



# **Explorations**

## **Introductory Activities for Literature and Composition, 7-12**

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## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES FOR LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION, 7-12

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*Dedicated to George Hillocks, Jr.*

**Acknowledgments:** We wish to acknowledge our friends Larry Johannessen, Betsy Kahn, and Carolyn Walter, without whose ideas and support this project would not have been possible.

NCTE Editorial Board: Candy Carter, Lee Galda-Pellegrini, Donald R. Gallo, Delores Lipscomb, Thomas Newkirk, L. Jane Christensen, *ex officio*, Paul O'Dea, *ex officio*

Staff Editor: Lee Erwin

Book Design: Tom Kovacs for TGK Design

NCTE Stock Number 16612

Published 1987 by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

**OERI** This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-86-0045. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the Editorial Board of the National Council of Teachers of English for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the National Council of Teachers of English or the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

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# FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). ERIC provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development reports, and related information useful in developing effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current information and lists that information in its reference publications.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—a considerable body of data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of educational research are to be used by teachers, much of the data must be translated into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, OERI has directed the ERIC clearinghouses to commission authorities in various fields to write information analysis papers.

As with all federal educational information efforts, ERIC has as a primary goal bridging the gap between educational theory and classroom practice. One method of achieving that goal is the development by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) of a series of booklets designed to meet concrete educational needs. Each booklet provides teachers with a review of the best educational theory and research on a limited topic, followed by descriptions of classroom activities that will assist teachers in putting that theory into practice.

The idea is not unique. Several educational journals and many commercial textbooks offer similar aids. The ERIC/RCS booklets are, however, noteworthy in their sharp focus on educational needs and their pairing of sound academic theory with tested classroom practice. And they have been developed in response to the increasing number of requests from teachers to provide this kind of service.

Topics for these booklets are recommended by the ERIC/RCS National Advisory Board. Suggestions for topics are welcomed by the Board and should be directed to the clearinghouse.

Charles Suhor  
Director, ERIC/RCS

# 1 THEORY AND RESEARCH

Do you remember the first time you were asked by a college professor to read *The Sound and the Fury*, *Ulysses*, or *Tristram Shandy*? No doubt you found it on the syllabus, were assigned the first few chapters for the following Wednesday, and showed up for class with a headache and bloodshot eyes. Then, in your freshman composition class, you were instructed to produce an explication of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" on the second Friday of the semester, when the most sophisticated piece of writing you'd ever produced in high school had been a book report on *Old Yeller*. The problem in both cases is that the professor's methodology requires students first to struggle with difficult material, and then backtrack, with the help of professorial expertise, in order to remediate comprehension. Such a process, the professor assumes, will teach students how to think and write analytically about problems presented in literature.

Our experiences as public school teachers, coupled with the research reports of scholars such as Dolores Durkin and Arthur Applebee, tell us that college teachers are not the only ones who neglect the cognitive processes involved in learning new information. By and large, in our schools, most material is *not* adequately preceded by any introductory activity that could give students the type of prior experience which would help them comprehend the material to be studied. Such experience allows students to make personal connections between their own impressions and experiences and the ideas presented in a work of literature or exposition, and ultimately to produce writing which is both meaningful to them and faithful to the ideas in the text.

The lack of adequate introductory activities affects both students' reading comprehension and writing performance. Durkin (1978-79) has reported that in the elementary schools, virtually no reading comprehension instruction takes place. Rather, teachers are generally "'mentioners,' as-

signment givers and checkers, and interrogators"; in 4,469 minutes of classroom observation, her research team observed only 28 minutes of actual reading comprehension instruction. Students would gather together to read, but were taught virtually no strategies for understanding either the text at hand or texts they might encounter in the future. Nor was reading structured to promote comprehension; strategies which research has indicated improve children's understanding of texts were rarely employed.

This problem is perpetuated in the secondary schools. One area neglected is introducing material in any way that could provide a cognitive map for comprehension. Beck, Omanson, and McKeown have found that "selection of a framework for pre-story preparation activities that will ready children to recognize and interrelate critical story concepts" will facilitate comprehension. Although their research concerned elementary school students, who are the subjects of most reading-comprehension research, their conclusions are consistent with those of cognitive psychologists who have found, as Beck et al. note, that "prior knowledge provides a framework into which a reader can assimilate new information." Such research is cited in a recent compendium of reading research, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, which reports that "using instructional time to build background knowledge pays dividends in reading comprehension" (p. 50). The importance of providing a cognitive map prior to reading, therefore, should be as great in the secondary schools as it is at the elementary levels.

However, the attempts to introduce reading selections in typical secondary school literary anthologies are inadequate in providing prior knowledge. (While "prior knowledge" might seem to imply some sort of factual information, we would also include under its heading prior experience in exploring an abstract concept or theme.) The typical literature anthology provides either no intro-

duction or prior knowledge at all, simply grouping selections by genre, theme, or some other organizing principle; gives brief biographical sketches of authors; provides a short essay introducing a given theme (such as “The Individual” or “The Puritans” in an American literature anthology); or includes an introductory essay giving historical background to a piece, such as a Greek myth, set in some remote time period. In none of these cases are students engaged in any activity encouraging them to probe a concept in terms of their own experiences and thus providing a cognitive map for comprehending the idea when they encounter it in the literature. The activities we are suggesting have provided our students with beneficial experience in grappling with concepts prior to their study, and have resulted in keen initial interest in the literature. Even such difficult and often forbidding works as Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” have been received and examined with some enthusiasm because of our introductory activities.

The authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* note that the importance of introductions is now receiving some misguided attention. Much of what is being done in the name of introductory activities is a waste of time, they say, covering too broad a range of topics. Rather, they feel that “useful approaches to building background knowledge prior to a reading lesson focus on the concepts that will be central to understanding the upcoming story, concepts that children either do not possess or may not think of without prompting. . . . Unstructured preparation may wander away from the concepts of central importance” (50). That is, an introduction should focus attention on key concepts in such a way that students can draw a clear correlation between their own experiences, values, and observations and those central to the text.

Properly prepared activities are not merely attention-grabbing gimmicks, though. A pilot study by Stephen Kern showed that experimental groups using one of the methods in this booklet, introductory scenario activities, scored better on a wide range of comprehension questions than did control groups who did not use the activities. The initial analysis of the data from Jane Curry’s current University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation suggests that another reading comprehension introduction, the opinionnaire, also promotes comprehension to an extent significantly greater than that achieved by

control groups. The activities, then, serve the dual purpose of sparking student interest and promoting understanding of the literature.

Students are also generally given inadequate preparation for writing. Arthur Applebee reports in *Writing in the Secondary School* that in classrooms observed in his study, activities “designed to help students while they were writing were almost nonexistent” (90). His study looked at writing in all areas of the school, and found that “prewriting activities typically took about three minutes—not time for much at all.” In English classes, students were “likely to spend their time thinking about the subject, trying to sort out relevant opinions and experiences.” Only some teachers, he reports, “are more concerned with the teaching of writing and work very hard to provide a variety of prewriting activities” (76–77). Otherwise, “two-thirds of student reports on prewriting activities noted instructions related to form (length and layout of the paper). Other sorts of instructions were rare.”

Although this observation includes teachers of all subjects, English teachers seemed to have no clearly thought-out method for introducing writing assignments. Applebee reports that among teachers responding to his national survey, “the most popular technique in helping students get started was to have them begin their writing in class, so that they could ask questions about what was expected if they found themselves in difficulties. This approach was most popular with English teachers, nearly 80 percent of whom reported that they regularly assign writing in this way. . . . About a third of the English teachers reported regular use of writing models. . . . Brainstorming was reported in regular use by some 37 percent of the English teachers” (96–97).

Applebee reports little concern among English teachers for instruction engaging students in real rhetorical problems and leading them to develop skills which will improve their general writing competence. The introductory activities he describes heavily emphasize the form of the written product, rather than the process which will produce such a form; they hardly qualify as “activities,” since the only activity he describes that engages students at all is brainstorming. Even this method only produces a variety of ideas to include in a paper, without teaching any strategies that could help the student write better after completing the immediate assignment.

The evidence is strong, therefore, that most teachers and existing texts give very little attention to the way in which problems or units of study are initially presented to students. While teachers' goals may be to improve students' comprehension of the selections studied and to help them produce better writing in their study of the texts, for the most part they do not present the material in such a way as to improve student performance. Cognitive psychologists, however, who study the information-processing capacities of the brain, have identified the importance of the role of prior knowledge in learning. Researchers such as Bransford and Johnson (1972) have found that the best way to spend time in studying new material is not necessarily to focus on the material itself; if we need certain information to understand it better, then we should devote more time to studying this prerequisite material. While our activities do not provide "knowledge" in the form of factual information, they do provide students a format through which to wrestle with concepts in familiar contexts. Kern's findings suggest that such prior experience serves the same function as the prior knowledge identified by Bransford and Johnson.

Research of this sort has led to the development of *schema theory*. A schema is the "script"—that is, the set of elements, patterns, relationships, and processes—that we have for understanding a given concept. For instance, most of us have a schema for "restaurant": the elements are the customer, host, table, waiter, food, check, and cashier; the patterns might be the logistical relationships among kitchen, bar, tables, and register; the relationships might be the pecking order among manager, chef, host, waiter, and busperson, and how they all relate to the customer; and the processes would be entering and being seated, ordering, waiting for the food, eating, paying, and leaving. Once we know this schema through experience, we can make inferences to help us understand what happens when we dine in a restaurant: food brought out of order could indicate an inexperienced waiter; slow service could mean that the dishes are individually prepared or that the chef has received too many orders at once; the presence of a loud jukebox could indicate the type of clientele favored by the management; in short, the prior knowledge about the relationships in restaurants, the schema a person has for restaurant dining, allows him or her to understand better what

takes place in restaurants. Without this schema, certain developments might seem baffling, and other events of significance might pass him or her by altogether.

The restaurant example is a simple illustration of the importance of establishing a schema for understanding situations. In school, we often present students with learning tasks for which we have given them inadequate preparation; they are like people whose restaurant schema is suitable for a mud-wrestling emporium which serves hamburgers and chili but who go to eat at the Ritz. Their preparation is inadequate for the task at hand, and they will understand neither the elements nor the processes at work, and will probably fail to understand the situation or perform up to expectations. Students who are not properly prepared for learning the tasks we set up for them will not perform according to our expectations. While we cannot clearly say whether or not our activities actually provide students with schemata, our experiences in using them lead us to agree with Kern's conclusion that they facilitate students' adjustment and use of schemata because of the preparation they provide in helping students to wrestle with key issues.

We must question the types of introductory activities currently practiced in the schools (as described by Durkin and Applebee) and included in most textbooks. Does a biographical sketch of an author provide a schema for understanding the themes he or she will present, even if it does mention what those primary themes are? Will a brief historical essay surmount the problems associated with comprehending the life of a different period of time, or help suggest the archetypes behind mythological figures? Will form-oriented models give writers a "script" that will help them generate sound ideas? Does giving students time to begin essays in class do anything to help them cope effectively with rhetorical problems?

We think not. We have designed this booklet to help teachers think about the processes that go into learning, and to explain how to design activities that provide solid introductions to various learning tasks.

This booklet opens with activities that will promote reading comprehension. We provide examples of four types of introductory activities that spark student interest and aid their comprehension of different types of literature. These examples can



provide models for teachers to use in designing appropriate introductory activities for their own instruction; the booklet will lead the reader through the rationale for and process of development of each type of activity. The four types of introductions are: the opinionnaire, scenario-based activities, studying cases, and role playing/simulations. The sample introductory activities are for frequently taught literary works, and we explain how teachers can use them to improve students' understanding of the literature.

The second part of the "practice" section presents a series of high-interest activities designed to engage students in thinking about particular rhetorical concepts. Each activity introduces a rhetorical problem in terms familiar from the students' present experiences, and makes students aware of strategies they already use to deal with these problems. We describe the characteristics of activities that introduce writing skills, and explain how the teacher can use these activities as a first step in developing more sophisticated writing abilities, again detailing the process used to develop appropriate and effective introductory activities.

The text provides examples of successful activities to illustrate these characteristics, activities adaptable for use with writers of varying degrees of skill. The examples can serve as a framework for developing a writing class, or can be altered for use with a teacher's favorite writing assignments.

These first two sections generally focus on reading and writing independent of each other, although the reading comprehension introductions can also involve writing assignments. However, the two are often interdependent. Each instructional activity in reading or writing provides information and procedural knowledge which can facilitate subsequent learning. The last section offers ways to coordinate learning activities so that reading experiences prepare students to write and writing experiences prepare students to understand what they read, as well as providing model activities that show teachers how writing can serve as an extended introductory activity for comprehending literature. In addition, it shows how teachers can use a close examination of particular literary works to prepare students to think and write about issues raised, but not resolved, in the texts.

## 2 PRACTICE

### Introductory Reading Comprehension Activities

#### *Opinionnaire*

The following introductory activity (which is based on a model originally developed by George Hillocks, Jr.) covers issues implicit throughout a single novel, George Orwell's *1984*. It could also be used for a thematic unit studying this and other related works, such as Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, or any of these other texts individually.

#### Design Process

The design process begins with a careful consideration of the difficulties students are likely to confront in the given work. In *1984*, many students encounter frustration when trying to explicate the political inferences and generalizations suggested by Orwell. The opinionnaire on p. 21 of the Appendix provides a series of statements concerning governments, individuals, and the proper relationship between citizens and rulers. Many high school students have given little thought to these issues, and it behooves the instructor to make their first encounter with such concerns one in which those issues are clearly and simply defined, without "distractions" such as character, setting, etc., allowing them to instantiate the concern from their own experiences and perceptions. The idea is to have students consider difficult issues initially from the contexts of their own worlds, so that the issues are clear and understandable; this then prepares students for examining the same problems in a more complex work of literature.

#### Procedures

The teacher distributes the opinionnaires (see p. 21 in the Appendix) and the students mark the statements individually. (An alternative method is

to have students discuss each statement in small groups.) The teacher then leads a class discussion on the responses to each of the statements. The teacher should focus the discussion, whenever possible, on areas in which wide disagreement among students exists, and should be careful not to let his or her own opinions influence the discussion. The students should defend their choices carefully, and, if necessary, the teacher should play the devil's advocate in the face of complacency.

#### Possible Follow-up Writing Assignments

The teacher might have each student take one of these statements and write an essay demonstrating through reference to *1984* whether Orwell would strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the selected statement. A second follow-up writing activity could be an expository essay explaining how people should behave in order to ensure a free and democratic society.

#### *Scenarios*

The goal of scenario-based activity is to provide the students with practice in examining certain themes or concepts critical for an adequate understanding of a text. At the same time, the activity should allow for students to make connections between their own experiences and the specific world of the literary work that follows. Finally, the activity must accomplish its goals in such a way as to spark interest in the subsequent text. Activities must complement texts, not overshadow them. The following scenario-based activity (based on a model originally developed by George Hillocks, Jr.) is designed to precede a specific work, *The Scarlet Letter*.

#### Design Process

1. The teacher needs to identify key situations early in the novel that are likely to present inferential problems for the students. In *The*

*Scarlet Letter* many students experience difficulty in understanding the behavior of the Puritans toward Hester's transgressions, for the workings of a tightly knit theocracy are not likely to be found within the experience of most high school juniors. Nevertheless, all students have experienced the effects of peer pressure and the norms of a particular peer group. The teacher must therefore design an activity that requires students to examine examples of such social situations and make judgments about them.

2. The teacher then must create several scenarios, each describing an incident wherein an individual's thought or action is severely constrained by the pressure of a group. Ideally, since Hester's situation occurs in a moral context, the conflict within the scenarios should revolve around ethical considerations familiar to the students. Just as in the role-playing activity, characters and situations depicted in the scenarios should be problematic, to avoid the possibility of superficial analysis of the issues.
3. Once the scenarios have been designed, the teacher must construct and specify the ways in which the students will interact with them. In the following activity, students are asked to rank the scenarios on pp. 22–23 in terms of the acceptability of the groups' behavior.

#### Procedures

1. Distribute scenarios to students, and instruct the students to read them silently first, and then decide which scenario presents the clearest case of a group behaving fairly. They are then to rank the three remaining scenarios according to the extent that each represents fairness.
2. The teacher draws the following chart on the board:

	A	B	C	D
Most acceptable	-----			
Least acceptable	-----			

The teacher then tallies the results on the board. The problematic nature of the scenarios, and the different values and opinions of the students, should cause wide disagreement in their responses.

3. The teacher then leads a class discussion that focuses on the reasons for the rankings made by the students. The teacher must be especially careful to avoid injecting his or her point of view into the discussion as this may inhibit students from grappling with the issues on their own. The teacher may want the class to generate some possible guidelines on when it is acceptable for a group to restrict the activities of an individual within that group.
4. At the conclusion of the activity, the teacher is ready to assign the first several chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*. She or he may or may not wish to cue the students' reading with a statement such as, "You are going to encounter a situation similar in some ways to those we found in the scenarios. Keep in mind what we discussed today in class as you read."

#### Possible Follow-up Writing Assignment

The teacher might decide to follow up this activity with a writing assignment to be done either before the students begin reading and discussing the literature, or at some point after they have begun reading. For *The Scarlet Letter*, the students could compose a short discussion of the group behavior of the Puritans toward Hester after they have read far enough in the novel. Or they might select one of the scenarios given and discuss the "fairness" of the group's behavior.

#### Studying Cases

##### Design Process

Case studies have been used successfully in a number of business, law, and education graduate schools as a means for students to explore and discuss problematic situations so that they will develop analytical schemata and become more capable of solving real problems with similar structures. They are similar to scenarios in that they involve a study of problems drawn from real-life situations; the difference is that each case is studied individually, instead of using a series of cases for comparative purposes. The design is thus similar to designing scenarios: The idea is to identify the problems that will arise in the literature, and write cases that contain a similar structure. If the students study a series of such cases prior to reading, then they should be better prepared to recognize the problems when

they occur in the literature.

The series of cases on pp. 24–27 in the Appendix prepares students to read *Romeo and Juliet*. Many students find the protagonists' ostracism from their families hard to understand. What they need is practice in analyzing cases that bring the experiences of Romeo and Juliet more within the realm of their own worlds. Therefore, in designing cases for this play, a teacher needs to focus on the essential conflict faced by the adolescents: They want to pursue a relationship, but are constrained by pressures from their family group. In designing the following exercise, we decided not to operate only within the family group and not to limit the relationship to a romantic one, but to have other groups pressure the adolescents, and include friendships as well. This allows students with little romantic experience to identify with the characters' plight.

One way to use these cases is to divide the class into five groups and have each be responsible for leading a discussion on the problems involved in the story, and how best to solve them. In leading the class discussion, each group should focus on identifying plausible solutions to the problem, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each, and trying to reach a consensus on which solution is best. This activity is excellent in satisfying an English program's oral participation requirement, and gives students an opportunity to run the class themselves for an entire week. This helps them in gaining independence from the teacher in their thinking and discussing.

The students should thus be prepared to understand the situation that Romeo and Juliet find themselves in. The writing assignment on p. 27 of the Appendix is one that you could have students do after they've read the play.

### *Role Playing/Simulation*

The idea for a role playing/simulation activity is borrowed from *Taking Action: Writing, Reading, Speaking, and Listening through Simulation Games*, by Lynn Quitman Troyka and Jerrold Nudelman (1975). A simulation game is a reconstruction of a real environment which requires the participants to take action and make decisions as if they were actually operating in the hypothetical environment; the idea originated years ago with the Pentagon war games. Troyka, for her doctoral thesis, wrote simulation games for the English classroom, and

compared the writing of experimental groups who wrote following simulation games with the writing of control groups. The writing from the experimental groups resulted in increased skill in reasoning, more clarity of style, and greater complexity of development. Rather than being simply gimmicks or games to catch students' attention, then, simulation games have had a demonstrated positive effect on students' ability to consider and solve problems clearly.

While Troyka and Nudelman focus on the quality of the writing that follows simulation games, we have found that when used prior to reading they can also enable students to grapple with concepts underlying assignments, and thereby improve students' comprehension of the material when they read it. This is possible when the simulation game designer creates characters, each embodying certain qualities or values that are important in the reading, who will necessarily come into conflict during the role-playing portion of the activity. This will force students, before reading, to examine critical issues through their own expression of the problems. This ability to identify with the issues before reading will allow the students to instantiate the issues and characters in the text, associate them with experiences and perceptions of their own that they will already have explored, and therefore better grasp the material.

### Design Process

1. The teacher first needs to identify the issues in the texts he or she wants the students to grapple with during the course of study. The following activity is designed to introduce a unit on American materialism, with the primary texts being *The Great Gatsby*, *The House of Mirth*, and *Death of a Salesman*. (Note: These introductory activities may be used to introduce a thematic unit, such as materialism, or any individual work based on this theme.) In such a unit, the following concepts are important:
  - a. The insulating effect that wealth can have on people.
  - b. The effect of material values on a person's behavior.
  - c. The areas of life which material values cause a person to neglect.
  - d. The effects of material values on people of varying degrees of material advantage.

2. Second, the teacher must design a setting and create characters who embody different aspects of the concepts to be studied, to provide contrast and difference of values when the characters clash in the role playing. Characters should not be drawn as all-good, all-bad, or all-anything; this will result in a superficial analysis of the issues. Rather, each character should be problematic, so as to give each the complexity inherent in real personalities.

For the unit on materialism, we needed to invent a scenario which would bring together people of different degrees of material orientation, and put them in a situation which would bring their different sets of values into conflict. The purpose of the characters is to raise issues concerning material values, not to parallel characters in the novel or play. We created, therefore, five teenagers with radically different attitudes toward the value of material possessions. This would help the students to associate the role players with people from their own experience, to promote an immediate sense of identification with the problem. These characters may be modeled on key individuals from the texts to be read, but needn't be.

3. The teacher must next determine the situation in which the characters encounter one another for the role playing. Troyka and Nudelman suggest that the role playing be conducted at some sort of simulated meeting in which the characters discuss an issue, to be followed by a decision on the meeting made by a group assigned to evaluate the role players. Not all simulation games need to follow this format, however. Any situation providing a critical encounter which forces the actors to probe the limits of their characters' behavior is good for the role-playing incident. For the unit on materialism, the situation involves an encounter which will force each role player to articulate his or her attitude toward materialism in a critical situation. The role players must make a decision on how to spend a large sum of money that has been bequeathed to them. The important thing to remember in devising the situation is that it must enable students to examine the problems from the texts from the standpoint of their own experiences and perceptions. The situation

should be one, then, of which they have some knowledge.

4. Finally, the teacher must design activities which follow the role playing. These are very important, for here the students analyze the situation to see how people behave when affected by certain conditions. This segment of the activity is where the teacher directs the students toward examining the issues underlying the simulation game.

Our purpose is to use the simulation game to help the students establish a schema for understanding the issues in the materialism unit, in order to improve their reading comprehension and to provide an experiential basis from which to generate writing in their analyses of the concept. We feel that the best way to achieve this is to create an assignment in which students in small groups evaluate the behavior of the role players and rank them in terms of which characters displayed the most and least exemplary behavior. If the characters are well drawn, many groups will be unable to come up with a consensus. The small-group work should be followed with an all-class discussion of the rankings, to identify the various attitudes the students have toward the different types of behavior, and to help the students analyze their own sense of material values. When students consider the actions of the role players in this way, they can probe the issues that will arise in their reading, and thus improve their likelihood of comprehending the literature. The following is a fully outlined simulation game to introduce a unit on materialism.

#### Warm-up

This type of activity works best if preceded by some sort of warm-up, to "loosen up" the students and make them more likely to improvise spontaneously and without inhibition. The following is a series of warm-up activities that the teacher should lead. We are indebted to Pat Gordon of Barrington (Illinois) High School for providing them, and for his many suggestions for teaching improvisation; for more details, he recommends Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater*. Some teachers might be concerned that this type of activity will take up too much instructional time, particularly if they are under pressure to cover a given amount of material in each marking period. However, the benefits from this series of activities outweigh the disadvantage of tak-

ing a lot of time. First of all, the activity causes students to examine the issues raised in the literature. It also provides an opportunity to incorporate important components of a public speaking strand into the instruction, instead of teaching speech as a discrete skill. The improvisation activities also serve as an enjoyable break from the conventions of instruction, an opportunity for students to be rewarded for their wit and spontaneity.

*Day 1:*

1. The students walk around the room randomly. At a command, they stop and pick a partner standing next to them. The taller of the two will perform some activity; the other will reproduce this activity as if he or she were a mirror. Then they switch roles, with the shorter of the two initiating the action. Do this four or five times.
2. One student leaves the room, and the others form a circle. One student in the circle initiates an action (clapping hands, scratching head, etc.) which the others must imitate. The other student returns to the room and stands in the middle of the circle. The student who is initiating the action must change actions every ten to thirty seconds. The student in the middle must try to identify the student who is initiating the action. When he does so, that student leaves the room and another student is chosen to initiate actions.
3. The students get in a circle and begin a story, each student adding a single word to what's been said. Then, they will tell another story, with each student contributing a whole sentence.
4. The students will work in pairs and practice becoming characters they might meet at a party they'd throw. Two at a time, they should get before the audience and assume specific character types, without explicitly telling anyone what types they are. Each should simply react to the other, while remaining faithful to his or her chosen character.

*Day 2:*

1. All students walk around the room randomly. On command, they should stop and say hello to the person next to them nonverbally. Do four or five different ways.
2. The students sit in a circle. One student creates

an imaginary object in his or her hands, uses it, and then passes it to the person sitting to the left. That person uses it, and then creates a new object which he or she uses and passes to the left.

If the class is large, you can divide it into two circles that do this simultaneously.

3. The students get in a circle and tell a story, each student adding a sentence to what's been said. Specify story types: grim, happy, tragic, comic, sentimental, science fiction, western, etc.
4. Begin the improvisations from the pairs established on day 1.

*Day 3:*

1. The students walk around the room randomly. At a command, they stop and pick partners standing next to them. The taller of each two will perform some activity; the other will reproduce this activity as if he or she were a mirror. Then they switch roles, with the shorter of the two initiating the action. Do this four or five times.
2. Emotional orchestra: The class forms into groups of eight students. The audience gives each player in the onstage group an emotion. When the orchestra leader points to each player, that player must make the sound of his or her emotion.  
Repeat the activity, except that each player must use words to convey the emotion.  
Each group of eight should perform once.
3. Finish the improvisations from day 2.
4. Follow-up discussion: List the types represented in the improvisations. How were they best characterized?
5. The students form groups of four to five for a "who-what-where" activity: Each student chooses one of the types represented in the improvisations, with no two in any one group being the same type; they should be different, to ensure lively interaction. They may choose any setting for their encounter. In their improvisation, they must use at least two imaginary objects which are central to their interaction (passing something back and forth, etc.).

*Day 4:*

1. Tug-of-war: Divide the class into four groups. Two of the groups at a time will engage in an

imaginary tug-of-war. The teacher establishes a central line which each will try to pull the other over. The teams line up on opposite sides, and all are instructed to pick up the "rope" which is at their feet. They must work as a team to try to "pull" the other team over the line. The teacher should orchestrate this, telling which team to be "winning" and which to give ground. Let each team "pull" the other two or three times.

2. The students sit in a circle. One student creates an imaginary object in his or her hands, uses it, and then passes it to the person sitting to his or her left. That person uses it, and then creates a new object which he or she uses and passes to the left.
3. The students sit in a circle. The teacher instructs one to pick up the "ball" sitting in front of him or her. Upon a given signal, the students will begin to "pass" the ball around the room; by the time it gets back around the room, the student who started with the ball will have to say six words beginning with whatever letter the teacher calls out.  
Do this with four or five students.
4. The groups of four may have a few minutes to prepare; then, they begin the performances of the activity begun on day 3.

#### *Day 5:*

1. The students walk around the room randomly. When the teacher commands, the students must stop and perform whatever action the teacher calls out.  
The students continue to walk around the room. When the teacher says stop, each student must become an animal, whichever one he or she wishes.  
The students walk randomly, and when the teacher gives a signal, they must pair up and carry on a conversation as the animals that they've become.
2. The students get in a circle. They will tell a story, each student adding a sentence to what's been said. Specify the type of story.
3. Brief preparation, then perform the remaining improvisations.

#### Role Playing

When the students have performed this series of activities, they should be ready for the role playing. The procedures are:

1. The students form five groups of equal size. Each group will be responsible for one of the characters, with one of the members ultimately playing the role. (Each group should therefore make sure that it includes at least one person experienced in or eager to perform in a theatrical or improvisational situation.)
2. Mimeographed sheets containing information about the background, the roles, and the situation are distributed to each group (see pp. 28–30 in the Appendix). The class reads these together, and each group volunteers for one of the roles.
3. Each group studies its role, and determines how its character would behave under such circumstances. It then selects the member who will perform in the role-playing activity, and prepares that person for how he or she will behave. The students must be cautioned that while the improvisation that they have done up to this point has often been deliberately humorous, the role playing itself will require a more serious approach.
4. Following a brief warm-up taken from the activities performed on days 1–5, the role players assemble as described in the situation, and improvise beginning with the last description in that portion of the materials. The role playing continues until the students reach some point of resolution.
5. Follow-up activities: At the conclusion of the role playing, the teacher should divide the class into groups of four, and tell the students to rank each of the characters in the role playing in terms of how admirable his or her behavior has been; in other words, to determine which character provides the best model for other people to follow, which character provides the second-best model, etc. These discussions should give students a forum for discussing the relative values of the characters, and how their different orientations toward materialism affect their behavior. They will be

forced to make judgments about which types of behavior are most acceptable to them, and so will be coming to terms with their attitudes toward materialism prior to reading. Such an experience should help prepare them for analyzing and understanding the behavior of the characters they encounter in the literature. When the small groups have completed their rankings, the teacher should conduct a whole-class discussion in which the students compare their rankings and further modify through discussion their understanding of the unit concepts.

#### Possible Follow-up Writing Assignments

The teacher may wish to initiate a composition assignment at this point, which the students would revise at several points throughout the course of study as they discuss the attitudes of the authors they read. A good assignment for a unit on materialism would be, "Describe the extent to which materialistic values affect an individual. Are these effects good, bad, or some combination?" This assignment would help the students to articulate their views on the problems they have just wrestled with, so that they can recognize them more easily in the subsequently studied literary characters; it would also allow students to experience the writing process in a number of different stages, perhaps periodically evaluating one another's progress in small groups. The papers could be turned in at the conclusion of the unit of study, after undergoing several revisions and much reconsideration.

Once again, in designing any of these follow-up activities, the teacher should keep in mind the purpose of his or her instruction. Teachers wishing to generate a strong affective response to the literature should design follow-up activities to elicit students' feelings about materialism. Teachers who want their students to comprehend the authors' attitudes toward materialism so that they can produce an expository essay on materialism or an analytical essay on a literary work about materialism should focus on analyzing the actions of the different role players. Regardless of the reason for teaching the literature, teachers should always keep in mind that the purpose of the introductory activity is to provide a cognitive map for learning the concepts underlying the course of study.

#### *Designing Your Own Activities*

Keep in mind that the purpose of this book is not so much to provide teachers with activities to use as to show how to design activities that allow students to explore concepts and learn skills prior to reading and writing tasks, in order to promote proficiency. A colleague, Bill Lovaas of Oak Park and River Forest High School, after observing some of our reading comprehension activities, designed one for a unit he was teaching on colonial American literature. Rather than adhering strictly to the types of activities we have described, he designed an activity based on their principles. This is precisely what we are encouraging you to do: use the idea of establishing a cognitive map to guide comprehension in order to design your own introductory activities. The types we have outlined are not the only ways to go about this; we felt that Bill's activity was an excellent example of how to adapt these principles to your own needs. The following activity is designed for either an American literature course or American studies course team-taught with American history.

#### Design Process

Beginning an American literature survey that starts with colonial writers presents a challenge to both teachers and students. The works of Bradford, Byrd, Taylor, Edwards, Bradstreet, and Wheatley present barriers to reading interest and reading comprehension. A prereading activity designed to alleviate some of the obstacles created by a distance of three centuries aids students in understanding the intent and content of the early colonial writers.

The objective of the two prereading exercises is to acquaint students, through role playing and critical thinking, with the conflicts facing the early settlers who left Europe for the promise of freedom in North America. The exercises encourage students to confront and analyze the physical and philosophical obstacles facing the colonists. The result is an appreciation for the perspectives of American writers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

#### Procedures

The class will be divided into small groups of four or five students. Each group will select a chairper-



son to direct the group and lead the group's presentation. (The chairperson will earn extra credit.) The groups are to read the scenario on p. 31 of the Appendix and develop responses to the scenario and rationales for their responses, in preparation for presenting their arguments to the whole class.

### Introductory Writing Activities

#### *Adding Details for Increased Clarity*

##### Design Process

Most teachers bemoan the fact that their students are not specific enough in their writing, and not thorough enough in their explanations. One way to introduce students to the idea of adding details to their writing to increase the clarity of their expression is to engage them in an activity in which they must not only explain something they are familiar with to someone else, but evaluate someone else's writing and critique it for the purpose of developing criteria for specificity. Students often take for granted that their audience can picture what they are describing, and therefore leave out important details. An activity that begins with asking students to describe something from their everyday lives can show them just how important it is for them to be specific in their writing. For a good source of exercises of this type, we recommend George Hillocks, Jr.'s TIP booklet *Observing and Writing* (1975).

##### Procedures

The activity that follows requires students to give directions for going from the front of their school to some destination at least one mile away. Upon first doing this, many students leave out important details such as which way to travel on a road, how far to go before turning, and what landmarks to look for around turns and the destination. The criticism of the instructions, however, comes not from the teacher but from students. Thus, they use the activity to develop a series of rules which they must then follow in completing the assignment. The activity concerns material very familiar to the students, their own neighborhoods, and thus provides them with a good, concrete introduction to the importance of using details in their writing.

### Assignment

The following assignment is read or distributed to the students:

One of your parents' old friends has just arrived here in town. She has never been here before, and wants to get a good look at the town. She goes with you to school in the morning, and then, when you have to go inside to attend your classes, she asks you if you can recommend any interesting sights for her to see in town. She wants to walk at least a mile, and asks you to give her directions to some place which is at least a mile from the front of the school. Write down the instructions you would give her.

The students are given time to write their directions, and when everybody is done they exchange papers. Each makes two columns at the end of the paper he or she is reading, in one column listing the parts of the directions that are especially helpful, in the other listing the parts of the directions that are confusing.

When this is done, the students gather in small groups to compare papers and evaluations, and to draw up a list of those qualities they feel should be included in a good set of directions. The small-group work is very important, for here students make judgments themselves about qualities which will affect their own writing.

When they are done, the groups break up and the teacher conducts a discussion in which the students make a master list of criteria for what goes into a good set of directions. Their final assignment is to rewrite, for a grade, the instructions that they had originally written for the out-of-towner.

#### *Making Generalizations and Giving Examples*

##### Design Process

To prepare the following type of activity, the teacher needs to compile a body of data which students can examine in order to form generalizations. Such an examination introduces students to some elements of argumentation, and this initial experience should provide them with a body of data that is relatively simple and engaging, to enable them to find similarities and draw inferences without too much difficulty. As students become aware of the process of forming generalizations and finding the appropriate support, the teacher can present them with more challenging sources of data. A teacher

can compile a series of related excerpts from periodicals or use commercially available debate evidence books to develop a body of data for examination.

### Procedures

The following activity is an excellent one for introducing the idea of examining a body of evidence, making generalizations about the information, and giving examples to support these observations. The exercise goes from examining simple, immediate material such as students' clothing and making generalizations about the people present to examining a series of case histories of members of urban street gangs.

The teacher opens the lesson by asking the students if they can notice any patterns about the way the members of the class are dressed. From this information, the class tries to make some generalizations about themselves, and gives evidence to support these generalizations.

Next, the teacher distributes the handout on pp. 32–34 in the Appendix. The students are instructed to read each description silently, and then list three things that these cases have in common. Following this, the teacher conducts a discussion in which the class makes a number of generalizations about the gang members and supports these observations with examples. The students are encouraged to question and criticize each other's observations.

### Variation

A variation of the generalization-and-support activity involves interpreting a series of statements. The teacher explains that at the end of a series of activities the students will be writing paragraphs in which they state a conclusion and provide support for that conclusion. The teacher explains that the students will be making generalizations to account for a body of data. The teacher may wish to refer to examples from the previous lesson to remind the students what generalizations are.

The teacher passes out the worksheet on p. 35 in the Appendix, and then asks the students to read the statements and decide what the statements are about. The teacher calls on students to make generalizations about the data, and writes their generalizations on the board. The students should then identify the generalizations that they feel are most accurate, and explain why, considering the

following questions: (1) How can you improve one of these generalizations so that it accounts for all the related evidence? (2) How can you improve the wording of the generalization so that it is not too broad for the given evidence?

The next step is to ask students to write brief paragraphs in which they state a generalization and supply the appropriate evidence. At this point the teacher may want to introduce or review the conventions for quoting evidence and citing a source.

From here, the students may go on to examine more sophisticated bodies of data, and try to draw generalizations about those data, make judgments about them, and explain their judgments in compositions.

### *Descriptive and Evocative Language*

#### Design Process

Sometimes you may want to encourage your students to enliven their writing by being more attentive to word choice. In designing an activity that encourages students to use language effectively, you need to begin with ideas and elements that are familiar to students. Let's say that you wanted to improve students' ability to write with greater sensory detail to convey images more clearly. You might first select something with which they are familiar to examine for potential sensory description. Hillocks (1975) describes several activities that focus on specific senses. In one exercise, students practice describing smells by being blindfolded, and then sniffing odoriferous substances and describing them as clearly as possible, trying to avoid familiar language and if possible use similes.

After an activity such as this, the class could examine some event or phenomenon, such as one of the four seasons, which offer tremendous sensory richness. Following a discussion in which students generate ideas on the images they perceive in a given season, and an identification of events or phenomena exclusive to that season, students can write a narrative or description of some vivid scene, such as a bonfire, harvest, or football game in the fall, focusing on describing the images.

In designing a lesson to promote effective word choice in students' writing, again, the object is to start with something familiar to them. The following exercise begins with an examination of highly evocative car names, requiring students to use their

imaginations to generate ideas about the cars based on their names. From this, they can proceed through a series of steps, gradually increasing their control over language, until they independently produce a text in which they concentrate on selecting words with powerful connotations.

### Procedures

The connotation lesson will begin with a study of the names of cars, since they are commonly known to students and are selected by marketing people to evoke powerful images in the minds of consumers. Start by giving the names of cars popular in the 1960s: Thunderbird, Falcon, Charger, Comet, Mustang, Barracuda. Ask the students: How are these names effective in evoking powerful associations in a listener or reader? What kind of performance could you expect from each of these cars? Why do you think these names were selected, and for what kind of buyer?

Then, present a second list of car names, this time from the 1970s: Rabbit, Pinto, Colt, Civic, Starlet, Gremlin. How are the associations we make with these names different? What kind of performance could you expect from each of these cars? Who might be expected to buy them? Why do you think these names were selected?

At this point, you can introduce the idea of "connotation," and define it as the associations that people make with a word. You can contrast connotation with the denotative value of a word, its more literal meaning, and give an example of a word (such as "pig") which has particular connotations depending on the listener: to a hog farmer, it might bring one thing to mind; to Gloria Vanderbilt, another; to a criminal, another. Only in the first case are the word's connotations and denotation the same.

Here, you should return to the original activity, and give the students the following assignment: Here are the names of some new cars. Describe them, and tell why this car fits the needs of society. Who drives it? What does it look like? How big and fast is it? Is it a family car, a recreational vehicle, a commuter's car, a sporty number, or something else? Students should work in small groups to come up with answers, to help generate ideas, and to share in the fun. They should be encouraged to use their imaginations. Some possible car names you might use are: Buzzard, Ox, Gnat, Walrus, Toad, Eel, Basset Hound, Slug, Rhinoceros, Stegosaurus, Porcupine, Squid, Dodo. Following a

class discussion in which students compare their responses, you could have an assignment in which each student thinks up a name for a new car, and describes it in the greatest detail possible.

This should introduce students to the idea of how powerful a word can be in creating associations. You should follow this up with an assignment requiring students to focus on their word selections in creating a strong sensory portrayal of a scene or situation. One way to do this is to write on the board, "He walked into the room." Point out to the students that this is rather bland, because we cannot visualize anything about the action. How could we replace the verb, so that we get a much better understanding of the person entering the room? For instance, if you changed it to "He slithered into the room," how do the verb's connotations help us to see not only what he looked like as he entered, but what type of person he is? Do the same thing with other verbs, such as "strutted," "pranced," "oozed," "marched," and others that either you or the students suggest. How does the verb choice affect the mental image that we form of this person? How can effective word choice affect our writing?

### Assignment

The students are now prepared to use strongly connotative words in their writing. One helpful exercise that serves as a good intermediary step is to present students with the passage on p. 36 of the Appendix and ask them to rewrite it, substituting words with powerful connotations for the drab language of the narrative. They should try to create a vivid effect for their passage, so that the reader can see what is happening, and in what kind of setting. The purpose of this intermediary step is to reduce the students' cognitive load in dealing with a new concept; were we to go directly from the introduction to an assignment requiring them to produce an original text, they might be overwhelmed by all of the requirements of generating both a story line and effective words. Here, they can focus solely on the new concept of selecting connotative words without being burdened by other responsibilities.

Finally, the students can be assigned to write an original narrative or character sketch, incorporating the lessons learned from these assignments into writing on a topic of their own choice. The sequence of activities should allow them to produce an evocative piece of writing with greater competence and less anxiety than if they had been required to write it with insufficient preparation.

### Classification

#### Design process

For this lesson, the teacher poses a question which helps students generate a series of examples for some concept. The students find similarities among the examples in order to group items into categories. In addition, the teacher needs to invent a series of scenarios to help students examine the key concepts further, and define their criteria for a definition.

#### Procedures

The following activities are intended to prepare students to think about some of the important concepts in a literature unit in which the rites of passage or initiation into adulthood is a central theme. The activities may also be used to introduce a single novel. This lesson engages students in the process of classification.

The teacher points out that some Sunday newspaper magazine supplements feature personality profiles of celebrities from the entertainment industry. The teacher offers some examples of this feature. Each week a celebrity is asked a number of questions intended to give us a capsule profile of him or her. Many of the questions are posed in sentence completion form. The feature usually includes the following question: "I knew I was grown up when. . . ." Some celebrities have made the following observations:

1. "I knew I was grown up when I bought a home."
2. "I knew I was grown up when I had my first child."
3. "I knew I was grown up when I got my first job."

The teacher states that these examples are only a few of the many indications that someone has reached adulthood. At this point the class is organized into groups of four or five, in each of which someone serves as the discussion leader, someone is the recorder, and someone else is the reporter. The teacher asks each group to find at least fifteen ways through which we know someone is becoming an adult.

The class is reassembled. The teacher asks each group to report their findings, listing on the board the indications of adulthood suggested. The students are asked to make a copy of all the responses.

The following examples provide a partial list of possible student responses:

- being legally able to buy liquor
- having children
- getting married
- buying a house
- making your own decisions
- paying bills
- growing taller
- doing your own shopping
- being legally able to rent a car
- growing more muscular
- graduating from high school
- graduating from college
- getting a job
- keeping a job
- living on your own
- growing facial hair
- experiencing a change in voice
- taking out a loan
- buying a car
- reaching puberty
- getting a driver's license
- voting
- having a confirmation or bar or bat mitzvah
- becoming more serious
- at 16, maybe quitting school and going to work

After this discussion, the students again organize into groups of four or five. The students are asked to refer to the list of indications of maturity that they copied into their notes. Now the teacher asks the students to organize the items into categories, with the guidelines being: Are any of the items on the list similar? Are there any items that can be grouped together?

When the students finish, the class reassembles as a group. The teacher asks the students to report the categories that they have determined. The students may identify categories such as:

- physical changes
- legal responsibilities and rights
- social and familial responsibilities
- ceremonies, rites of passage

The students should each record the categories that the class identifies, with some examples for each. They should then determine the most important or most reliable indications of maturity, and the least reliable indications, explaining their conclusions.

The students again form small groups, with new readers, recorders, and reporters. The teacher hands out the worksheet on p. 37 of the Appendix, and then each group discusses and evaluates each scenario. The class then reassembles, and the groups share their evaluations and decisions. During this discussion, the class tries to reach agreement about what determines maturity. The scenario activity should help students realize that experience and knowledge will help shape maturity. Age, in and of itself, does not tell us that a person is mature. These considerations should be incorporated into the previous observations about maturity. It is important in a discussion of this type to let the students do the talking and reach their own decisions; although they will probably arrive at these conclusions, they should do it on their own, with the teacher acting as facilitator, so that they have some feeling of discovery and ownership over the criteria they select.

#### Assignment

The students are then ready to write on the following question: "What are some indications that a person is maturing?" The composition should consider all the categories that the class has identified. In this composition, students should use the organization developed from their discussion to present their support categorically. Before writing, they have developed generalizations, classifications, and support, and their responsibility now becomes to communicate the conclusions they have drawn about this problem clearly and effectively.

Following a first draft of the paper, the students can exchange papers with one another, or work together in small writing-evaluation groups for peer critiques. The students should be attentive to the following concerns:

1. Does the writer answer the question?
2. Does the writer deal with all of the categories that were discussed?
3. Does the writer provide examples to illustrate each category?

4. Does the writer discuss the categories in a logical order?

Following this peer critique, students are ready to prepare a draft to be turned in for teacher evaluation.

### Introductory Writing Activities That Promote Reading Comprehension

#### *Making Inferences*

##### Design Process

Character analysis represents one of the most common writing assignments given in literature classes. A successful character analysis demands that students infer abstract traits and values from literal details contained in a text. Qualities and motives of characters may be presented explicitly by an author, but a more common practice among creative writers involves "showing" instead of "telling." Students not sophisticated in literary analysis may, however, experience a great deal of difficulty when confronted with the busy landscape of a challenging work. Even when they can confidently formulate appropriate traits, they often find it hard to connect specific details to their inferences.

The following introductory writing activity gives students practice in making inferences about a limited amount of information having to do with character. The "character" undergoing analysis in this case is another student in the class, who supplies a series of mostly literal details by means of a personality questionnaire. This assignment has the added advantage of offering a subject near and dear to the hearts of most students: themselves. Often students are amazed at the accuracy of the analyses; some even report that they have learned things about themselves they had never known.

When students attempt a subsequent character analysis based on a literary text, their inferential skills have been sharpened. They are more sensitive to the clues given by an author, and they recognize more completely the need to connect their inferences to specific details contained in the text.

#### Procedures

This lesson has been adapted from a lesson originally designed by Sherry Medwin of New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois. It begins with

each student filling out the questionnaire on pp. 38–39 of the Appendix.

### Writing Assignment: Character Sketch

The students are asked the following questions and given directions for the character sketch.

What do the answers on the questionnaire tell you about the person who wrote them? What kind of person is he or she? Is the person a boy or a girl? How do you know? What words come to mind that could describe the person?

*Directions.* Using the answers on the questionnaire, write a character sketch about your person. In the first paragraph, describe the person in general terms (the person is thoughtful, violent, generous, selfish, tough, considerate, etc.). In the next few paragraphs, give evidence from the person's answers to support each observation you've made about him or her. Each paragraph you write should focus on an important personality trait that the person has. Use your imagination, and try to describe your person in the greatest detail possible.

The final stage of this assignment is to return these character sketches to their original owners along with the questionnaires. The students are then told the following, and given the evaluation form from p. 40 of the Appendix.

Your next assignment is to evaluate the character sketch that someone has made of you, based on your answers to the questionnaire. Remember, this person has only had a little information to go on, so in some cases he or she might not have described you exactly. Therefore, do not take it personally and commit some awful crime against this person after school. When you evaluate the character sketch, simply try to see if the person has drawn reasonable conclusions from the evidence you gave about yourself in the questionnaire.

First, read the character sketch carefully all the way through. Then thoroughly complete the evaluation below. (A poor evaluation will be reflected in the grade you receive.) When you've finished, turn in the original questionnaire, the character sketch, and your evaluation in that order.

Following this assignment, students may be asked to make more sophisticated inferences about literature, or other observations they are required to make.

### Comparison/Contrast

#### Design Process

To prepare this type of activity, a teacher must develop a series of descriptions that students can

examine in order to clarify the criteria for distinguishing between two classes. The process is similar to developing an extended definition: The student has an opportunity to group examples under specific categories and develop the criteria used to guide the classification.

### Procedures

The following activities are intended to prepare students for thinking about John Updike's "A & P," or any other story featuring rebels or nonconformists. This lesson engages students in the skills of character analysis, classification, and comparison/contrast.

The class is organized into groups of four or five and each student receives a copy of the worksheet on p. 41 of the Appendix. Before the students read the scenarios, the teacher introduces the terms *conformist* and *nonconformist*. The nonconformist is an independent thinker who will not blindly follow a common standard. Each group should discuss whether the main character in each scenario is a conformist or a nonconformist, taking notes on the qualities or behaviors that cause them to classify the characters as one or the other. Then, the whole class comes together to compare responses, with each group explaining how it arrived at its decision. Through this discussion, the class develops criteria for distinguishing conformists from nonconformists. You may either develop the criteria as a class, writing down the students' decisions on the board, or have each student take notes from the discussion to develop his or her own set of criteria.

After the students have read and discussed the short story, the students return to their groups and reiterate the criteria they used to distinguish a conformist from a nonconformist. They then must determine which characters in the story are conformists and which are nonconformists.

Following this small-group discussion, the groups share their conclusions. The characters are listed on the board under the headings *conformists* and *nonconformists*. For each character the students check the criteria to verify the classification, and the students record the lists.

Each group must then organize each list and rank the characters. The conformists should be ranked according to rigidity; the nonconformists should be ranked according to rebelliousness. After the groups have developed their rankings, they report their conclusions. Disagreements often pre-

vent the class from developing a definitive list, but this is no problem as long as the students are secure in their own rankings.

### Assignment

The follow-up writing assignment calls for the students to use the previous discussions to compare and contrast the characters in the story. The assignment is as follows: "How is Sammie different from other characters in the story? How is he the same as other characters? How do the differences influence Sammie's decision to quit his job?"

Following the completion of a first draft, the students can engage in the sort of peer critique outlined in the previous section, and then prepare a final draft for the teacher.

### Argumentative Essay

#### Design Process

The key to preparing this type of assignment is finding a debatable topic. Analysis of the issues becomes dynamic and meaningful when the solution is not clear-cut. The teacher may want to invent a letter or story in which two actions both offer viable solutions to a controversial problem. The story could be invented, or it may be reported from current issues in the news. As an introductory reading activity, the topic should be related to the key concepts in the literature to be read after the writing assignment.

The problem for debate should suggest a solution that can be framed as a policy statement; that is, the writer can offer a solution as an action that *should* be taken. The "stock issues" paradigm that is offered here will work most readily with policy issues.

#### Procedures

The following assignment provides students with a model for writing an argumentative essay. This writing activity also prepares students for thinking about some of the issues introduced in *Of Mice and Men*. John Steinbeck's novel features a character named Candy, who owns an old dog that is spreading a rancorous odor through the bunkhouse. Carlson, another character in the novel, encourages Candy to kill his dog. Candy must determine whether it is more compassionate to let the dog live or put it out of its misery. This episode of the novel

prepares the reader to think about George's dilemma, and the introductory writing activity helps students understand Candy's problem. With the model for writing argumentative discourse in mind, students are able to write analytically about the problems facing George and Lennie.

The teacher provides students with the letter on p. 42 of the Appendix and asks them to read it, pretending to be the author of a newspaper advice column. The students' task is to write a response to the author of the letter and advise him or her about what action to take. The students should fully analyze the letter for the worried reader, who is seeking a sensitive response. The students can discuss the solution to the letter writer's dilemma in small groups before the teacher helps them to synthesize their arguments. The students can think about the problem from a relatively simple *stock issues* paradigm: (1) What action should the reader take? (*proposition*) (2) What problems (*harms*) would the proposed action eliminate? (3) How serious (*significant*) are the problems? (4) Can the problems be eliminated by some means other than the proposed solution? (*inherency*) (5) What *advantages* will the proposed solution yield? (6) What *disadvantages* will occur if the reader takes some alternative action?

The worksheet on p. 43 forces students to examine the central issues in the conflict.

### Writing about Personal Experiences

#### Design Process

Much literature is based on archetypal experiences. We can help our students to understand such literature better by having them write about experiences they've had which are similar to those they will read about. The process they go through in considering what happened to them, and how they responded, can help them recognize and understand the reactions of the literary characters to their predicaments, and increase their comprehension of the material and their appreciation of the literature. Furthermore, the students often produce writing which they can develop into either a personal essay or reflection, or their own fiction.

#### Procedures

A teacher needs to identify the sort of archetypes at work in the literature to be studied. Many books taught in high school build on the "loss of inno-

cence” theme; a writing assignment asking students to reflect on one such experience from their past can lead to meaningful discussion of the effect this sort of experience can have on an individual, and provide a good background for understanding such characters as Holden Caulfield.

#### Assignment

Some books are complex enough so that we can provide several choices to our students for their prereading writing. The following assignment was developed (following conversations with Dale Griffith of Barrington [Illinois] High School) as an introduction to William Faulkner’s “The Bear.” Here, the students have four options from which to choose (see assignment sheet on p. 44 of the Appendix).

#### Follow-up Writing Assignments

As noted, such writing can serve as the basis for a reflective essay or creative writing. It can also become part of an expository essay that requires students to use examples from real-life experiences to support their contentions. For instance, an expository paper following a reading of *The Catcher in the Rye* might ask students to describe the effects that a loss of innocence can have on an individual, discussing what is lost and gained in such an experience and what the long-term effects are on a person. Students could be advised to save their introductory pieces of writing for possible revision and inclusion in this later composition.

### Introductory Reading Comprehension Activities That Promote Writing Ability

#### Design Process

To prepare this type of activity, a teacher must first decide which concepts students need to understand in order to be able to comprehend the text to be read. The teacher must think carefully about the concept and decide how it is distinguished from other closely related topics. The scenarios that he or she invents should help students refine their criteria for defining the concept, and each scenario should emphasize a separate criterion.

#### Procedures

The following activity achieves two different objectives. First, students learn to provide the necessary elaboration to define an abstract concept. Students

who can write effective extended definitions will find this ability useful in a number of academic classes. As an introductory writing activity, the extended definition prepares students to think about an issue that is central to a single literary work or an entire literature unit. The following extended definition activity follows a model developed by Hillocks and by Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter (1982).

The teacher begins by passing out copies of “What Is Friendship?” from pp. 45–46 of the Appendix. Students are organized into small groups. Each group reads and discusses each scenario on the sheet. In each case, the students are asked to determine whether or not the situation provides an example of friendship and to articulate the rationale for their decision. Students note their decisions and rationales for each situation. When the teacher reconvenes the class, each case is again considered, and the groups report their conclusions. There will be debate about a few of the situations, and students will add criteria not illustrated on the worksheet. All reasonable criteria are listed on the board. Students are encouraged to select the factors that they think are essential to friendship.

To help students begin an extended definition, the teacher reads a dictionary definition of *friendship*. The students are asked to consider the difference between the dictionary definition and their own conclusions about friendship. The students begin their definitions by pointing out the shortcomings of the dictionary definition. Each essential element of friendship is considered individually, with assertions about friendship supported with examples, near examples, and contrasting examples. Students should explain how each example supports an assertion. The explanation is crucial, especially when contrasting examples are used and the writer may otherwise appear guilty of a contradiction.

Thinking analytically about an abstract concept like friendship prepares students to think about major issues in such works as Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, Zindel’s *The Pigman*, Greene’s *Summer of My German Soldier*, Knowles’s *A Separate Peace*, Morrison’s *Sula*, and Cormier’s *The Chocolate War*. This extended definition activity can be adapted to consider a variety of abstract concepts that are crucial to understanding many literary works. Other useful topics might be justice, love, honor, duty, success, and progress.



# APPENDIX

## Opinionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Never give an opinion without also giving your name.)

Below is a series of statements. Circle the response which most closely indicates how you feel about the statement.

1. Most governments genuinely do have the interests of the people at heart.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. If the people feel a government is not working fairly for them, they have the right to start a revolution to overthrow that government.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. A citizen of legal age has the right to do anything he or she wants to do as long as it does not directly harm another human being.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. Governments are only interested in keeping themselves in power.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. The *best* government is the one that governs *least*.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
6. You should always complain when things aren't going the way you want them to go.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. A person should be loyal to his or her government first, and to his or her own interests second.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. When you want society to change, you should do it through your vote, not by protesting.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. We should never question the decisions of people who are placed in administrative positions, because they are doing what they feel is best for everyone.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
10. Most people are too meek to stand up for what they believe in.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
11. I always make my opinions known when I disagree with the way things are being run.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Not Sure    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

### Scenario Worksheet for *The Scarlet Letter*

*Directions.* Read each of the scenarios carefully. Each of them briefly describes an incident involving a single individual and a group of people. Focus on the behavior of the group. In each case, is the group's behavior acceptable or not? You are to rank the following scenarios in terms of the acceptability of the groups' behavior. Place a 1 in the blank of the most acceptable scenario, a 2 in the blank of the next most acceptable, and so on through a 5 in the blank of the *least* acceptable.

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Ben Reardon was a freshman at a large Midwestern state university that had an active fraternity system and a famous agricultural school. Ben had become a pledge of the Alpha Alpha Alpha fraternity, and had spent a good part of his freshman year working hard to impress the fraternity members. Like the other pledges, he had had to go through various tasks and degradations—most of them quite harmless except to his own dignity—to prove his worth to the *fraternity pledge council*. Throughout the pledging period, he had done everything asked of him without complaint (including paying a pledge fee and dues to both the local and national fraternities), because of his eagerness to join the Alphas, the fraternity of which his father had been president twenty-five years earlier. Not only that, fraternity membership was quite important to a young man's social life on campus, since there was little else around except cornfields and farm animals; most men on campus were in fraternities, unless they had been blackballed.

Finally, the week of the initiation ceremony arrived. The Alphas had a longstanding tradition that one of their pledges would be randomly selected to steal a lamb from the Agricultural School for a secret sacrifice as part of the pledge initiation rite, with its blood being wiped on the forehead of each initiate in the form of the letter *alpha*. Unfortunately, Ben was picked to steal the lamb. "You don't have to kill it," he was told by the pledge council, "but you do have to steal it." After thinking about it, Ben told the council that he couldn't do it. Helping kill an animal for no reason was wrong. The council decided to drop his name from their pledge list. Beyond that, they told him, they would see to it that he would be blackballed forever from fraternity life on campus for not respecting their sacred traditions.

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Arlan Foster, a graduate student in philosophy at Boston University, rented a house with a small front yard in a suburb of Boston not too far from the university. An environmentalist and member of several organizations dedicated to the protection of nature, Foster disliked the artificiality of a carefully manicured lawn. He planted wild flowers and grains, allowing the yard to become a virtual New England meadowland. A *neighborhood organization* petitioned the courts to have Foster forced to cut his yard in accordance with legal ordinances. The other neighbors complained that Foster's yard was an eyesore, and that weeds were spreading to other lawns. The court agreed that Foster's yard should conform to the law and issued an injunction requiring him to mow his yard.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. Cynthia Talmudge was a first-semester senior at a high school in a Houston suburb. Her first three years yielded nothing but As and a long list of school activities, highlighted by a year as junior class president and two years as chairperson of a school social service organization. At the end of her junior year she was inducted into the National Honor Society. By the beginning of senior year, it was quite obvious that Cynthia was pregnant. She told everyone that she was planning to have the baby and raise it herself. The *National Honor Society executive committee*, citing one of the qualifications for membership as "high moral standing," revoked her membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. Marsha Mellow's neighborhood bordered on a large shopping mall, and she and her close *circle of friends* often spent their free time wandering around looking in the windows and buying things with money earned from summer jobs. They also liked to play "Truth or Dare," in which they either had to share some intimate story about their past, or perform some task that the other group members would set up for them. Some of the early dares had been quite difficult, such as calling up a "nerdy" guy and talking to him in an amorous way, or writing, signing, and mailing a letter to the captain of the football team. Since they had begun playing the game a year before, the group had exerted such peer pressure that no one had ever refused to attempt a dare, no matter how embarrassing or risky it was. Therefore, the girls would often opt instead to share an embarrassing or intimate truth. Marsha, however, prided herself on always taking "the dare."

One afternoon, Marsha's friends settled in for a game of Truth or Dare at Marsha's house. When it was her turn, she naturally picked the dare. In the past, the informal penalty for refusing a dare was a form of ostracism: the girl would be excluded from the trip to the mall that usually followed one of their games. This time, her friends thought they had a dare that would finally get Marsha. They told her that she had to shoplift something that cost at least \$10. Marsha was stunned. The dares had never been illegal; usually they were just embarrassing. She tried to convince them to give her a different dare, but they wouldn't budge. After a lot of pleading, Marsha finally refused the dare. As they left, Marsha's friends told her that not only was she excluded from this trip to the mall, but that someone such as she who refused to play by the group's rules was no longer welcome in the group.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. Capt. Tom Polis and Sgt. Abigail Lands met while stationed at an army base in Virginia. They both worked in the communications station at the base, although Tom was not directly in command of Abigail. After working together for nearly six months, they began seeing each other off-duty. They kept a low profile, realizing that the *U.S. Army* frowns on the mixing of officers and enlisted personnel. After another several months, word reached Tom's commanding officer that the two were dating quite frequently. She called Tom into her office to discuss the regulation against such mingling. She told Tom that the only way around this regulation was for the captain and the sergeant to get married. Tom and Abigail refused. After several warnings, the *U.S. Army* court-martialed both of them.

**Case Studies for *Romeo and Juliet***

1. Billy is a white fourteen-year-old from the east side of the city he lives in. His parents were both immigrants to the United States from Europe; they have settled in a neighborhood in their city that is inhabited entirely by people of their own ethnic background and completely surrounded by neighborhoods inhabited by racial minorities. Billy's parents have grown to hate and fear anyone who is not white.

Tommy is a black fourteen-year-old from the west side of the same city. His family had been victims of racial discrimination on a number of occasions, his father having been denied employment and the family having been denied access to housing opportunities strictly because of their race. Both parents, and all of Tommy's brothers and sisters, dislike and distrust white people.

Both Billy and Tommy love baseball more than anything else, and are very good players. They play for separate teams, since they live in different communities, but following the summer season both are named to a city all-star team that will travel all around the state to play teams from other areas. During their travels around the state, Billy and Tommy become very close friends in spite of their different backgrounds. Upon their return home, they happily tell their families about their new friendship, and of their desire to remain close and see one another often, even though they will attend different schools and play on different teams from then on.

Both families are horrified. Billy's parents tell him that under no circumstances is he to see Tommy, and forbid him even to set foot in the West Side of town; Tommy's parents tell him that such a friendship is impossible, and that he should stick to his own kind, people who will treat him fairly and with dignity. Both parents make the same threat to their sons: Should they continue seeing one another, they will be forbidden to play organized baseball again.

What should the boys do?

2. Millville is a large town that relies on a few industries for employment. Among the largest employers in town are two paint-manufacturing companies, one owned by the Bigby family and one by the Hinds family. Each company was founded at the turn of the century, several generations before. The companies were originally the only large industries in town, and have competed hard for profits and employees. Workers for each company often regard themselves as part of a large "family," one which is severely at odds with the other. Employees of the two companies eat at different restaurants, relax at different night spots, take their families to different parks, and play in different divisions of the town's recreation leagues. The rivalry has been going on for many decades, with succeeding generations of a family continuing to work for the same company.

Barbara Bigby and Howard Hinds are both students at Millville High School, the only high school, public or private, in town. Each is an only child, and, if they follow their family traditions, they will one day run their families' companies. Like all members of their families during this century, they have grown up learning to hate and mistrust anyone bearing the other's family name. The problem has grown worse in recent times, because the Bigby Paint Company has achieved more success, and is outperforming the Hinds Paint Company in sales. Hinds has had to lay off a number of workers because of slackening sales. One problem with their company is that some large batches of paint were recently tainted, angering some of their steady customers and causing them to switch their business to Bigby. The management at Hinds feels that Bigby might have sabotaged these batches.

Not long after this, some Bigby delivery trucks were overturned in their overnight parking lot. Although nothing was proven, everyone suspects that some Hinds employees were responsible.

The Bigby-Hinds feud is causing much distress at Millford High School, which the children of all these workers attend. Fights have even broken out between the offspring of Bigby and Hinds employees, and the climate is growing very menacing. During all this, Barbara Bigby and Howard Hinds have fallen in love. They are both on the debate team, and although they were hostile at first, they have grown to respect, like, and finally love one another. As the tension and violence around them increases, they have become closer and closer. The problem is that they can't be seen together, because of the family feud and the heavy scrutiny they are under as heirs to the companies' ownership. What should they do?

3. The Jivers and the Stonebreakers are rival street gangs. Each has its own special turf, colors, and insignia; anyone violating them is subject to violent repercussions.

Ace is the leader of the Jivers, and his fifteen-year-old brother is named T.J. Ace loves T.J., and hopes that in another year or so T.J. will become a full-fledged gang member and become his lieutenant in the gang. Speedy is the head of the Stonebreakers, and his younger sister is named Sarah. Speedy, although a young man of the streets himself, wants his sister to remain pure and unadulterated. He refuses to let her date other members of the Stonebreakers, although many of them would date her if they could; Speedy believes that his sister is too good for them, and that she should go to school and marry a "better class of person." Both Ace and Speedy act almost as parents to T.J. and Sarah: Ace and T.J.'s father died when they were young and their mother has been an invalid for years and is incapable of supervising or caring for them; and Speedy and Sarah's father disappeared long ago and their mother is too busy trying to fend off the problems resulting from living in a housing project to be able to control her own children effectively.

T.J. and Sarah meet in school, and soon start to meet during their free periods to talk and establish a relationship. Before long, they are sneaking off together after school to have a soda and a burger, and soon they fall in love. One of the Jivers who goes to their school sees them kissing between classes one day, and immediately goes and tells Ace. That evening, when T.J. comes home, Ace confronts him and begins to yell at him about being a traitor and a fool. T.J., although he worships his brother, argues back, telling him that he can do what he wants with his life. Ace brings T.J. before the Jivers and tells them about his tryst. The gang members begin to taunt him, and together decide that right then and there, T.J. must be punished by enduring "The Line": The gang members would form two lines, and T.J. would have to run between them, with each member of the gang allowed to hit him with a bat, chain, or whatever they wanted. The Line is a rarely used test of loyalty that the gang uses only as the most extreme punishment for a member who shows signs of unfaithfulness.

Meanwhile, Speedy has found out about their romance, and forbids Sarah to go to that school anymore; he immediately arranges her transfer to another school some distance away. He then assigns two of his deputies to watch her and make sure that she goes to school every morning, and comes directly home and stays there every afternoon. He then dispatches a squad out to teach T.J. a lesson; that day, as T.J. leaves school, he is jumped by several Stonebreakers and severely beaten, and left with the message that he should never see Sarah again.

What should Sarah and T.J. do?

4. Mike is from a devoutly Catholic family. He is of a pure ethnic descent: his parents' families are both from the same country originally, and no one in either family has ever married or even dated outside the nationality. His parents would be extremely upset if he were to marry someone of a different bloodline, although they might grudgingly approve if she were Catholic.

Beth is from a Jewish family. Her family upholds the religion strictly, and, like Mike's family, are "pure bloods": no one has ever married outside the religion. All of Beth's older brothers and sisters have married, or plan to marry, within the Jewish culture.

Mike and Beth are both sophomores in the same public high school, and are in several classes together. They soon discover that they like one another quite a bit, and start spending their free time together. They start meeting together at movies, although they always just tell their parents that they're meeting friends there.

In the spring, though, the school has its big dance, and Mike and Beth are tired of meeting secretly; they want to go public with their romance. When they announce to their parents that they are going to the dance with one another, the parents are greatly distressed. Beth's parents wonder why she can't find a nice Jewish boy to go with, and suggest several that they know of; Mike's parents can't understand why one of the nice Catholic girls from their church isn't good enough for him. Their brothers and sisters are similarly appalled: after all, they have followed their parents' wishes their whole lives, and can't understand why these two should be any different.

Both families feel that drastic steps are necessary. Mike's parents decide that he can't go to the dance at all, and then tell him that to prevent the romance from going any further, he must come home directly from school every day. They then make plans to enroll him in the town's Catholic high school, where they now decide he should have been from the very beginning. Beth's parents are equally drastic, telling her that she is grounded until further notice. Her only social activities, they tell her, can be those that originate in the synagogue.

What should Mike and Beth do?

5. Jennifer is from the wealthy part of her town. Her father is an executive in the town's largest business, a textile plant, and makes more money than almost anyone in town. Their family belongs to the town's very exclusive country club, lives in one of the biggest houses, and goes on some of the nicest vacations. Most of Jennifer's friends live in her part of town, and feel quite exclusive about their circle of friends: If someone's family is not a member of the country club, they feel, then that person is not good enough to be a friend of theirs. They tend to look down on people whose parents are not as wealthy as theirs. Although Jennifer does not regard herself as a snob, she still has known these people her whole life; they have been her neighbors and playmates as long as she can remember, and she likes them and has a lot in common with them. She doesn't always like their snooty attitude, but since she is "one of them," it doesn't really affect her.

Sue's father works in the textile plant that Jennifer's father owns. Her family lives in a modest house in the part of town south of the tracks, where most of the blue-collar workers live, and the family car is a secondhand sedan that Jennifer's friends would probably consider a "beater"; most of them get nicer cars than that for their sixteenth birthdays. Sue's father is not a member of a country club, but rather takes the family bowling every weekend. Sue's friends are from her neighborhood, and tend to be from backgrounds like hers. They are distrustful of anyone who is not from their neighborhood, and especially of anyone who is not

from their social class; they prefer their own kind, and are particularly contemptuous of the rich people in town.

Jennifer and Sue meet in school, and discover that although their backgrounds are quite different, they still have a lot in common in terms of basic values, sense of humor, and interests. They are both members of S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Driving), and through their activities together become very close friends. When their friendship starts to go beyond the club, however, they begin to run into problems. Jennifer, for instance, invites Sue to go to the country club with her. When they show up, all of Jennifer's friends immediately find something else to do and completely ignore them. When Sue invites Jennifer to a block party in her neighborhood, none of Sue's old friends will talk to them, and when the softball game starts, the two of them are conveniently not picked to play.

As the two girls continue to spend more time together, they find that the "freeze-out" treatment by their friends becomes more and more pervasive. Even when the two aren't together, their old friends don't want to have much to do with them. They even find themselves the subject of unfounded rumors, with people whispering all sorts of lies about them.

Soon, the girls are outcasts to everyone but each other. They are very sad about the loss of their old friends; they wish that they could maintain their friendship with one another, and still enjoy the company of their old friends. They know that if they eliminate their friendship, they will be able to restore their friendships with their childhood and neighborhood friends.

What should Jennifer and Sue do?

In the presentation that you did prior to reading *Romeo and Juliet*, your task was to examine the problem in the scenario, come up with several solutions to the problem, evaluate their advantages and disadvantages, and try to lead the class to a discussion in which you selected the best solution to the problem. Your task for *Romeo and Juliet* will be similar. Like the scenarios, this play concerns the problems that two young people have in pursuing a friendship/romance when their families and/or friends seriously oppose it. *Romeo and Juliet* come up with a solution for their problem, which has its advantages and disadvantages.

Your task is to write a composition in which you first explain what their problem is, and then tell what you think would be the best way for them to solve it. You should explain this solution in detail, identifying both its advantages and disadvantages. You should then compare the solution you've given to the one that they actually try in the play, and explain clearly and in detail why yours is better. Finally, you should explain a third solution, and tell again why your best solution is superior to this one.

Finally, you should conclude your paper with a paragraph in which you wrap up the ideas of the whole paper, summarizing your argument and reiterating why your best solution is the best course of action to take given the circumstances.

## Role Playing

### *The Background*

The Robinson family is extremely large. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson had had ten children, who had all moved to different parts of the country as soon as they'd been old enough to leave home. Because the family had been so large, and because some children had left home while others were still quite young, many of the children did not know one another well, and, after splitting up, had made little effort to keep in touch.

As a result, the ten families that Mr. and Mrs. Robinson's children had started have ended up being very different, because they live far apart, the parents have different jobs and interests, and their incomes and values vary widely. Very few of the children from these families have ever even met.

Chris, Lee, Pat, Dale, and Marty are all grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, although each is from a different family in a different part of the country. They are all therefore cousins, but they have never met one another. Each one is a junior in high school. (Note: Each of these characters can be either a boy or a girl. For the sake of style and consistency, we will use the same pronoun in the description of each character, although the teacher is by no means bound to assigning characters to students of the gender used in the description.)

### *The Roles*

1. *Chris* is thought by many to be one of the smartest students in her school, although her report card does not always reflect her intelligence. When doing an assignment for a class, she will often get sidetracked with something she finds more interesting than what she's been assigned, and spend hours reading and learning about this related topic; then, she will do the assignment at the last minute, usually getting a decent, although not always top, grade.

Some people worry about *Chris* because she doesn't seem to have any concrete plans, doesn't always have something to show for her efforts, and doesn't seem concerned with success or failure; rather, she gets satisfaction from trying and doing things, even if they don't leave her with any material product or result. Some people feel that she will never get anywhere unless she forms a clearer idea of what the final product of her efforts will be, and of how valuable that final product will be in the eyes of other people.

*Chris* comes from a middle-class background, but, unlike many students from this social class, does not aspire to have the possessions and lifestyle of wealthier people. Her idea of a fulfilling experience is to go out for a walk in the woods, or to have an interesting conversation, or to read a good book. She feels that spending her time acquiring material possessions would only distract her from finding real meaning in life.

2. *Lee* is from a very wealthy family. His father is a successful electronics researcher who holds patents on a number of telephone parts, and his mother is a respected surgeon. Both of them work long hours, often leaving *Lee* unsupervised. Now seventeen years old, he is on his third car, having wrecked two others, miraculously escaping injury, but also escaping legal problems through the clever manipulations of his father's lawyer. He spends most of his time in pursuit of pleasure and fun, without any sense of awareness of the way his behavior affects other people, and without any thought for the consequences of his actions.



Yet Lee is quite popular among his peers. He is fun-loving and always ready to have a good time. He is generous with his time and money, often throwing parties and giving people rides around town. He is witty and charming and well-liked, although not respected by many.

3. *Pat* is a very enterprising person, seeming to have a natural talent for organizing and executing money-making plans. As a youth, she had always been the leading salesperson when her junior high basketball team had sold candy or light bulbs to raise funds for new uniforms or equipment; later, she had undertaken her own money-making schemes, such as when she had worked hard enough to have been assigned an enormous paper route, and then had divided the territory among several young boys who had done all the work, allowing her to make money while actually doing no work. *Pat* has developed a number of schemes like this, and so has established a substantial income even though she's only in high school; rumors have even circulated among her peers that, to make money, she has become involved in some underhanded deals, although she has never been caught in any wrongdoing.

*Pat* likes to display the results of her entrepreneurial success, wearing expensive clothes, driving a new car, and otherwise showing the signs of material success. She is on good terms with a number of people, since they depend on one another for goods and services; but she has few, if any, close friends. Her main activity in life is to make and spend money.

4. *Dale* is a student from a middle-class family. He works in his father's hardware store after school and on weekends, and upon turning seventeen had saved enough money to buy a used car which he has personally maintained for the year he has owned it. His car is his most important possession, signifying both status and mobility. He lives in a town inhabited by a lot of rich families, and because he is acquainted with so many wealthy students, he values their lifestyle and possessions, and wants to work hard so that someday he will have them, too. He would like to be rich, although he has not gotten along well with many of the wealthy students at school.

5. *Marty* is extremely politically minded. She has read much literature of the communist and socialist movements, and believes that the world would be a much better place if nobody owned anything individually and everyone shared all land and possessions. She feels that if people didn't compete for wealth and material advantage they could live in greater harmony, working together for the common good instead of trying to gain personal advantage in life. *Marty* feels that the world does not have enough love, and that the capitalist system is responsible for this, since it places a value on individual gain instead of communal cooperation and happiness. She feels that wealthy people should be forced to share their wealth with the poor, so that no one will have an unfair advantage over anyone else, and so that everyone will have an equal opportunity in life.

Wealthier people in *Marty's* community feel that she is a typical moocher, since she comes from a lower-middle-class background; they feel that she wants a piece of their wealth without doing anything to earn it. Many other people simply feel that she is crazy to spend so much time reading about and supporting socialist causes, such as labor organizations, when she could be out making herself a little cash.

*The Situation*

One of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson's daughters, Mary, and her husband, Bob Simpson, are killed in a car accident. The two of them have amassed an enormous fortune in their lives, having developed the recipe for cooking the chicken in a successful fast-food restaurant and earned a commission on each piece of chicken sold. They have no children, and so have divided their estate among their brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews.

Bob and Mary had been somewhat eccentric, and their will includes a number of strange conditions and awards. One of these peculiar clauses stipulates that one million dollars be left to Chris, Lee, Pat, Dale, and Marty. The money belongs to them as a group; they may not simply divide it up and go their separate ways. They must meet together and decide what to do with the lump sum, and may do anything they want with it, from starting up a business to giving it to charity, as long as all of the money gets spent on a single cause, which they all must agree on.

The meeting is to be held in the living room of the Simpson home in St. Louis, which has not yet been sold. The five cousins are flown in from the different parts of the country to meet and make a decision about the money. They all enter the room together and begin to discuss their plans for the money . . .

### **The New Land: Part 1**

You are a member of a small and fiercely devoted group of 250 people suffering from generations of political, social, and economic oppression. After repeated attempts to gain acceptance, or at least tolerance, by the ruling group, you have finally decided to leave your native land. Because of the oppression, your children are losing their faith, customs, and devotion. Some members of your group are beginning to doubt the basic philosophies you hold so dear. To achieve the freedom to practice your beliefs, you must leave the land of your forebears.

As a member of the council of elders, you are responsible for planning the emigration from your home to a newly discovered world. The New World is unsettled, and only vague reports about the conditions there have been circulated. The rivers and lakes are uncharted; the vegetation and wildlife are indigenous only to the New World; the few natives encountered are hostile, and there are no roads, towns, transportation systems, or MTV. Essentially, this is a "New Eden," untouched by your civilization.

Before embarking on your journey to this primitive land, you must make certain decisions. You and your fellow council members must establish a list of eight priorities to be implemented before leaving.

In your group, make a list of these priorities and explain each with four or five sentences. Remember, the fate of your followers relies on your decisions.

### **The New Land: Part 2**

After a difficult first year, the population of the group has been reduced by more than half. Disease, starvation, cold, hostile attacks, physical infirmities, and ignorance have combined to deplete your numbers. Your plan for a utopia in the New World has been sorely challenged by the realities of the environment. New conflicts await the council of elders, and they must not only prepare to endure another harsh winter, but confront additional threats to the survival of the settlement.

1. What should you do about dissenters? Members are beginning to question the sagacity of the elders. How will you react to dissent and why will this reaction work?
2. New immigrants are arriving from the Old Country. They too are outcasts, but they do not follow your beliefs. What should you do about them?
3. Representatives from the homeland have arrived offering assistance. However, the price for this aid is colonization. You will become a part of the country you left, and you will be serving those who cast you out. What decision will the council reach?
4. Even though some settlers have been killed by hostile natives, small bands of these natives have provided instruction for survival. The lessons offer a chance to live through the upcoming winter. What can you do to balance this relationship with the natives?
5. You originally came to the New World for freedom to follow your beliefs. Yet new arrivals to the settlement are promoting philosophies challenging your own. What will the council do to these "intruders" who are making the same sort of escape that you had once made?

### **The Cases of Twenty Street Gang Criminals**

The following descriptions have been adapted from a newspaper article about street gangs. The names of the gang members and their gangs have been changed. The gang members who are listed here have been prosecuted for and convicted of the crimes described below their names.

#### *Case 1*

Fred Mumps (Apostles); Bob White (Apostles); Ed Lawyer (Apostles)

Robbed a seventy-one-year-old man and invaded his apartment, where they robbed a twenty-three-year-old man and raped a twenty-year-old woman. Shot each in the head, paralyzing the woman, killing the younger man, and leaving the elder with a bullet lodged in his head. On leaving the apartment, turned on gas stove.

Sentence: natural life for Mumps, White; forty years for Lawyer

#### *Case 2*

Charles Matt (Bad Plaid)

Strangled a woman and her eighteen-month-old son and eight-month-old daughter when he tried to rob them and found them with no money.

Sentence: death

#### *Case 3*

Joe Strange (Cobras)

Killed a youth by shooting him in the back after several other youths had yelled the name of a rival gang. The murdered boy was not a gang member.

Sentence: eighty years

#### *Case 4*

Edwin Gutter (Cobras)

Shot a man from behind five times as the victim was changing a flat tire on his car, because the man's jacket included the colors of a rival gang. The man was from out of town, just passing through.

Sentence: fifty years

#### *Case 5*

Jimmy DeLand (Insane Acolytes)

Killed a rival gang member by firing from a moving car at a group of three people.

Sentence: thirty years

#### *Case 6*

James James (Apostles)

Raped a thirteen-year-old and a fourteen-year-old during an "indoctrination" into the gang.

Sentence: eight years

#### *Case 7*

Percy Miller (Nice Lords)

Killed a clerk and wounded another during the robbery of a small grocery store, during which he stole \$28.

Sentence: twenty-three years

*Case 8*

Woody Park (Nature Boys)

Shot a man seven times, killing him, after pelting the victim's car with rocks to start a fight.

Sentence: thirty years

*Case 9*

Roy Walker (Moochers)

Killed a member of a rival gang while firing at a group of men who were drinking wine in an alley.

Sentence: seventy years

*Case 10*

Darrell Small (Royals)

Was lookout during an armed robbery in which the store owner, forty-five, was killed when a gang member thought he saw him reach for a gun.

Sentence: twenty-six years

*Case 11*

Mo Schmidt (Nice Lords); Robin Shelton (Nice Lords)

Schmidt and Shelton beat a fifteen-year-old member of a local high school's track team to death with a club and chain after terrorizing him into saying he was a member of a rival gang. The victim was not a member of any gang.

Sentence: twenty years each

*Case 12*

Alastair Tentworthy (Happy Jokers)

Fired a gun from a moving car, killing one youth and wounding two as they left a high school dance.

Sentence: forty years

*Case 13*

Al Sertiv (Insane Acolytes); Rocky Ford (Insane Acolytes)

Killed two brothers and shot a girl in the face, sending her into a coma for two months before she died. Victims were mistaken for members of a rival gang, blamed for slaying an Insane Acolyte. None was a gang member.

Sentence: thirty-five years for Sertiv, fifteen years for Ford

*Case 14*

Cruiser Waits (Stonebreakers); Marty Grass (Stonebreakers)

Waits fired a gun six times from a car driven by Grass as they passed within six feet of a group of youths on a street corner one block from a police station. One youth was killed and two were wounded.

Sentence: forty years for Waits, twenty-four years for Grass

*Case 15*

David Yale (26 Boys); Duncan Walker (26 Boys)

A Girl Scout, sixteen, and a Marine on leave, nineteen, were killed by Yale, acting on orders from Walker to kill rival gang members. Victims were not gang members.

Sentence: natural life for Yale, thirty years for Walker

*Case 16*

Jules Valley (Mandarin Boys)

Executed a man who was on his knees begging for his life. The victim, sixty, was shot twice in the back of the head.

Sentence: forty years

*Case 17*

Carl Ghoul (Lugs); Joe McGoze (Lugs)

Ghoul killed a rival gang member when he fired from a car into a small group of people standing on the sidewalk outside a liquor store. McGoze was driving the car. The shotgun blast hit the victim in the face.

Sentence: forty years each

*Case 18*

Edward Edwards (Nature Boys); Eddie Edwards (Nature Boys)

The Edwards brothers killed a sixty-eight-year-old man who was on his porch when they ran out of a gangway and each fired into a crowd of fifteen people they thought might be rival gang members. Two other people were wounded.

Sentence: forty years each

*Case 19*

Scott Paul (Apostles)

Supervised two juveniles in a robbery in which two people were killed.

Sentence: natural life

*Case 20*

Armand Wellington (Bad Plaid)

Shot an unarmed man to death after he stopped Wellington from stealing a bike from a girl.

Sentence: twenty years

**What Do These Data Say about Television Viewing?**

Note: An “aggressive” person is someone who is most likely to be loud, demanding, forceful, and capable of hurting others.

1. According to L. Russell Huesman of the University of Illinois at Chicago, “Kids who are six or seven years old don’t discriminate [tell the difference] well between realistic and unrealistic violence. They think that cartoon characters behave like real people.”
2. According to several researchers, the child likely to be most aggressive also watches violent programs most of the time they are on.
3. Two researchers at the University of Illinois have concluded that when viewing violence is combined with several other factors, it is likely to lead to heightened aggressiveness.
4. The regularity with which a child watches violent television shows appears to be an important predictor of aggression.
5. The child most likely to be aggressive believes that the violent television shows that he or she watches portray life as it is.
6. Aggression, academic problems, and viewing violence seem to be related to one another.

### Connotation

It was a hot day. The sun was shining and the insects were humming. He located the tracks and began to follow them.

The tracks went up a small hill. He walked up the hill, prepared to shoot at any second. Something made a noise in the bushes and he stopped to listen. He pointed, but did not shoot. A squirrel climbed up a tree, stopped to look at him for a second, and then climbed out of sight.

He breathed heavily for a moment, and then looked back at the tracks, which went into the underbrush up ahead. He walked toward the bushes and then knelt down to see where the tracks went. He found himself looking into the eyes of a big snake. The snake stuck out its tongue, and then crawled away. He began to crawl through the bushes, following the tracks.

The underbrush opened out into a large clearing with a big tree in the middle. The tracks went across the clearing. He walked across and sat under the tree. The sun was shining down through the trees, creating a pattern on the ground. The birds were singing and the insects were buzzing. The breeze blew and he felt it on his face.

He got up and followed the tracks back into the forest. He stepped over logs, ducked under branches, and climbed over rocks. The tracks stopped at a stream. He bent over and got a drink. Suddenly he felt a shadow over him and looked up. The bear was standing over him. He grabbed his camera, aimed, and shot several pictures. The bear smiled, patted him on the head, and walked away.



### What Is Maturity?

*Directions.* Is the person described in each of the following statements old enough to do what he or she wishes to do? Write “yes” or “no” before each statement. Be prepared to explain how you determined your answer.

1. On the first day of summer vacation after fourth grade, Jim Panzee wants to go to the beach with one of his friends. The trip to the beach involves crossing the city, changing buses three times in the process. His parents are hesitant about allowing him to go. Would you let Jim take the trip to the beach? Why or why not?
2. Patty O’Furniture’s neighbor John has asked her to go to a movie with him on Saturday. He will pick her up in his car at 9:00 P.M. At thirteen, Patty is afraid to ask her parents if she can go out with John. If you were one of Patty’s parents, would you allow her to go out on this date? Explain.
3. Hammond Eggs has returned home on leave after completing basic training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Although only eighteen, and thus not old enough to drink legally, Hammond goes to a neighborhood tavern and orders a shot and a beer. The bartender refuses to serve him. Should Hammond be able to have a drink? Explain.
4. After school one afternoon, Rhoda Repairs comes home, turns on the television, and lights up a cigarette. Rhoda’s father surprises her when he comes home early from work. He scolds her, insisting that a twelve-year-old should not be smoking. Do you agree with Rhoda’s father? Explain.
5. Although Julie Montague is only sixteen, she and Albie Darned have been dating for two years. When he graduates from high school in June, they would like to get married. Is Julie old enough to marry? Is Albie old enough? Explain.
6. Sixteen-year-old Ann Wynott has been invited to visit her aunt and uncle in Oregon, hundreds of miles from her home in Wisconsin. Ann’s parents are willing to pay her airfare to fly there directly, but Ann would like to take the train and see some of the country on the way. She can stop overnight at a friend’s house along the way, but her parents still feel that she is not old enough to travel for that long alone and are insisting that she take the plane or not go at all. If you were Ann’s parents, would you have made the same decision? Explain.



9. Of all the people who have ever lived, list the five you admire most and tell why you respect each of them.

10. What are you afraid of more than anything else?

11. What makes you happy?

12. What depresses you?

13. If you could plan out the perfect Saturday night, what would it be like?

14. Rank the following in order of importance to you. (1 = most important, 2 = second most important, etc.) You may leave out items which don't matter to you at all, and add things to the end where it says "other."

friends _____	world peace _____
school _____	health _____
money _____	religion _____
love life _____	my favorite sport _____
clothes _____	how I look _____
job or career _____	family _____
nature _____	other (please describe) _____
the arts _____	_____
social justice _____	_____

**Evaluation Form for Character Sketch**

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 is highest, 4 is lowest):

1. The person gives good evidence for the conclusions he or she has drawn about you. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The person has paid attention to *all* of the information on your questionnaire, and not just selected a few bits of information to go on. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The person's observations are thoughtful and meaningful rather than superficial. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The character sketch is written in a smooth and interesting way. \_\_\_\_\_
5. In the space below, evaluate the character sketch. Tell what was good about it, and what was bad about it. Give the person who wrote it several suggestions about how the paper might be improved. Do not say nasty things about the person who wrote the character sketch of you; rather, try to make constructive criticisms to the person that will point out the strengths of this paper as well as helping its author to do a better job the next time around. \_\_\_\_\_

**Conformist or Nonconformist?**

*Directions.* For each of the following items, decide whether the main character is a conformist or a nonconformist. In the space provided before each item, write "C" for conformist or "N" for nonconformist. Be prepared to explain your answer in each case.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mr. Klupstutz, a senior history teacher, strictly enforces the school disciplinary code. Any student who enters his class chewing gum, carrying a radio, or lacking the appropriate school supplies is immediately sent to the dean's office. Many students have said to Mr. Klupstutz, "Why are you so strict? No other teacher enforces the rules." Mr. Klupstutz replies, "I don't care what other teachers do. I get paid to enforce the rules."

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Preston Cleaned and his girlfriend Eileen Forward are considered the best-dressed students at Kerouac College Prep High School. They check with each other every night to coordinate what they will wear to school the next day. Preston and Eileen especially like wool slacks and skirts, tartan plaids, oxford-cloth shirts with button-down collars, argyle socks and sweaters, and penny loafers. Many other students at Kerouac Prep admire Preston and Eileen, and try to imitate them.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Biff Stake is the fullback and captain of the varsity football team. After the last game of the season, Biff's teammates invite him to join them in drinking beer at one of the players' homes. Although Biff hates beer and had been planning on seeing his girlfriend that evening, he decides to join his teammates. Biff explains to his girlfriend, "As captain of the team, I must keep the respect of the players."

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Allison Wonderland has been friends with the same group of five girls for a long time. Now that they are in high school, they have begun to dress alike. They all dress in a way that their parents and teachers find somewhat shocking. Allison, for example, likes to wear a very short skirt, black fishnet stockings, bright green sneakers, a sweatshirt from the University of Hoboken with the sleeves torn off, and lots of cheap costume jewelry. Allison also likes to wear her hair cut very short on the sides and frizzed up on top. Allison's friends dress and wear their hair in a very similar fashion. When all six friends walk together down the halls at school, both the teachers and other students turn their heads and stare.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Everyone at the accounting firm of Whitelip, Beagle, and Snoop dresses almost exactly like everyone else. Although there is no stated rule about how to dress, a kind of office uniform has evolved. Almost all the men wear dark suits, usually gray, navy blue, or dark brown. The accountants prefer to wear either white or light blue shirts. They also prefer plain black oxford shoes and striped ties. Jim Dandy, however, seems completely out of place. He often wears brightly colored plaid jackets, colorful polyester slacks (sometimes with an anchor or duck design woven into the fabric), and souvenir ties that celebrate the cities he has visited during the summer. He likes white belts and white loafers with gold buckles. Some of Jim's coworkers have warned him that he will never get anywhere in the firm if he continues to dress the way he does.

**“Bewildered in Bettendorf”**

Dear Answerline:

I am thirteen years old. I have a dog named Buster, who is also thirteen. Buster is a boxer with a brown coat and a big patch of white fur across his broad chest. He used to be a very handsome dog. Now that he is very old he looks a little shabby.

I've had Buster for as long as I can remember. He and I used to do everything together. Buster used to meet me at school when class was dismissed. He even met me when it was cold and snowing. He stood outside the school door, with snow piling up on his shoulders. When I rode my bicycle, Buster ran along beside me. When I went fishing, Buster came along to romp in the shallow water, trying to catch the little sunfish. He's not very active any more, but he's still a good companion.

My family says it's time to have Buster put to sleep. They point out that he is very old and decrepit. My older sister and brother complain that he smells bad, and he stinks up the whole house. They say that the house now smells so bad from his stench that they are too embarrassed to bring any friends home. My parents are also worried that the smell will get into all the furnishings, and it will be very costly to clean or replace them. My mom says that since poor Buster has lost most of his teeth, it is very difficult to find things that he can eat, and he is not getting his proper nutrition. Buster is deaf and nearly blind. It took a long time to discover that Buster was blind because he knew how the furniture was arranged and he never bumped into anything. One day when I thought Buster was looking right at me, I tossed a frisbee to him. It hit him right between the eyes. He looked startled, as if he didn't know what hit him. My dad says that he thinks Buster has arthritis, and that it is very painful for him to move around.

I still think that I can take care of Buster. I've told my family that I'm willing to shampoo Buster every day and spray him with deodorant. I'll get up early each morning to prepare special soft foods for him. I would also watch Buster whenever I was home to make sure that he doesn't hurt himself.

My parents say that Buster would be better off dead because he is suffering and is no good to himself. But I don't know; I still love Buster and want to be with him. What should I do?

Bewildered in Bettendorf

**“Bewildered in Bettendorf” Argumentation Worksheet**

A. SOLUTION: What should the reader do in this situation?

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B. What are the PROBLEMS that Buster and the family face?

How SERIOUS are the problems?

1.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
4.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
5.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

C. What are the possible ALTERNATE SOLUTIONS?

Explain whether these remedies are GOOD or BAD solutions.

1.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

D. What ADVANTAGES would be gained from your solution?

What DISADVANTAGES would occur if an alternative course were followed?

1.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

**“The Bear” Assignment Sheet**

1. **Initiation:** Write about a situation in which, in order to be accepted by another group of people, you had to undergo some sort of test or experience that was common to the others. Describe the circumstances, and your feelings before, during, and after the initiation.
2. **Monster:** Describe an encounter you had in which you felt as though you were up against something larger than life. How did you get into this situation? What was the outcome? What effect did this experience have on you?
3. **Leadership:** Write about a reward that you’ve earned, when you took on a new position of leadership that demanded risks and sacrifices, as well as courage. Did you undertake this responsibility voluntarily, or were you forced into it? How did this experience change your life?
4. **Repudiation:** Describe a situation in which you had a long-term goal, but when you’d worked up to it you discovered that, because of changes in you, you no longer desired what you’d worked so hard for. What had been your original motivation? What replaced it, and caused you to abandon the goal? Which of your values had changed? What replaced the original goal?



### What Is Friendship?

1. Sharon DeWealth thought that Dwayne DeTubb was the best-looking guy at Dunbar High School. For months she had been hoping that Dwayne would ask her for a date. Finally in early spring Dwayne asked Sharon to go out with him to a movie and dinner. Sharon was nervous all evening. She wanted to leave Dwayne with a good impression. During dinner Sharon and Dwayne talked about Gwendolyn, Sharon's best friend. Dwayne observed that Gwendolyn was a "real dog" and the most obnoxious person he had ever met. Sharon agreed with everything Dwayne said. Is Sharon a good friend to Gwendolyn? Explain your answer.
2. One Saturday afternoon Thurston Hunger called his friend Bert Counton to ask Bert if he would like to go to a movie that evening. Bert said he was sorry but he was sick with a terrible cold and had to stay home and rest. Later that afternoon Bert got a call from a popular girl named Susan Winns. Susan asked Bert if he would like to attend a concert with her that evening. Bert said he would be glad to go, and he immediately began making preparations. Would Thurston think that Bert's behavior was characteristic of a good friend? Explain.
3. Ryan Caraway and Roland Butter decided to cut classes and go to a baseball game on Monday. On Sunday they agreed to meet at the bus stop at 11:30 the next morning. On Monday Roland waited for Ryan for over an hour at the bus stop. He finally decided to go to the game alone. When Roland talked to Ryan later that day, Ryan explained that he had forgotten about their arrangements and had gone to school. If you were Roland, would you change your feelings toward Ryan?
4. Hilda and Juanita grew up together in Detroit. They were constant companions: they went to school together; they studied together; they went to concerts and plays together. It seemed that whenever you saw Hilda, you also saw Juanita. When the girls were fifteen years old, Juanita and her family moved to San Antonio, Texas. After ten years, the girls still exchange letters and cards on special occasions. Sometimes they will surprise each other with a phone call. They still visit each other whenever they get a chance. Do Hilda and Juanita act like friends? Why or why not?
5. Bud called Rick one Sunday afternoon. Bud explained that he was out on Saturday night with Mirna Quinstaedt. Bud was able to go out with Mirna because he told his steady girlfriend Amy that he was going to a basketball game with Rick. Bud pleaded with Rick to cover for him if he talked to Amy. Bud told Rick, "Come on, be a pal!" If Bud is Rick's friend, what will he do when he sees Amy?
6. One rainy Saturday, Zeke was awakened by a phone call at 2:00 in the morning. Archie had phoned to ask for help. He had been drinking beer all night at Bennie's White Rose Tap. As he was driving home, Archie had run his pickup off the road. The pickup had gotten stuck in a ditch along Carter Road, five miles south of town. Archie asked Zeke to drive to the spot and help him get his truck out of the ditch. Zeke assured Archie that he would be there in twenty minutes. Archie was relieved. He had used his last quarter to make the phone call, and he felt very fortunate that he had been able to reach a friend to help him. After Archie hung up, Zeke lay down in bed and fell fast asleep. Does Zeke have a responsibility to help Archie? Why or why not?
7. Antoinette Zither had been planning a trip to Europe for two years. She was prepared to spend four weeks traveling throughout four countries. Two days

before the trip, Ellen Merchessen, Antoinette's college roommate, called to say that her parents had died in a fiery car crash. Ellen was very upset. She was having difficulty making funeral arrangements and she needed help. Antoinette immediately canceled her trip and prepared to stay with Ellen. Would you describe Antoinette's and Ellen's behavior as friendly?

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**Stephen Kern** graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, earning honors in both English and philosophy. At Grinnell, he won the Seldon-Whitcome Poetry Prize in his junior and senior years, after placing second and third his first two years. He teaches English and humanities at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, where he chairs the school's Critical Thinking Committee, and was program chair for the Chicago Northwest Suburban Board of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. He was a presenter with McCann and Smagorinsky at the NCTE Annual Convention in 1985.

What do Mr. Klupstutz (a senior history teacher); Whitelip, Beagle, and Snoop (an accounting firm); Buster (a thirteen-year-old dog); and Thurston Hunger (an average teenage boy) have in common?

They are just a few of the creative characters appearing in this book's helpful activities, activities designed specifically to introduce students to new literature and composition assignments that are unfamiliar and complex. As you guide your students through these interesting and thought-provoking activities, or similar activities adapted to your own teaching needs, you are enabling them to relate the fundamental concepts in upcoming assignments to their *own* experiences and perceptions.

The activities are presented in four sections:

- Introductory Reading Comprehension Activities
- Introductory Writing Activities
- Introductory Writing Activities That Promote Reading Comprehension
- Introductory Reading Comprehension Activities That Promote Writing Ability

Don't let your students lose the full benefit of an assignment as they struggle simply to understand unfamiliar material. Give them the head start they need by allowing them to explore new concepts and skills through the imaginative activities suggested in this book.



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