elements in Writing

# 28

An interesting part of our literary tradition is the introspective view that writers have provided on their creative experiences. There is an imposing literature of the kind quoted in Chapter 23 in which writers report on how they write. Much of the reportage deals with elements in the personality that influence writing in ways that appear to lack volitional direction.

It is natural that professional writers should be interested in their own composing and writing mechanisms. Presumably, they sense that introspection along these lines helps to bring their writing under conscious control; hence, they are less at the mercy of the muse. Certainly, if a writer finds that he works best at night, he can spare himself both energy and frustration that he might otherwise waste in trying to work by daylight. Even if his beliefs about his work are self-delusions, they may serve as conditions in helping him work, or at least as mnemonics having the same function. Anyway, writers do write about how they write, and perhaps this kind of writing is itself compulsive.

Introspection about writing is a valuable part of the composition program, as valuable to the teachers to whom the introspection is communicated as it is to the students. One purpose in this self-analysis is to bring as much of the composing process under volitional control as possible.

#### Assignments in Introspective Writing

Two kinds of assignments are appropriate. The first is to have the students write about the process involved in working up specific compositions. This assignment should be given only when the target of instruction is a relatively short piece (as with the samples on pp. 531, 533, and 575). If they have to do this extra work in connection with longer writing assignments, they may resent it and treat the self-analysis in a superficial way. Moreover, many stu-



denis schedule work on longer assignments over several days and, as a result, may forget important details of the composing process.

The second kind of introspective writing is on a general topic, such as "The Way I Write." If this assignment is given late in the course as a regular or "extra credit" composition assignment, the students are highly motivated to take it seriously. The areas that can be readily blocked off for such consideration are the environment and the condition of the organism as compulsive components of the composing process. Another area for consideration, especially for the mature student, is style.

The series of examples below were written as "extra credit" work (that is, optional assignments). They were submitted without the follow-up proof-reading, criticism, and revision indicated as part of the routine process in Chapter 24 so that the teacher could get at the informational content when the form was pristine. All the writers were eighth graders. All of these papers were written by members of the same class. The diversity of the self-analyses suggests strongly that students have different needs in terms of their composing processes. The implication, then, is that a teacher in developing his composition program must provide for these differences at every stage of the program.

## 1

As I sit at my desk in my room crazy thoughts go through my head. If I get an inspiration from them, I pick up my pen and write.

Very few things I write are really my own. I am usually given an assignment to write about a subject, use or copy someone else's style, or analyze another's work. My mind, being restricted to these various areas, is usually trapped without words to write. I need an inspiration to start me, and sometimes one does not come. My surroundings, mood, and appetite affect my thoughts and inspirations greatly.

My favorite surroundings are in my room. It looks basically average, messy but comfortable. In one corner there is a pile of clothes on a chair and junk all over my bed. On the other side of the room I keep my mice. Next to the table that they are on is a sloppy thing I call my desk. This is usually covered with papers, dirty nylons, books, etc. Also on it is my radio which I always have on when I do my homework. These are the conditions I work under. If they were different I wouldn't be able to stand it.

My mood also affects my writing. If I'm angry at someone or something I can't concentrate. When I'm depressed I don't think straight and if I don't like the subject I am writing the composition for, I probably won't bother to do a good job.

Strange as it may seem my appetite affects my work too. I can't work unless on a full stomach. Usually I can only be satisfied with certain foods. One time it was raspberry jello. Another time it was two glasses of

lemonade. (If this composition doesn't seem very good, it's because I'm on a diet and I didn't have a snack at all!)

All these things set my mind whirling with thoughts as I write. After I get ideas the only problem I have is putting them down with words. Somehow I seem to manage. Sometimes in better ways than others.

## 2

When I write I make sure everything around me is in order. One will often find me cleaning my room before I write. I can't conceive why, but it seems that when I write I can't have my conscience bothering me. The space around me is neat but my paper is unreadable by anyone other than myself. I always have an extra sheet of paper beside me where I will write all the words I don't know how to spell. By the time I'm finished just about all 27 lines are taken up with one word a piece. I also drink 2-3 glasses of water because my mind gets dried up from talking so much.

## 3

I have to write on impulse and think about my assignment first for a long time. Sometimes I talk about my assignment with friends just to have some ideas. When I do the final writing I have to be completely alone, being in my room with the door shut and the window blinds closed. I also have to have an empty stomach. I sort of keep myself going by having a goal of food and can't eat until I have finished my English.

I usually work best under pressure. Many times I put off my homework till the morning it is due and I make myself get up at 6:00. Even then I put off the homework till 7:00 and then I have only a half an hour to work because I have to get dressed by about 7:45 and then eat breakfast, which takes about twenty minutes because I am a very slow eater. Then I have to catch the bus. Some of my best compositions have been finished up in the morning before I got to school. That way I really have to rack my brain. I write everything I need in the composition. At times I have leisure time to write my compositions but then it takes a longer time because I don't really concentrate. When I write a paper the morning it's due I usually take most of the night to think about what to write.

## 4

Anyone who writes any sort of materials such as compositions, books, poems, plays, etc. probably has special conditions under which they write. This is true of myself. Someone would think that most people require silence. Under my circumstances this is not true. I have to write my compositions where there is activity, or where it is noisy. This usually takes place in our kitchen. If there is no one around me to make noise I turn the radio on. But before I can do any of this I have to have something to eat so I can concentrate on what I'm doing.

Once I settle down and turn on the radio I start to think of possibilities for my composition. Once I get the main idea I turn off the radio and start writing down my information before I forget it. If I should think of something that would fit well in the middle or end of the composition before I think of the beginning, I take a few notes on it so I won't forget to put it in. This is the plan I follow for compositions that require no facts from books.

When I write a composition that requires information from books I write it in a little different fashion. First I look over the facts from the book and jot down important features on a piece of paper, then I arrange them in their best order, and then go to work writing up my composition and see places where improvements can be made, then I fix them.

## 5

When I am going to write something, whether it is a composition or just a letter, I must first be inspired. Unless I've got an inspiration I cannot write. I cannot write if I am hungry, either. Often I will go and eat or drink something before starting to write. Another thing I need is moderate quiet. If there is a lot of noise and confusion I cannot concentrate. I think I write best in the evening, in a room by myself, with a low murmur of noises. I can't write with a lot but there must be some noise. If there is no noise my mind starts to wander and if there's a lot I can't concentrate.

Before I start writing I will develop the whole plan for whatever it is in my mind. I don't usually bother to write it down but I don't just sit down and write. Even a letter, I organize mentally. I do not have any habits, though, such as sharpening pencils, going for walks, or eating something before I write.

## 6

When I finally settle down to write a poem, book report or whatever, I am definitely under pressure. One of the reasons for this may be the time at which I prefer to attempt a composition, at night. Settled in a quiet room with perhaps a radio playing softly in the background. I sit or lounge on my bed and begin.

If a particular piece of work may be due in two days, it has a habit of slipping to the last night. But this does not, in any way seem that I have forgotten about it. Why at any time walking down halls, getting on a bus, etc., when my mind is not in constant demand, I may suddenly find myself thinking of ideas that may form into sentences, into paragraphs which may fit into the work itself. Even if the assignment is a long one, I can take notes if necessary; gather ideas but for sure I can only feel fully capable working quite near due date. An example of this is the exam of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This may be because of laziness or I'm inclined to believe that I'm afraid I may leave something out and not be able to put it in the paper.

Last, I have a thing about revision, and unless this is absolutely a must, I prefer to leave my work in its first form, of course this does not include first drafts.

## 7

When I write, my conditions, and environment are very important for my concentration. To start out, I have to have a radio on, usually loud. If I haven't been sleeping lately, and I try to force my mind to focus, and pay attention, I get a headache. I just can't do it. The other things that distract me most, besides a quiet room, is a hard chair, that I can't move around in, people talking (not on the radio), and being hungry or thirsty. I do my best writing after meals (preferably supper) and in a rocking chair. The reason I say supper is because during the morning or afternoon, the light in my room from the windows distracts my mind to things outdoors.

When I am assigned to do things with my opinions in them, it is harder for me than explaining things. The reason is: When I write my words change my mind, often in the middle of the writing, to an opposite side. My brain is influenced quite easily.

My first draft is done quickly and easily. I leave my punctuation at the end of sentences out sometimes. When I go over it, I change the whole thing, but it helps me to get my first thoughts about the subject down first. Teachers in previous years had the class pass in their rough drafts along with their final copy. If the two papers weren't alike word to word, we would get marked off. This always presented a problem, because when ever I wrote a copy, I would find better or more adequate words to put in. I finally ended up changing my rough draft to fit the first.

When I'm assigned a subject, my ideas either come right away or in a long time, never inbetween. If I have a general idea of what I'm going to do, I can write easily, and words will come to me: or, I have to think every word and then place it, spell it, and see if it makes sense. My styles of writing change a lot. It depends on nothing. Just my mind.

## 8

My best ability is shown when I use poetry. I feel this is because I enjoy it quite a bit more than prose. In my opinion surrealism has the best qualities because for one you're not writing for anyone else but yourself. I don't believe in the narcotic taking type of poetry when you're writing mainly what you don't understand. I think the complications of the world where we don't need narcotics is the best.

My year in eighth grade so far has given me freedom with my writing. My interest in expression with prose and poetry has risen one-hundred percent since my entering eighth grade. For further training I plan on going on into Latin.

When I start to write I jot down my most precious ideas to try and work

them into my piece. Revising and more revising in the process. Once the various paragraphs and phrases are, in my opinion, coherent and flowing I then make my final copy with a little revision here and there. This procedure applies to both prose and poetry.

Although my results to me have been satisfactory I should look for a better procedure, but first things first. I must perfect this one.

The conditions required for me to do my best is very faint mood music and to have the piece of paper not on a desk but on my lap. When sitting on my bed I get best results. I don't like to use a desk because it makes me edgy and uncomfortable.

## 9

There isn't too much unusual about my writing habits and the kind of writing that I do best. Mostly I just write!

The times when I write best are Sunday afternoons. I sit on the second from top stair on the staircase leading from the downstairs to the upstairs hall. Most of the time my brothers are play fighting in front of me just to annoy me. Sometimes this helps me to work and sometimes it hinders me (especially when one of them lands on top of me).

Another time during which I write well is after supper. I sit at my desk and I must have a "Peter, Paul, and Mary" album on the record player, turned down so I can hardly hear it.

I have to stop every once in a while because my mind tires easily because of the way in which I hold a pencil, so this gives me some time to think about what I want to say.

It is difficult to write on an empty stomach so I usually write after Sunday dinner or on a week day after supper. I can't write well during the day or if I'm comfortable.

Now about the kind of compositions that I write best. First, I think, is expository. It is easiest to express myself, mostly because the first thing that I do is to make a plan by gathering my ideas together so all I have to do is follow the plan.

Next comes poetry. Sometimes it is easier for me to use poetry, but it is usually more difficult because it is hard for me to find the right words to express myself well. (form-oriented work)

These are my two favorite types of compositions, and I don't think there is too much unusual about my writing habits.

## 10

The way in which people begin to write a composition is interesting and sometimes unusual, although I can not say this for my particular habits. With many people the environment affects them in the style and quality of their work. Many people use references in other works to get started. Others make an outline for the subject to have something to refer to. My personal preference to this will be shown in this composition.

The environment I need when I write is definitely away from school. I am never able to think or concentrate in school well enough to compose as essay, etc. The reason for this is probably because of the other students talking and moving about. At home, in the kitchen with a lot of books around (whether they pertain to the subject or not) and a dictionary is the environment I want to work in. I should have piles of paper and a pen whose color ink I like—cobalt blue. Then, at 7:00 to 7:30 I begin.

The way I go about it is to first think about the subject on which I am to write. If it is, say, literary analogues, I must write on a piece of scrap paper what I think literary analogues are. Then I think about the pieces of work, if there are any, I have to work with. I reread the pieces and let my mind absorb the information.

The next plan is to look at the assignment—whether it is to compare the compositions or to explain them, etc. I always then look up in the dictionary word(s), literary analogues, in this case, and compare the two definitions. If they agree I keep in mind, throughout the composition the previous definition because it is usually easier to understand.

If the composition is to be long, my next step is to write an outline. Here is an example:

1. Explanation of Work
  - A. Plan
  - B. Definition
    1. Dictionary's
    2. Mine
  - C. Introduction to works

Then, on scrap paper, I begin the first copy. I try to state my plan, give the definitions, the introduction to other works, the comparison, and summary, with a few additions in between. I usually follow this fairly closely.

I, at this point, take a break. After a few minutes I start rewriting the second copy. I perk up the language and fix it in a few places, and take another break. And for the last time, I begin the second final copy—cutting out a few things that are unnecessary and again fixing the language.

I clear the table, throw away every other copy and begin to read the composition I have just written aloud. After I am finished, I sit down and read it to myself and criticize it aloud again and put it in my notebook and start on a new subject.

**Use of Reactionnaires**

The most common classroom technique that takes advantage of compulsive elements in writing is the use of reactionnaires. The teacher shows a painting or plays a piece of music and directs the class to write "whatever they think of." Another variation is to show a painting, photograph, or magazine cover and ask these questions:

"What happened just before the scene?"

"What happened just after the scene?"

"What is this person thinking of?"

From time to time, a teacher may encounter a class that is largely composed of writers who are functional but seem uninterested in writing or in anything else connected with school. One way to activate these students to write is by using a kind of verbal reactionnaire, a number of statements written on the chalkboard.

Before the class enters the room, the teacher writes several statements on the board that are calculated to threaten the class's value system. The intent here is to obtain a direct emotional response from the students. The statements should be something like these:

1. The black-jacketed youths hanging around street corners, smoking and drinking, are typical of the teenagers in today's world.
2. People below their junior year of high school are simply too young for dancing. They should not be permitted to dance until they are mature enough. There are plenty of other activities available that are more suited to their age.
3. We need a curfew in this town. All children under the age of sixteen should be off the streets by eight o'clock unless accompanied by an adult. On weekends the time can be extended to nine. Growing youngsters need their rest.
4. The reason for so much failure in school is that school-age children spend too much time listening to the poor current songs that clutter up radio waves and record stores. The noise should be completely eliminated.
5. Teenagers are natural fall-guys for every fad and all the junk merchandise that comes along. They should be allowed about fifty cents a week to spend so they can learn the value of money. Everything above this amount should be turned over to their parents who know how to use it better. Many P.T.A.'s recommend this.
6. Because teenagers have more accidents than any other age groups, the age for driver's licenses should be raised to twenty-one.

When the class enters and gets started, the teacher should indicate that these statements have been made by responsible members of the community. After the students have read them and start talking about them among themselves, the teacher should ask if anyone would like to comment. He will get a few comments. When the same points are being made for the second time, he should indicate that he wants the students to organize their thoughts better. Each student should then be asked to comment on at least one statement in writing. A number of emotionally charged compositions, like the following from tenth graders, will result:

I would like to comment about number 2. Most of our lives we have looked upon the opposite sex as being almost an enemy. Nobody told us not to, and we never go along. But all of a sudden we get attracted to each other as we mature physically and mentally. No one told us to, but we wanted to dance. All of a sudden we wanted to dance, and make out and all the rest, and their trying to tell use that we are too young for something nature tells us that we are not too young for. Times have changed. Its the twentieth century and not the 17th. We do our dancing and they do theirs. There is nothing wrong with dancing; just let us entertain ourselves the way we like, not the way they think we should. Dancing keeps us out of trouble. If they told about half the good things that we did instead of all the bad things we do then there wouldn't be enough hours in the day to tell you about it.

Tenth-grade boy

I think the statement depends on the parents. If a parent wants their teen to stay out until midnight it's up to the parent. If a parent wants a teenage kid around the house all night with a blasting radio, dancing, talking on the phone it's up to the parent. I'm sure the parent would get pretty darn sick of their kid acting up at home. Whereas if the teenager is out the parents have some peace and quiet. So if a parent wants their child out and in a half decent place all night long they should agree to a certain point. If a parent doesn't care about their children they can let the kid out on the street.

Maybe their behavior isn't like an angel but who's going to sit at home talking to parents, to grandparents, when you learn all the things parents say about when I was a boy or girl I didn't act like you. My mother didn't let me out till 10:30. Times have changed, I don't think they'll turn back to early 1900's.

Tenth-grade girl

### **Surrealistic Writing**

Another lesson that exploits compulsive writing is an assignment in surrealistic writing. As preparation, the teacher asks the students to describe the structural characteristics of dreams. If this question proves puzzling, he expands it by saying, "I don't mean 'What do you dream about?' I'm asking about such things as whether people dream in technicolor or black and white."

An active discussion is likely to ensue. As characteristics of dreams are elicited, they should be written on the chalkboard: the distortion of time and space relationships; the double viewpoint of the actor and observer; the

abrupt changes, and so on. The discussion should be allowed to run its course. In the course of the discussion, the subject of dream interpretation will arise. The teacher should explain that many attempts to interpret dreams in various ways, have had a place in history, and he should sketch some of them: Joseph in the Bible and prophetic dreams, Freud and dream imagery as symbols, and the like.

Next, he should relate the interest in dreams to the Surrealist movement in the arts, showing some surrealist prints and pointing out their dream-like characteristics. Following this, the class should read and analyze some Surrealist prose and poetry in terms of their dream-like characteristics.

As an assignment, the class should be asked to write a composition that conveys dream-like imagery and structure. To maintain the dream-like tone, the students should be told that the composition should not reveal that it is about a dream (unless such a realization is part of the dream itself), nor should they write about going to sleep or waking up.

When the prose compositions are finished, the class should rewrite them as free verse, each taking his own composition *in toto* or selecting a section of it. The following are examples of this type of work:

---

A force beckoned me to come forward. With a pulling jerk I could feel myself transformed into a long bony creature with a bent beak that looked of an enemy's curse and felt of the burden I knew it became by the minute. Blood was dripping from my fang-like feet. My scantly carcass felt as does a sausage skin, too small for its contents, and my body reeked of the innocent smell of death, a smell permanently transplanted onto my nostrils as though the deity had commanded its presence. At last I had discovered my wings, the right as pure white as those of the beings who lived far above me, and my left as dark and unknown black as those of the fearful ones far below me.

My entire being is shrouded in a mist that allows me only to see glimpses of myself of what is below or around me. I have only my sense to guide me, through cold of mist, heat of sun, and scenery below. I am flying on an endless course, as a puppet left behind to hang on a string. I feel my existence resting on that one thread.

Only now do I realize the others on the mirrored waters below. They are not equipped with my lovely wings. Perhaps it is justice for them to be drowning. I dare not risk my safety for them. Have I not my own string to worry about, its strength lessening and leaving me every minute?

While I through the mist  
Only glimpsed my winged self  
And below in the mirrored water  
They scream without wings  
Or even strings, threads to hold  
And pull them through the mist

With the strength of pull on the thread  
Through the mist where I fly  
With my wings.

Ninth-grade girl

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Suddenly there was a little clicking noise at the front door. I felt a chill run through my body. I nearly screamed, but I was too scared to do anything. (Then the door opened slowly and he walked in. He smiled and started toward me. He didn't say a word, but just kept on walking. His smile turned into an evilish grin and as he walked I saw something in his hand. It was a black silk scarf. He sat down beside me, and gently placed the cloth around my neck. Then gradually he pulled the noose together tighter and tighter. I screamed and I screamed and screamed and wouldn't stop, until finally she ran in. She looked at me and smiled and then her smile changed into an evilish grin and she laughed and laughed and laughed . . . )

The Smile of Life and Death

And the door opened slowly  
And he walked in and smiled  
He moved nearer and nearer  
And didn't stop, and he smiled.  
And he smiled an overcoming smile.  
And his smile was death.  
His smile of Death surrounded me,  
And it trapped me, and blackened my spirit  
I screamed for Life until she appeared  
And she smiled.  
And she smiled a dying smile.  
And soon her smile faded away.  
And it would never return,  
For her smile was Life.  
But he stayed and never wandered.  
For his smile was Death.

Tenth-grade girl

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It is interesting to note one of the comments about how this assignment was written:

I could rightly say that I chose to eat grapefruits while doing surrealistic writing, for I can recall in the last assignment, to compose or recall a dream, the first thing I did was to eat grapefruit, something I felt I had to do. Whether this influenced my work I can't say.

**Journal Writing**

Many teachers believe that requiring their students to keep journals in which the students report their responses to various experiences—both in and out of class—is a useful procedure. Some teachers may make weekly suggestions for entries. For instance, they might suggest that the student describe something he has never before observed, write down his feelings of anger over some experience, or describe his feelings about someone he likes (or hates) very much. The teacher's suggestions may be ignored if the student has some special entry he would like to make. Some teachers set aside special class time for journal entries. Others have students make their entries as part of homework assignments. Usually, students are free to make any entries they like, from descriptions of scientific experiments to poems and short stories.

The teacher should check the journals at regular intervals, but if he has 130 or more students per day, he can hardly check each of them every week. An energy-conserving plan is to stagger the checking points for classes, checking the journals of two or three classes per week. His comments on journal entries should not be punitive and need not be extensive; they should be encouraging wherever possible. He should concentrate on noting strengths in expression, suggesting how the writer might improve his entries, and suggesting journal entries that might be worked into longer compositions as part of the regular writing program.

**Style and Stylization**

A final consideration in writing is the way in which the writer uses language. In this regard it is useful to distinguish between style and stylization. A stylization is the conscious reshaping of a piece of work so that a characteristic kind of expression emerges as its feature. *The New Yorker* and *Time* feature highly stylized materials.

Many professionals continually revise their work both during the writing and on completion. The focus of their revision is usually the style in their expression: word choice and syntactic structuring.

Much of the work of professionals is done on the finished piece:

I can't understand how anyone can write without re-writing everything over and over again.<sup>1</sup>

—TOLSTOY

Looking at the work of the professional as a corpus, his conscious styling becomes a matter of deep concern after he has passed through his formative period:

... but then comes the question of achieving a popular—in other words, I may say, a good and lucid style. . . . Without much labour, no writer will achieve such a style. He has very much to learn; and, when he has learned that much, he has to acquire the habit of using what he has learned with ease. But all this must be learned and acquired,—not while he is writing that which shall please, but long before.<sup>2</sup>

—Anthony Trollope

Probably, some writers aim at a characteristic stylization; certainly, the dialect writers such as Damon Runyon and Joel Chandler Harris must have done this.

Should adolescent writers be concerned with conscious stylization? One danger is that the young writer may develop preciosity in his writing, an objectionable artificiality that he cannot recognize or evaluate adequately by himself, because of his lack of sophistication.

Another problem has to do with maturation. Most young writers have enough trouble dealing with the main problems in their writing: planning adequately, then carrying out the plan.

If styling problems are essayed in the course of instruction, they should be dealt with as part of polishing the finished work in follow-up procedures.

The writing of parodies as described in Chapter 27 will serve to indicate which students can do styling. Those who do not show signal success in their stylization parodies are probably unable to attack their own style problems in any depth. If writing results indicate that some students are ready to study style, two avenues are open: a systematic, unambiguous self-analysis, using the tools provided by the linguist, and the introspective technique indicated above.

Using the first approach, the writer should select from his writing a sample or two that he feels is typical and subject it to rigorous analysis. In this way, he can determine what the style characteristics of his syntax are. He can then perform the same operations on any style he admires and consciously adjust his writing, or revise it, to approach that style. Following are two tenth-grade examples of such work:

**STRUCTURE ANALYSIS**

This composition, analyzing my style of structuring compositions, is entirely based on "Comparison of Richard III and Cyrano de Bergerac." All statistics actually refer to that composition only.

My compositions average about 500-550 words. They are composed of approximately 45 sentences, which range in length from 6 to 28 words. The sentences have a mean of 12 or 13 words. My compositions are composed of only 14% adjectives and adverbs, thus they are not especially descriptive. They do not include too much action (15% verbs) and 1/4 of all the

words are nouns. The highest percent of words falls in the function word category. Function words, having no referent, add a touch of complexity to the composition. Also adding a touch of complexity is the fact that over half of the words are polysyllables. A purpose and plan of the composition is included in each composition. The average length of my paragraphs is 69 words. The first and last paragraphs are usually the shortest, as they contain only the purpose, plan or summary. For example, at the beginning of "Comparison of Richard III and Cyrano de Bergerac" I said, as a plan and purpose of the composition, "Although both Richard and Cyrano have physical deformities they react differently to the rather disillusioning situation (one paragraph). As a summary or conclusion at the end I said, "Thus in all fields Cyrano de Bergerac is more acceptable to the reader."

Thus, when analyzing one of my compositions, the structural construction becomes apparent.

It would be hard to find two people who wrote in the same exact style. This essay will try to show you my style of writing and what makes it different.

First of all we will look at words. In my composition I have used 288 words. 28% of the words used are nouns and 25% of the words are verbs. This is a close ratio and shows good noun-verb relationship. There were 17% adverbs and 15% adjectives or adverbs but a fair amount is employed. There were 20% function words which show I'm certainly not afraid of them. A great use of function words might indicate that the author is not writing an essay for a young person or is a young person. This is so because function words can not adequately be explained and would be hard to grasp for a young reader. There are no immediate recursives in my composition. 30% of the words used are pronouns. This shows that I use quite a few pronouns.

Sentences are the next important step in the analysis of style. There are twenty-five sentences and an average of twenty words per sentence. If you try to write twenty words you will find that it is a good amount of words. 40% of the sentences are compound-complex, 25% are complex, 20% are compound and 15% are simple. There is not really a great difference but it does show very few sentences are simple as far as compound and complex go but compound-complex have a much greater percent than the others. There are no commands, questions, or exclamations. These things will usually tell the difference between a story and an essay. In statement patterns there are two; clause then subject then predicate, and prepositional phrase then subject then predicate. I use a more than average number of recursive sentences and clauses. It seems that I like to dwell on a subject and not leave it.

The next important step in analysis is the paragraph. I use an average of six sentences to a paragraph and an average of 73 words per paragraph. This is not a great number of sentences but a good number of words to

a paragraph. I use a pattern of a few short sentences and then a burst of long sentences. Usually after my longest sentence I will follow up with a short sentence such as "But just wait a minute". I do have topic sentences and they are all at the very beginning.

I have covered all three main subjects. Before ending I would like to say that I try to use a personalizing or editorial approach in my writing.

In closing this composition I hope you have seen the various characteristics of my essay and will be able to compare it with accurate results.

Obviously, such a project demands a preliminary study of the appropriate analytic techniques.

The second method is a more subjective analysis of style through introspection. The following work of another tenth grader is an example:

As for my style of writing, I really don't think I have one particular style. I don't think that a writer should have one definite style because then he (she) feels that he has to keep up that way of writing. When I write something and I have good ideas, I don't think that a certain way of writing was going to stop me from writing that. When an author or writer has to think of work which will follow his style I think that his writing is what you might call "forced".

I think that anyone who is writing a piece of work should write what he thinks suits the paper, and what comes easily and naturally to him.

A good note on which to close the discussion of style!

#### NOTES

1. Goldenveizer, A. B., *Talks with Tolstoi*, Koreliansky, Samuel S. and Woolf, Virginia, translators (New York: Horizon, 1969), p. 50.
2. Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p. 148.



The best instructional situation for working with dysfunctional writers is made possible by administrative grouping practices; it is the situation in which a class is composed exclusively of dysfunctional writers. Relatively few schools, however, provide such special classes.

Skill at reading, which is prerequisite to skill at writing, is by far the more important of the two from the point of view of pupil needs. Reading problems must therefore be attacked first. Of course, some writing activities should be used as part of the remediation, but any extensive writing serves only to distract from the problem of clearing up reading dysfunction. Most teachers who have to deal with verbal dysfunction, hopefully can, however, bring constant pressure to bear on the administration to form separate classes. The ticket for admission to the remedial composition class is functional skill at reading.

Although this chapter has been written in terms of a special class for dysfunctional writers, some of the techniques suggested may be used by a teacher with only one or two students whose writing is dysfunctional.

The first step in designing a correctional program in writing skills is to analyze the student's writing problem to see where the blocks are occurring and what their character might be. In making this analysis, the teacher must first evaluate the student's fundamental verbal ability. The characteristic division of tests of mental abilities is into verbal and nonverbal processes. Verbal processes are those that have to do with language; that is, the use of language is the central feature of verbal processes. There is evidence that the presumed dichotomy of verbal-nonverbal is not so neat and clear as we would like to have it.<sup>1</sup> However, operationally, it is useful as well as convenient to consider verbal processes as a distinct type of intellectual function. The verbal processes may be further divided into those that have to do with receiving and interpreting language information and those that have to

do with composing and expressing language information. It is at this stage that the function of the writer may be breaking down: he may be unable to handle words, morphology and syntax at all in composing and expressing. The verbal block may result from difficulty with all language generally, the English language, or it may be related to specific dialect problems.

Dialect differences are far more likely to cause trouble in writing than in reading. No matter what dialect a student uses when he speaks, his writing must conform to standard English spelling patterns, whereas when he reads, he can translate the printed symbols into his own speech patterns. A real dialect problem can occur in connection with the writing of Negro children, one that is partly phonological and partly morphological.\* Many tend to omit the *s* when they form noun plurals, possessives, and third-person singular verbs and to omit the marker *ed* of the past tense and participial forms of weak verbs. Another pattern is the omission of auxiliaries in forming verb phrases. Spanish-speaking students who are learning English often confuse *b* and *v* and also *n* and *ng* and the various spelling configurations of the high front vowels. Anyone learning a new language will have a great many problems with its syntax, which ordinarily presents very few problems across dialect lines.

Another kind of writing difficulty is connected with sentence patterns. Perception of sentences in English is in large part dependent upon perception of the English superfixes: stress, pitch, and juncture. Probably, pitch patterns give dysfunctional writers the greatest problem. The great difficulty is that in oral expression we frequently use patterns that are acceptable as complete sentences to our listeners, but if these patterns are reduced to writing, they are not ordinarily read with the superfix patterns that signal sentences. For example, the answer "When I get my homework done" can be made to *sound* like a sentence easily; but it does not *read* like a sentence. Run-on sentences also relate to superfix patterns. Such locutions as "Hurry, hurry, hurry" and "I came, I saw, I conquered" testify to the disparities that exist between the spoken language and analogous written forms. On occasion, even a functional writer uses problematic locutions: "He's on time so regularly, he's a clock." The argument that the locution is made possible as a result of the phenomenon of ellipsis is questionable since the clauses are readily reversible: "He's a clock he's on time so regularly."

The second cause, then, for composing difficulty is syntax problems. Spelling may also create writing difficulties because of the failure of English sounds to correspond with letters in any consistent way. Thus, a student may be blocked in his writing because although he knows what he wants to say, he cannot spell the words.

The final item to consider in writing dysfunction is handwriting. Illegible

\* Similar dialect-related problems have been noted in those persons, blacks or whites, who use plantation speech and other Southern dialects.

handwriting may be in part a deliberate attempt to conceal spelling deficiency, or it may reflect general frustration at writing. It may also be a cue to immaturity since the small muscle control necessary in handwriting develops after control of large muscles develops. Such handwriting difficulty could itself frustrate a student in writing a composition.

The teacher must consider all four of these factors—general verbal ability, sentence perception and formation, spelling deficiencies, and handwriting—in planning the instructional program for dysfunctional writers.

### **Empirical Exploration**

When dealing with dysfunctional writers, the teacher should extend the inventory period to encompass a considerable amount of exploratory work. He should try out many different writing situations in an attempt to discover the specific ones in which these students do their best work. He should, for example, give them dictation, have them give dictation to one another, and have them write on the chalkboard.

The spelling inventory (Chapter 21) will provide initial evidence of the students' ability to handle dictation of sentences and to copy what they have written. In addition to noting any spelling weaknesses and ascertaining whether some study methods are indicated or contraindicated, the teacher should note whether the handwriting on the copied material is significantly better than that on the dictated material. Students who have a great deal of trouble taking dictation of verbal material *presented as a context* should be grouped together and receive dictation of individual words. The teacher should make clear that the purpose of this dictation of a word list is not to test spelling but rather to test the ability to take dictation. Therefore, when dictating, the teacher should spell out any words the students have difficulty with. It may be the case that some students are generally inefficient at writing from dictation. On the other hand, some students who make mistakes in taking dictation even of single words at their desks may do much better work taking dictation at the chalkboard because chalkboard writing makes greater use of large muscles than does writing on paper.

The students who have had difficulty with copying their own work should try copying printed material. Both kinds of copying should be tried at the chalkboard as well as at their desks. They should also work at their desks copying material written on the chalkboard.

The early emphasis on copying and dictating is an effort to exclude from the complete writing gestalt those factors that are related to composing and the internal handling of language generally. The dictating and copying provide an opportunity for writing that is freed from the immediate frustrations that may attend verbal composing. Many students will be able to perform these mechanical tasks adequately yet will not be able to do any extensive writing

that must be based on their own ability to compose, thus suggesting the possible nature of their blocks. The dictating, copying and chalkboard activities that characterize this early exploration are similar to the activities of the elementary school, especially in the lower grades. It is useful for the teacher of the dysfunctional writer (and reader) to conceptualize his students as being extremely immature in their skills. For this reason, the methods that work with pupils who are actually chronologically younger may very well work with them. The content of the material that is dictated and copied, however, should reflect the interests of older age groups. Adolescents, who will be all too aware of their deficiencies in skills, are insulted and humiliated when they are forced to work with "baby" materials.

When instruction in handwriting begins in the lower elementary grades, the typical pattern is to teach the students to print letters first. (This is called "manuscript" writing; ordinary handwriting is called "cursive" writing.)

The typical procedure in teaching young children to write is to delay their writing until after they have had some success with reading. The handwriting instruction itself is carefully preplanned. The children learn to form letters on the basis of the structure of the letters, their frequency of occurrence, and similar considerations. The writing of words and the correct spelling of these words is achieved without discrete attention to the spelling per se. The sequence in which the words are learned interrelates with the letter learning sequences. Additional factors that help to determine learning sequences are the familiarity with the words in preliminary reading experience, speaking vocabulary, and usefulness in generating sentences. Ordinarily, initial instruction, as was noted above, is with manuscript writing—a kind of printing. Ideally, when students are able to use manuscript writing with ease, they are gradually shifted over into cursive writing.

One of the cleavages in elementary school procedural philosophy has to do with manuscript writing as opposed to cursive writing. In some school systems it is believed that since the function of handwriting is legibility and manuscript is generally more legible than cursive, it is unnecessary for people to learn cursive writing at all. Staying with only one system has the additional advantage of not burdening the learner with two systems; and the time that might be used in teaching cursive writing can be put to other uses in the elementary school teacher's total instructional program. Because manuscript writing more nearly resembles printing than cursive writing does, it is felt that practice in manuscript alone provides support in reading.

On the other hand, in other school systems it is believed that since the general adult population employs cursive writing, and not manuscript, it behooves the schools to teach cursive writing. Some schools, aware of the possible difficulties that might arise as a result of learning two systems, do not teach manuscript at all, but begin instruction directly and immediately with cursive writing. However, it is more usually the case that, a youngster first learns manuscript, and then is taught cursive.

Whatever the relative values of the differing viewpoints may be, it is best for the secondary school teacher not to take sides in the issue. But the teacher of the dysfunctional writer in the secondary school must be aware of the varying practices. One kind of problem that the secondary school teacher frequently encounters with dysfunctional writers is that of the student whose initial writing experience was in a school system committed to one form of writing and who later transferred to another school that taught the other form. He may thus find himself "behind" in writing and never catch up.

The secondary school teacher must be aware of all the alternatives in dealing with the problem of handwriting. If under all the conditions of dictating and copying named above the student exhibits uniformly poor handwriting, the teacher and student should explore together the possibility of his using a completely different style, that is, if he is a cursive writer who writes badly, he should try manuscript; if he uses only manuscript and his manuscript is poor, he should try cursive. If he has both manuscript and cursive and they are both poor, or if he cannot learn the form that he does not use, then he should explore typewriting.

Dysfunctional writers in general, should have the opportunity to do typing since the neuromuscular patterns involved in typing are much different from those involved in handwriting. Certainly, from the point of view of legibility, typing is vastly superior to either of the handwriting forms. For some students typing may be the answer to their writing problems.

If typewriters and typing instruction are not available, and handwriting is a major problem, the teacher will have to do some work in improving the student's handwriting. Since secondary school teachers are not trained in this area, the first move is to secure help. Help may be obtained from the reading specialist, or skilled teachers in the lower elementary school. Handwriting manuals and workbooks are available. In addition, there are some unsophisticated techniques that can be tried in an effort to improve legibility.

The first of these is to have the students skip lines in their writing. Another is to have them try writing on *unlined* paper. Another avenue is simply recopying. For many students recopying results in vastly improved papers. For some writers a kinesthetic approach may be indicated. It is beyond the scope of this chapter, even of this book, to detail all the kinesthetic procedures. Since there are a number of people who seem to be able to learn in no other way, the teacher must familiarize himself with kinesthetic techniques. Unfortunately, working with the kinesthetic approach demands much one-to-one relationship between teacher and pupil. It is essential for the teacher to observe the various phases of pupil behavior attentively. Because the kinesthetic approach teaches reading, spelling and handwriting at once, it is extremely valuable for working with the severely disabled student. The writing of Grace Fernald is recommended for insights into kinesthetic methodology.<sup>2</sup> After the early exploration has indicated which students take dictation adequately, the teacher should pair students, with at least one member of

each pair a student who can write from dictation fairly well. That student should then receive dictation from the other, or if both members can take dictation, they should alternate. The dictation should start with original sentences. Through this procedure, the student is able to separate the act of creating original sentences from the physical act of writing. In other words, the student who does the composing does not have to write, and the student who writes is not faced with the problems of composing; this is a way to involve students in original composition while minimizing their frustrations. If the pairs experience success at single sentences, they should go on to longer structures such as short personal narratives, directions on how to do something, or descriptions of simple scenes or procedures.

The next writing situation that should be explored is one in which the students are provided support in their composing efforts. Groups of four should be formed, with each including at least one member who is adequate at taking dictation. The class should be given a writing problem or series of problems structured in this way:

1. "You are going to have a party. *Step one:* You plan the party. Decide when and where it will be held, which people you will invite, what games you will play, whether or not you will dance, what records you will play, and finally what kinds of goodies you will eat. *Step two:* Invite all the people that you plan to ask and make all the arrangements, such as buying the food and collecting the phonograph records. *Step three:* Describe the party itself.
2. "You are planning a trip to another planet. *Step one:* Decide all the preparations you will make, what the different crew members will have to do and who they will be, what things you are going to take with you, the date and place you are leaving from, and the characteristics your space ship will have to have. *Step two:* Assemble the crew, set up the space ship for takeoff, and get together all the necessary equipment, food, and so on, that you will need. *Step three:* Describe the trip itself.
3. "You are planning a game of baseball (or any other game). *Step one:* Decide who will play on the team, what equipment will be necessary, where you will obtain this equipment, and when and where the game will take place; it may also be necessary to decide on who your opponents will be and who the umpire will be. *Step two:* Assemble the players and the umpire and all the necessary equipment at the right place and at the right time. *Step three:* Describe the game itself."

The writing should be done in three stages corresponding to the three steps in each problem. The writing of the first step should be a group effort; the second step should be written by pairs of students; and the third by individual students. The writing of the first two steps will involve a great deal of repetition. The third step will result in writing that is somewhat different in content

but yet closely related to the content of the first two. Each group of four students should make a selection from the problem series.

In the first stage of the writing procedure, each group should thoroughly discuss each of the three steps of its writing problem—that is, what they will probably say in each. When all three steps have been discussed, the group should go back and discuss the first one in detail. (While the groups are working, especially during the discussion period, the teacher should move from group to group giving help as it is needed.) When all the ideas have been worked out orally, then the group should dictate its version of the first step to the group secretary, the person who is best in the group at taking dictation. If necessary, the secretary should make a neat copy of the dictation to be signed by all group members. The papers should then be turned in to the teacher.

When the teacher reads these compositions covering the first step in the assignment, he should first of all note whether the content is adequate—have enough specific details been included? The next item to consider is the sequencing of the details: Is it reasonable? The next is sentence structure: Are the sentences adequate? Finally, the teacher should consider mechanics: Are words spelled properly? Are capitalization and punctuation adequate? Instead of just marking errors, the teacher should indicate appropriate forms, especially in connection with spelling. This activity is designed, not to give instruction in these areas, but to reduce frustration.

At the next meeting the papers should be returned to be revised along the lines indicated by the teacher's marking and comments. If it is clear that some group or groups have had considerable difficulty, the teacher should visit them to give them more specific help. When the revisions have been made in each group, each individual member should make his own copy of the group composition, making additions if he wishes to.

In the second stage of the writing procedure, each group should be divided into partnerships. Each member of the partnership now has a copy of step one of the assignment as completed by his group (probably a paragraph). The partners should now thoroughly discuss the content of the next two steps of the composition. When they have finished their discussion, they should go back and discuss in detail the content of the second step, and then, working together, they compose it. This second step will be almost identical in content with the first one, varying only slightly. When a good copy of this step of the composition is made, both partners should sign it and turn it in. The teacher reads these in the same way that he read those that came from the groups of four. Using the same follow-up procedure, he works with the partners who seem to need help the most. Next, each partner makes a finished copy of his work and adds this to the part that resulted from working with the group of four. The composition is now two-thirds finished.

The last stage of the work begins when the partnership separates. Now each

student is working as an individual, and his problem is to develop the third step of the composition. He has had a good deal of preparation for this: first of all, he was a member of a group of four, and he discussed all three parts of the composition with the others in the group. Next, he was a member of a partnership, and he discussed the final two parts of the composition with his partner. By this time, he should have a pretty good idea of what he wants to say. Now his problem is to say it.

When the teacher reads the final section, he will be able to determine which students can perform adequately when they have been given thorough preparation and which students cannot write even with such preparation.

The next type of writing situation to be tried is the individual writing of a short composition that has been structured in a general way. The students should first be given a short reading assignment—a short story, an essay, a magazine article such as one from *The Reader's Digest*, or an article in the encyclopedia. They should tell about what they read, in the first part of the composition and in the second part, they tell about something new they found out in their reading (or something they especially liked in it). Very little original thinking is involved here. The specific organization of the first part of the student's composition has been done for the student by the author of the material, and the student merely has to repeat what he has read. The general organization of the composition has been taken care of by the teacher. The student's only real problem is responding to the second part of the writing problem—that is, deciding what he learned that was new (or what he liked best)—a formulation he must make on his own. When the teacher reads the finished composition, he can decide the extent to which the prestructuring has aided the student in his composing—both the prestructuring the teacher himself has given, and the more careful prestructuring that has been given by the author of the material in the reading assignment.

The next prestructured writing is somewhat longer and follows after a longer reading experience, a book report. The teacher should tell the students to devote the first paragraph to what the story is about; the second to a description of the character that they thought was the most important, and the third to what they especially liked or did not like about the book. Once again the first paragraph is merely repetition of what they read, requiring very little original work from the student other than condensing the organization that the author of the book used. The second paragraph requires a bit more original work, that is, extracting specific items that occur throughout the story and developing a brief characterization based on this extraction process. The third part of the book report involves the greatest amount of original thinking.

This last assignment brings to a close the exploratory period of the year's work. This period will be rather long, but at the end of it the teacher will have a good idea of the various strengths and limits both mechanical and intellectual, of each student's writing performance.

### The Instructional Program

After the teacher has completed the exploratory activities, the content of his instructional program should be conditioned by the immediate and eventual needs of the students.

Because the students find writing frustrating, the first part of the year should be devoted to finding out what specific elements in the writing gestalt frustrates them and which phases of writing they seem to be able to deal with. When instruction begins, the teacher should design the program so that the students can avoid the activities that are frustrating to them and concentrate on those that they can do rather easily. As the year goes on, however, they should be gradually introduced to those activities they had found to be frustrating. If they were to avoid them, they would not become functional at writing.

In addition to the type of activity, the frustration can derive from the length of time that a student spends in doing it. Obviously it is more difficult to write thirty paragraphs than one paragraph. Therefore, the teacher should observe behaviors in the exploratory period very carefully with an eye to determining how long his class can work at a given task. As he notes symptoms of frustration—looking up from the work, gazing around the room, pounding on the desk, distracting others, breaking pencils, dropping pens, sharpening pencils, excessive erasing, requests to go to the lavatory, and so on—the teacher will have an idea of how long he can spend on an activity. As the year goes on, he can gradually lengthen the time spent. At the beginning of the year, it is not impossible that a class may be able to stand only two or three minutes at an activity. Therefore, the teacher must have a variety of different activities in his program, planning them so that the different types alternate with one another. For example, if the class is doing copying at their seats, the next activity should involve something that contrasts with it strongly, such as group discussion. After that could come chalkboard work and then a listening activity. Then the cycle might be repeated, starting with more work at their seats.

The class is likely to be made up of very immature persons who are hostile to authority in general and teachers in particular. Having had little success in school work, they are likely to have a defeatist attitude toward their own potential. They will display a great many negative behaviors, which the teacher should accept insofar as possible, recognizing that such a display is, in part, a means of testing him. In order to build up the students' confidence and self-esteem, the teacher must be alert at all times to find ways of rewarding them with praise for their efforts as well as their actual achievement. He schedules his work so that very easy things are encountered before things of even slight difficulty are encountered. He gives copious praise for successful completion of the easiest tasks. He must never indicate that any task is easy. Nor must he indicate that it is unusually hard. Some of the tasks will be obviously simple, and if the teacher indicates otherwise, the students

will suspect his integrity. The teacher must make it clear that the easy tasks are foundations and that they will not be able to do the harder ones unless they have mastered the easy things. In this respect, writing skills can be compared to such other skills as weight lifting, track practice, and swimming practice—that is, a person starts with things that he can do and gradually increases his tasks and efforts until eventually he can do things that he could not possibly have done in the first place.

The teacher should watch for students who are not making an effort. Although he should not chide these students because that would interfere with rapport, he should not pretend that they are making an effort when it is obvious that they are not. He must consciously encourage and support them. Often the simple act of standing near a student who has never learned to work or has forgotten how encourages that student to work. A high value should be placed on work. The students should never be asked to do the best they can since the conscientious ones are probably already doing it and it is almost impossible for a person to give the best that is in him consistently. Rather, they should be encouraged to work reasonably hard. Also, the teacher should make it plain that he understands that reasonably hard work *is* hard. He must also make it clear that he understands that what is easy for one person may be quite hard for another.

Routines are important for dysfunctional students. If the same kinds of activities are done in the same order each day, the instructional pattern itself will support their learning. Another advantage is that this will save time that might otherwise be spent in giving directions. Moreover, the student does not have to learn new directions and new procedures each day.

A good procedure is to start each lesson with a spelling drill. The results of the spelling inventory will indicate whether there is a widespread need for attention to basic writing words. If there is, the basic writing vocabulary should receive first attention. The teacher should next drill the students on words that are not in the basic writing vocabulary but that will be encountered on forms of various kinds: school forms, business forms, tax forms, and the like. Much of the writing that is done by adults in daily life has to do with filling out lists, and such items as days of the week, months of the year, addresses, and so on will be found on all these lists. Mastery of these items is essential.

When the spelling lists have been developed, they should be scheduled for daily drills with some convenient number of new words being introduced each week—ten is a good number. A set of words written on the blackboard should be copied by the students into their spelling notebooks; they can be studied by the methods discussed in Chapter 21. Each day a quick spelling quiz should be given by a student. Papers can sometimes be exchanged for correction and at other times be corrected by their writers. The student who administers the test should choose the next day's administrator from those whose words are all correct. After the first week, the test should be divided into two

parts—the first containing all the words for that week presented in a different order each day and the second made up of selections from the words of all the previous weeks. In this way there can be a continual review of all the words. As the year goes on and work with pluralizing, the use of the apostrophe, and other orthographic rules is introduced, the weekly spelling list can contain general words that exemplify the rules that have been considered. Additionally, other words that the class as a whole or various members have found troublesome can be introduced onto the list.

Another kind of spelling drill, and one that has a high degree of motivation inherent in it, is based on the use of a flashing device. The teacher should make a series of slides or obtains slides or film strips from commercial sources. Such devices as the tachistoscope and speedioscope, which are available commercially, can be attached to overhead projectors or filmstrip projectors; they govern the speed at which words can be flashed on a screen, from a few seconds to fractions of a second. After the teacher flashes a word on the screen for a moment, the class writes it down. After a series of such presentations—say ten words—the teacher returns to the first word, opens the shutter, and lets the class check their responses to that word, and so forth down the whole list.

Another way to provide motivation in spelling is with various spelling games. One such game is Hangman, in which the sketch of a gallows is drawn on the board and a series of dashes is put beneath it, each dash representing a letter of a word. The students should try to guess the word by guessing each of the letters. As a letter is guessed correctly, it should be written into each of the spaces in which it occurs. For example, suppose the word is *school*. The spaces should be written on the board, one for each letter as follows: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ . If a student guesses *o*, the two *o*'s should be filled in. As wrong guesses are made, the stick figure of a man should be gradually built under the gallows. For example, if the student guesses *e*, the head of the man should be drawn in. If another student guesses *a*, the neck should be added. If another guesses *i*, the shoulders should be added, and so forth. The students may guess at the word, as well as the letters; whenever a wrong word is guessed, another part should be added. If the stick figure is completed and the word has not been guessed, the teacher should supply it, and the stick figure should be erased and the game begun again. If a student guesses the word, he becomes the game leader and supplies dashes for his own word. (It is a good idea for the teacher to check the spelling of the student's word before the dashes are put on the board.)

Another good spelling game is Ghost. The class is divided into teams, and a member of the first team suggests a letter, which is written on the board. The first member of the second team adds a letter to it; the second player on the first team adds another letter; and the second player on the second team adds another, and so on. The object of the game is not to add the last letter of a word. Proper nouns are not used, and only words three letters in length or

longer are counted. Should a student, in order to avoid putting the last letter on a word, suggest a letter that is patently absurd, the next player on the other team can say "I challenge you." If the previous player cannot supply a word spelled in that way, his team loses a point. Whenever any player adds the last letter to a word, his team loses a point, and the teacher scores the loss, by writing a letter of the word "ghost" on the blackboard. The first time a player adds the last letter to a word or loses a challenge, his team gets the *g*. The next time the player on that team loses a point, his team gets an *h*, and so on until the team loses five points and "ghost" is spelled.

Other word games, such as Scrabble and crossword puzzles, also add interest to spelling lessons.

Because it is an important and frequently encountered writing experience, filling out forms should be a frequent activity of the remedial writing class. In the course of the school year, it is necessary to have many school forms made out. The teacher of the dysfunctional writing class should therefore make every effort to have these forms delegated to him for work in class. (This is in contrast to the attitude of the teacher of the regular English class who avoids this sort of scut work at all costs.) In addition to school forms, the teacher can obtain business forms, especially employment forms, from such sources in the community as grocery chains, filling station chains, factories, and utility companies—in short, from employers who hire a great many unskilled, nonprofessional, noncollege-trained persons. In addition to these forms, the teacher can construct a great many forms for evaluating compositions. (An example of such a form is given below in the evaluation of business letters.)

Another feature of instruction in classes for dysfunctional writers has to do with training in the perception of sentences. One of the rules for whole-class discussion should be that all answers must be made in the form of sentences, no matter how inefficient, clumsy, or silly this practice may seem. Insisting on sentences in oral work not only provides practice in the formation of sentences but also keeps the students' attention riveted on sentence patterns. The teacher can give extra credit to those who detect answers that are not in the form of complete sentences, and double extra credit can be given for detection of teacher locutions that are not sentences. If a student characteristically writes run-on sentences or incomplete sentences, the teacher should have a conference with him and ask him to read his composition aloud. If his voice makes the appropriate superfix patterns, the teacher should alert him to these patterns and ask that he be guided by the patterns in reconstructing or repunctuating his writing. If he does not produce the patterns appropriately in his oral reading, he will have to do a great deal of oral work and oral analysis of sentence patterns and forms until he can recognize and produce the appropriate superfixes. Students who use the superfix patterns appropriately in their oral work should be encouraged to read their written work aloud in their proofreading.

If the analysis of the exploratory period has indicated the need, many of the



class activities should be oriented toward oral work, which can take the form of interviews (as described in Chapter 2), mock interviews of different kinds—such as employment interviews—mock telephone conversations, and work with drama.

The inventories, the exploratory period, and the permanent records of the school will indicate which students are dysfunctional writers because English is not their native language or because they speak a nonstandard dialect. Each language presents unique syntactic and phonological characteristics. Therefore, unless a teacher is familiar with the native language of his student, he will be unable to provide contrasts between the patterns of that language and English. Only acutely perceptive persons can infer pattern differences on the basis of an analysis of the writing that a nonnative speaker does. If the linguistic literature that deals with analysis of the language in question is unavailable to him, the best help for a teacher will be the foreign language teachers in his school system. They may be able to provide a good deal of help on the phonological, spelling, and syntactic problems of some students. In the absence of such help, the teacher will be forced to rely on oral work. He may find that work with a language laboratory, if one is available in his school, will be instrumental in solving the problems of those who are not native to English or not native to a standard dialect of English.

Probably a great deal of work in the year will involve copying and analyzing short passages of writing. Most school grammars are good sources for this sort of material because their exercises are composed of relatively short sentences that are introduced separately and are usually carefully constructed on some principle that the lesson is built around. The lesson on parallel construction, for example, is very helpful in sentence analysis. Because the sentences can be dealt with as single entities, not much time is required in dealing with an individual sentence, thus reducing the student's frustration. Another advantage of the grammar is that the student will be copying printed material, and any incidental learning he acquires, such as how to spell certain words, will be of the correct rather than the erroneous forms. Another advantage is that these grammar book drills concentrate on sentence analysis rather than vocabulary development. Consequently, the vocabulary that the student encounters is rather easy. Of course, the teacher's primary purpose in assigning the grammar book drills is not to have the students learn rules or analysis but to support their work in writing—that is, to provide practice material for copying, simple composing, and so on. At the same time, because the students are using grade level textbooks, the work tends to support the development of a healthy self-image. The traditional school grammar book, then, is a useful tool to the teacher of dysfunctional writers.

Because their structure is so important, the study of business letters is useful in working with dysfunctional writers. Although most of these students will, in fact, probably never write a business letter, they are aware that this is a "real life" kind of writing and are thus more easily motivated to practice busi-

ness letter exercises than many other kinds of exercises. Practicing the writing is the important consideration here.

The letters should be analyzed part by part, with the students mastering one part at a time. When they finally write complete letters, they can criticize their own work and that of the other class members. The use of a form for this criticism can provide additional practice in using forms. Each student should put his finished letter on a duplicator stencil, and after the stencils are run, each member of the class should be given one to be analyzed according to the following form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date in Full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Author of letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment on the letter in general:

Neatness: \_\_\_\_\_ Margins \_\_\_\_\_

Placement of parts

heading: \_\_\_\_\_ top: \_\_\_\_\_

inside address: \_\_\_\_\_ l. side: \_\_\_\_\_

greeting: \_\_\_\_\_ r. side: \_\_\_\_\_

body: \_\_\_\_\_

closing: \_\_\_\_\_

signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment on contents of parts, punctuation, abbreviation, completeness:

heading \_\_\_\_\_

inside address \_\_\_\_\_

greeting \_\_\_\_\_

body \_\_\_\_\_

closing \_\_\_\_\_

signature \_\_\_\_\_

Is the message clear? If not, what is unclear:

Suggestions for improvement:

A new letter should be criticized each day. This criticism not only helps the class to learn the characteristics of business letters but gives them practice in filling out forms.

Another kind of composition that is useful to the teacher of dysfunctional writers is the Japanese poem form haiku. Because the form is short, it is challenging but not frustrating. Even the very weakest students can have a measure of success in writing it. The first step in the lesson is to analyze models of the haiku. When the analysis has been completed, the students should write their own haiku. Booklets of the haiku composed by the class

are useful in motivating the students and increasing their self-confidence (see Chapter 5 for a detailed presentation of the haiku lesson).

### The All-Purpose Model Paragraph

There will be some students who, according to the inventories and the teacher's subsequent investigation, will not be able to do very much writing unless it is carefully prestructured for them.

The student's most pressing writing need—beyond simple lists such as those used for filling out forms—is to transmit information. Therefore, the writing problems of these students can be drastically reduced through the use of an all-purpose model paragraph structure into which information can easily be fitted. All the student has to do is to memorize the paragraph structure and order the information within that structure.

The following is a model paragraph, the structure of which was empirically established after a study of several hundred paragraphs written by functional writers:<sup>3</sup>

The Siamese is the most interesting cat as a pet. When a cat owner brags about his blue-eyed friend, he usually has a Siamese in mind. Because of its unusual coloring, its fondness for killing rodents, and its love of a good swim, it is always the subject of some interesting doings. Its love of swimming is probably its most interesting feature, since cats usually dislike water. Its many unusual characteristics make its owner the object of envy of other catkeepers, and this is despite the fact that the bathroom is out of bounds when someone is taking a bath.

Let us first abstract the structure from the paragraph. The paragraph contains five sentences, and the structure of each of them is as follows:

1. The first sentence is short and is the topic sentence of the paragraph. If blanks are substituted for the parts of speech, a model sentence structure is derived. "The Siamese is the most interesting cat as a pet" becomes "The \_\_\_\_\_ is the (most) \_\_\_\_\_ (preposition) \_\_\_\_\_." This model can generate any number of sentences: "The center is the most important player on the basketball team." "Gauze is the most difficult fabric to work with." "Candy is the most dangerous food for the dieter."
2. The second is a complex sentence of the "if-then" form. Other introductory words can be substituted for "if": "when," "whenever," "as," "since," and so on. The "then" in the second clause can be inserted, or it can be omitted completely as it is in the Siamese cat model. "If the center wins the tap, then his team has the advantage." "Since gauze has little body, working with it on a sewing machine presents very special problems." "When you go to the movies, you are tempted to eat candy."

3. The third sentence is a catalog of characteristics of the subject that is introduced in the topic sentence. "The best centers are fast rugged players, have good vision, and are very tall." "Gauze is used in making bandages and dressing for wounds, inexpensive displays of various kinds, and theatrical costumes." "Candy haunts you not only in the movies but also at parties, in the cafeteria, and in snack dishes around the house."
4. The fourth sentence expands on one of these catalog items. "Height is not only important in controlling the tap, but it helps him control the backboards." "Although gauze is used in inexpensive costumes, the difficulties in sewing it require a lot of time and planning." "The most dangerous of these temptations is having the candy around the house because it is always there."
5. The last sentence summarizes all that has gone before and then provides a contrast in ideas; it is a compound sentence. "Tall boys are usually chosen as centers, but often they are clumsy and will handicap their team in its play." "You can get nice effects inexpensively by using gauze, but it tears easily so you have to be careful with it." "Candy is always around to tempt the dieter, but it tastes pretty good when you yield to temptation."

Thus, the model can generate a number of paragraphs.

The teacher should begin his instruction with this model by initiating a discussion of cats, leading this to Siamese cats, and developing all the points that are made in the model itself. Next he distributes duplicated copies of the Siamese cat paragraph. While these are being distributed, he writes the first sentence on the chalkboard.

He then asks his students which words can be changed without changing the meaning of the sentence. When the answer "'cat' can be changed to 'animal'" is given, he erases the word "cat," draws in a blank space, and writes the word "animal" over the empty space. He then reads the sentence, "The Siamese cat is the most interesting animal as a pet," and asks the class whether they agree with the statement. The dog lovers and horse lovers will disagree. He next asks which word in the sentence on the board could be eliminated and another substituted. When someone says "Siamese," he erases it and draws a line. Above the empty space he writes the word "horse." Then he reads the sentence: "The horse is the most interesting animal as pet." Next, he asks whether the horse is really a pet. Many in the class will declare that it is not. He erases "pet," draws in the blank, and writes "farm animal" over the space. He reads the new sentence: "The horse is the most interesting animal as a farm animal."

Next, he asks whether "interesting" really fits well in the new sentence. "Of course, it doesn't." "What would fit?" "Oh, something like 'hardest working.'" "Interesting" should be erased and "hardest working" substituted. Now the



model structure is complete. "The \_\_\_\_\_ is the (most) \_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_."

He asks whether the same sentence could be used in talking about something other than animals. Probably the response will be in the realm of automobiles. "The Mustang is the most stylish car as an automobile." The teacher should point out that the word "as" might be changed so that the last phrase could be something like "on the road."

Next, the teacher distributes paper and asks the class to think of a subject that they know a great deal about. It can be something around the house, a hobby, an animal, but it must be something that they have a lot of information on. This subject should become the title for their composition, and they should write it on the top line. Next, everyone in the class should indicate what his topic is. The next step is to write the first sentence in a paragraph on this topic. The sentence will follow the form "The \_\_\_\_\_ is the (most) \_\_\_\_\_ (as) a \_\_\_\_\_." When these sentences are completed they should be read aloud. No more work is done that day on that activity.

The teacher collects the papers and checks on their fidelity to the model. The papers should be returned the next day, when the class should go through a similar procedure in adding the second sentence to the paragraph.

On the third day, sentences three and four should be worked on together. The catalog of items must be so arranged that the item that will be expanded in the fourth sentence appears last in the catalog in the third sentence. Students should be warned that the thing they think of first in this list of items will probably be the one they want to expand on in the fourth sentence. Therefore, when they think of it they should jot it down, and then think of some other things to mention. Developing these two sentences requires a good deal of thought in composition. After the two sentences are developed, the whole paragraph should be rewritten to this point, so that it contains the first four sentences. After they are collected, the teacher checks them for fidelity to the model. On the fourth day of instruction, the last sentence should be composed and added to the paragraph. Each time something new is added to the paragraph, all that has gone before should be copied over, a process that helps the student to learn the model. By the end of the fourth day, he should have fairly good control of the model.

The next step is to practice new writing with the model as a guide. Each student should be assigned to one volume of an encyclopedia to look for an article on an animal he knows something about but would like to learn more about. After marking his place, he then goes on to look for an article about an animal that he has never heard of before. He should take notes on both these animals and then write a composition on each of them, following the lines of the model paragraph. Again, the teacher should check to see whether these paragraphs are faithful to the model.

Once it is clear that the students have learned the model and it is helping

them to generate paragraphs, they should begin work with longer compositions. Longer compositions are essentially strings of paragraphs having the same structure. The first step in producing them is to have the students think of two subjects that they might easily compare, such as two breeds of dog, a dog and a cat, or two persons.

When the subjects have been chosen, the students should write a paragraph on each. If a student has demonstrated competence in handling the model, the teacher should be lenient if he moves away from its precise lines. By this time, most students will do this on their own initiative. When the two separate paragraphs have been finished, the teacher should indicate that the student must think of original sentences to join them together, to introduce them, and to summarize the whole composition. Such a completed composition follows:

The battery is the most important part of baseball defense. You need a pitcher and a catcher in a battery. I will tell you about the pitcher first.

The pitcher is the most interesting player on the team. When a team wants to win, then it needs a good pitcher. A pitcher needs a strong arm, a good pickoff motion and a cool head. The most important thing is a cool head because in tight spots everybody's on you. Although a pitcher looks like a star, he looks bad when he throws too many homer balls.

You know about pitchers. Now I will tell about catchers. The catcher is the key player on the team. When a pitcher starts to crack up, the catcher has to calm him down. The catcher needs a good throw from a crouch, speed with his hands to pick up bad ones and guts. Guts are the most important to cut off runners from third. Even if he can't hit, he is important because he does everything else.

You can't have a winning team without a good battery. But you might win a few games without one.

Ninth-grade boy

In the course of this discussion on dealing with dysfunctional writers, a great many reading activities have been indicated. However, if the class is composed of students who are dysfunctional at both reading and writing, it follows that reading activities cannot play a large part in writing instruction. It is better to concentrate on eliminating the reading dysfunction first.

Although a great many of the reading and writing problems of students will be cleared up within a year of exposure to carefully structured, thoughtfully worked out remedial programs, one cannot expect all the problems of students to be cleared up within that time. Some of them may have persisted over six or seven years of the elementary grades, when these students were under the direction of teachers who were specifically trained to deal with instruction in reading and writing. Therefore, it is not reasonable to expect

instant correction in the secondary class. In any case, the objective in instruction is not perfection in either reading or writing skill. Rather, the objective for the student is to attain enough proficiency at the skill in question to become functional with it.

The teacher working with dysfunctional students must be primarily concerned with their cognitive responses because, once they are in and by the secondary years, they have little time left. Students must learn the skills. However, a teacher who is deeply concerned about his students' real needs may run the risk of so loading his program with skill-developing activities and drills that the program becomes tedious, dull, and generally un motivating to his students. Although cognitive responses are paramount in importance, affective responses cannot be ignored.

To some extent, students are rewarded as they see their skills improve, but such results are often visible only over long stretches of time. Although student-kept progress charts will help them to see long-term growth, the teacher must be always alert to short-term procedures that will evoke positive affective responses. Some useful procedures have been indicated: games, copious praise, and a choice of composition topics related to adolescent interest (planning parties, baseball, science fiction, fantasy). If the students are functional readers, the reading program can center on highly interesting stories. Movies should be used as often as possible. Field trips add excitement and interest to the program. Briefly, whenever possible, the teacher should use activities that will help the students to *like* the class.

The teacher must always be conscious, however, that interesting activities do not in themselves result in cognitive learning but rather promote a generally good atmosphere for that learning.

Recently, it has become faddish for teachers of ghetto students to exploit the poorly spelled and punctuated writing of their students to show that they have been able to motivate these students to write. The writing of such students, however, is not really dysfunctional; it can be understood with little trouble on the part of the reader. Yet these teachers give the impression that to teach writing one must merely motivate: let students write about the things that are really important to them, that they feel strongly about. The inherent writing of dysfunctional writers is interesting, but pathetically interesting, *because of its defects*. The same passages made coherent and correctly spelled, although expressing the same ideas and emotions, would not excite the same attention. Certainly such motivational techniques must be part of the teacher's repertoire, and he must capitalize on whatever is honest and striking in his students' writing. But he also has the ultimate responsibility of helping his students to learn the skills that will allow their writing to stand on its own merit and not simply as an example of what a potential dropout can do when motivated. Writing characterized by gross errors might be acceptable to school teachers who are sympathetic to the writer. But outside of school such writing,

no matter how expressive, is not likely to have a sympathetic audience. On the contrary, it might simply support undesirable stereotypes.

#### NOTES

1. Grace Fernald, *Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects* (McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1943).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Bernard J. McCabe, "Teaching Composition to Pupils of Low Academic Ability," *Classroom Practices in Teaching English*—'65-'66 (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Although dysfunctional writers may not be physiologically disordered, the insights offered by teachers of aphasics are useful to the classroom teacher. The following books are especially practical.

1. AGRANOWITZ, ALBEN, and MILFRED RIDDLE MCKEOWN, *Aphasia Handbook for Adults and Children*. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1964.
2. GRANICH, LOUIS. *A Guide to Retraining*. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1947.

Because information about and approaches to teaching non-English speakers must differ as their native languages differ, no one source will suffice for all the possible teaching problems. However, the two following offer suggestions and leads to appropriate materials:

1. J. VERNON JENSON. *Research on Childhood Bilingualism and Procedures to Follow in Educating the Bilingual Child*. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.
2. Center for Applied Linguistics. *Reference List of Materials for English as a Second Language*. Available from Champaign, Illinois NCTE (Stock No. 12701).

The following sources give a general background in social and regional dialects, and implications for teaching:

1. EVERTT, ELDONNA L., ed. *Dimensions of Dialect*. Champaign: NCTE, 1965.
2. SHUY, ROGER W. *Discovering American Dialects*. Champaign: NCTE, 1964.

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