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THE WORLD OF THE WRITER (REVISED VERSION). THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE. RHETORIC CURRICULUM VI, TEACHER AND STUDENT VERSIONS.

BY- KITZHABER, ALBERT R.
OREGON UNIV., EUGENE

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THESE TWO UNITS FOR 12TH-GRADERS INTRODUCE STYLE AS THE UNIFYING CONCEPT OF THE YEAR'S RHETORIC STUDY. THE FIRST, "THE WORLD OF THE WRITER," REVIEWS CONCEPTS TAUGHT IN PREVIOUS YEARS AND FOCUSES ON THE PROCESSES OF CONSCIOUS SELECTION AND PURPOSEFUL SHAPING OF MATERIAL. LESSONS PROVIDED ARE--(1) SEARCHING FOR A WORKABLE AND MEANINGFUL TOPIC, (2) FINDING SOURCES, (3) FINDING AN APPROPRIATE FORM THROUGH OUTLINING, AND (4) JOINING PURPOSE TO STYLE (A TRANSITIONAL LESSON TO THE MATERIAL THAT FOLLOWS). THE SECOND UNIT, "THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE," IS DESIGNED TO MAKE STUDENTS AWARE OF STYLE AS SOMETHING CONCRETE. THE CONSCIOUS CHOICES MADE BY SKILLED WRITERS IN THE PRACTICE OF THEIR CRAFT IS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH AN EXAMINATION OF THEIR PROSE. THE STUDENT VERSION INCLUDES STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, EXERCISES, AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS. THE TEACHER VERSION PROVIDES RATIONALES, EXPLANATIONS OF MATERIALS, AND SUGGESTED TEACHING PROCEDURES. A TEST DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY THE UNIT, "THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE," IS APPENDED. SEE ALSO ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160, ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832, TE 000 195 THROUGH TE 000 220, AND TE 000 227 THROUGH TE 000 249. (DL)

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Introduction

This unit should require little explanation, beyound what is given in the Student Version. It paces off familiar ground, although at times it may seem to do so with giant steps. This is because it is partially an attempt to review what students have learned about writing up to this point.

But it is not a true review. You will find great gaps in the actual information covered, if you look to this as a resumé of five years' work. However, it is hoped that the unit has been arranged so that you can introduce extra material yourself, at the appropriate points, if you feel a need to review some specific process or problem more thoroughly.

For example, it is suggested in the Student Version that you may wish to refresh the class on the use of specific source material. Questions of logic are introduced only in a rudimentary and suggestive way, and matters of style will be dealt with extensively in the remainder of the year's work.

For the unit to achieve its desired effect, it seems desirable to keep it brief, to cover a few, practical methods of approaching any problem one faces in making a formed, continuous, and coherent statement, particularly in writing. In other words, this should be a catch-up unit for those who need it, and a summary unit for everyone, before proceeding to the question of style.

What you will find here is the constant reminder that when we write we consciously select certain material from a massive body of possibilities, and that we shape that material, also consciously, with purpose.

The suggested student essays move from questions of "Who am I?" to "What do I know?" to "What do I think or feel about who I am and what I know?" Each essay should reflect a progressive awareness of purpose in writing and of the means of achieving that purpose.

A writer must always find what he is going to wite about. Here you will find practical as well as theoretical suggestions for finding "substance." The substance must be given form or structure to be coherent. Again, certain mechanical or practical suggestions accompany theoretical ones.

Some questions have been cast in the form of exercises, within or at the end of lessons. Others have been included within the text, without numbers or other marks to set them off. These too should be answered in class or in some more formal manner, rather than being considered simply hypothetical questions, lest students pass over them without resolving the problems they pose..

If you find the suggested essays too time consuming, it would probably be better to shorten them in length rather than in number. Substitute a paragraph or two for a complete essay, for example. Each suggested essay or written exercise is included as a different step in the problem of finding and shaping material.

There are fewer essay examples in this unit than you will find in some. Whenever possible, discussion of finished essays should be based on examples from classwork, so as to focus attention on the student's own work in this comparatively short unit.

LESSON I: Searching for Substance

This lesson is simply centered around an exercise in finding a workable topic in an extensive and shapeless body of possible material. The subject, "Who am I?", was selected in part because it should offer no problem in finding adequate material to choose from. Moreover, it is obviously not a usable topic in its given form. "Who am I?" must either be answered by brief statistics or length autobiography. Students should understand that neither will do here. They must refine their own subjects from the broad, general topic.

Encourage them to be imaginative in their solutions to the problem. One might identify himself by the things he leaves lying in a room after he goes out. He might identify himself as three different photographs, in the possession of three different people. He might see an imaginary self as his "real" identity.

It is important that the students actually go through the process of making various rough notes and lists to work from, so it would be a good idea for you to check those rough notes, as they are suggested in the Student Version. It is all very well that some students find it easy enough to get a "good idea" right away, without consciously going through the process of narrowing and channeling ideas, but even these students may not realize possibilities they have overlooked unless they explore more than one avenue for ideas.

The Churchill essay provides a model for one way in which the problem might be worked out. It is apparently intended to be an amusing anecdote on certain youthful failures of a successful man, a common enough sort of thing in which the successful writer, politician, athlete, what-have-you, recounts for the reader's amusement and gratification the time he flunked out of such and such a school, or the time he got up to give a speech and found himself speechless. It would probably be safe to say that such an anecdote works only when the speaker is speaking from some position of recognizable and comparable security, so that he can say in so many words, as does Churchill, none of this was really too serious.

Churchill's general topic might be "My education," or more specifically, "My troubles with exams." Beyond that, however he words it, the student should write a statement of subject and purpose which names not only the specific topic but also recognizes that this is a light essay, an amusing reminiscence. He should also see that Churchill is telling the reader something about his personality and life in adopting this light, ironic attitude, as when he says that he admired Dr. Welldon because that man was capable of seeing Churchill's true worth despite his performance on the exam.

Of the final exercises, the most important is the essay itself. The outline which students are asked to make will be little more than a summary of some of the points covered in the lesson, and serves simply as a check on their grasp of the contents, as do similar exercises in the following lessons.

LESSONS II: Finding Sources

This lesson, too, is based on the actual writing of an essay, which is an extension of the topic and problem presented in Lesson I.

The lesson should make the simple point that sometimes the writer can simply write from what he already knows, and sometimes he must look for more information than he has. Students should also realize that, depending on the purpose of an essay, it is sometimes more effective to draw on one source than on another. When is first-hand observation most effective, and when does the reader ask for official statistics? Why do we sometimes quote authorities,, when we have our own, more or less identical, opinions on the subject which we might give?

A thorough discussion of where one might find information on the list of suggested topics should fairly well cover all the kinds of sources one might use. For instance, one might go to a general reference such as an encyclopedia, to a special book on the subject, to old newspapers themselves, or to a retired editor, to find information on the first topic. Some topics might particularly lend themselves to some sort of public opinion survey. Where one looks for information depends on the purpose of the writing. For example, an essay on the local police force might be an informative essay in which the writer interviews the chief of police, or a critical editorial based on personal observation of an incident.

The Updike essay is actually the last paragraph of a longer essay on pigeons which appeared in The New Yorker, and may be thought of as an entertainment first, and an informative piece second, although it certainly represents what Updike calls "some honest research work." Updike carefully seasons his facts with such imaginative or amusing speculations as the hypothesis concerning modern architecture, and the facetious information that there are five "Pigeons" in the phone book.

LESSON III: Finding Form

The formal outline is introduced here simply as a useful tool in organizing rough material. Students should see that such a tool may help them to see patterns which exist in rough notes, may help to formulate some idea of the comparative significance of different ideas in relation to each other and to the whole; but the fact that one can organize his material into an outline does not, in itself, guarantee effective, purposeful writing, though it may be very helpful in discovering what that purpose is.

The Benchley essay is a good example of somewhat conventional material enlivened by conscious and strict shaping of the subject. A less experienced writer would probably have included a number of other things about teenagers, as the Student Version suggests, such as telephone habits, etc., all under some such broad topic as Eccentricities of the American Teenager, or The Habits of My Strange Children. Benchley has, instead, written a light satire on his teenaged children's habit of loitering about the house, coming and going as if with some secret purpose, during vacations and weekends. He heightens the satirical effect by imitating in his own approach to and arrangement of his essay his children's appearance of having a mysterious purpose. The material itself is strictly limited. In a sense he simply says the same thing several times over, which is one reason it might all be arranged in reverse order and still seem to make some sense.

But his essay employs a mock-serious obscurity, which gradually becomes clearer, to heighten the satire. The first paragraph is intentionally obscure, while the last is very simply a light-hearted fatherly protest.

In a sense, the picture he gives of his children grows more familiar and normal with each paragraph. A combination of exaggeration and good humored realism makes the essay effective, given its purpose of light satire.

The exercises are intended to focus the student's attention on the why of arranging material in a particular way.

Writing Exercises

1. Possible answers might be The First Time I Tried to Drive the Car; Choosing a Wardrobe to Take on an Airplane Trip; My Grandmother's Country Kitchen. Students should see that certain subjects themselves suggest a kind of order. There would be little point, perhaps, in telling about what you would take on an airplane trip in chronological order, and difficult to say how you could find any chronological order in "Grandmother's Country Kitchen" although there would certainly be spatial order, whether it be the "from left to right" sort of thing, or the "one's eye first saw" sort of thing.
2. The questions here should be self-explanatory. Sometimes one wishes to begin with what seems most significant, rather than with what happened

first. Sometimes information which would normally come first is withheld for the sake of suspense. Sometimes the condlusion is hinted at in the beginning to catch the reader's interest. Other more ingenious variations on "natural" or obvious order might be mentioned. The writer might wish to repeat something at key points in the essay, for emphasis.

3-6. These exercises can be quite short, so long as the writer limits his topic sufficiently for whatever length is allowed. The assignments are self-explanatory. Number 3 presents the material in its natural or most obvious order. Number 4 allows for the exploration of alternatives. Number 5 demands that the student rethink the possibilities of his material to come up with a completely different purpose for writing. Number 6 encourages the student to channel his material even more specifically and strictly than in his original choice of topic, and consequently that he develop it more completely.

LESSONS IV: Joining Purpose To Style

This lesson deals further with the familiar idea that expression is shaped by purpose. It also asks the student to see purpose in more than one dimension, as the purpose he has in writing, as the purpose his audience may have in reading, as the inherent qualities of his subject, and as the interactions between all of these. Since these questions will be dealt with in a more complete and sophisticated way later in the year, this lesson may be seen as a bridge between what has been covered up to this point and what is to follow.

The short examples simply point out, by demonstration, that writing may direct, explain, provide exact or factual information, appeal to the emotions through connotative language or the senses, appeal to reason through logical satement of circumstances, and so on.

Students are asked to write a paper which will involve a more complex purpose than was necessarily apparent in the other papers in this unit. That is, this paper should deal, in some way, with strong opinions or feelings held by the writer; by implication he wishes to similarly affect his addience. The essay should be accompanied by what is essentially a second very short essay, explaining why the student chooses the way he does to convey his opinions or feelings. If he uses statistics, he should explain why. If he adopts the role of expert observer, he should explain why he thinks this will be more effective, given his specific subject and intended audience, than some other approach, such as the citing of authorities.

The example dealing with color television is from a magazine advertisement. It is not, of course, offered, as a model. It is rather used to illustrate the use of a certain style of writing for an obvious purpose. With its pseudo-scientific approach the passage becomes a burlesque of "good" style used to persuade or convince. Examination of the passage may give rise to some interesting questions. For example, if we equate good writing

with effective writing, is this good writing? What part should integrity play in the use of language to move or persuade? We would probably say that this is intended for a popular audience rather than an uneducated one, making the distinction on the basis of the appeal the ad makes to a popular respect for the "scientific approach". On the other hand, the ad would probably not appeal to anyone with a degree of sophistication in advertising techniques.

The unit should probably conclude with some in-class discussion of the final essays, so that students will have a chance to apply their knowledge critically to their own work, and to exchange ideas on problems dealt with in the various essays. If you find that you have more time to spend on the work of the unit, you might simply ask for a revision of the final essay, after the class discussion and after students have had a chance to see some of each other's work.

Teacher Version

UNIT II

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

Introduction

The purpose of this unit is to make the student aware of "style" as something quite concrete. While it is true that style is a term which can be applied to a writer's world-view as well as his handling of adverbs, it is also true that the specific, identifiable aspects of a writer's style--as manifested in his choice of words, his sentence structure, and other of the "smaller" aspects of his discourse--are often overlooked in the teaching of composition. If this close attention to style is ignored, the student is deprived of what could be some very valuable insights, not only into the writing techniques of others, but also into his own style and the means by which he might improve it. Thus, while this sort of analytical study of style may offer some difficulties to the neophyte, it is nevertheless immensely worth doing.

A Workable Theory of Style

The great problem with style, of course, is that most people can recognize it, but no one can explain it. Most of the essays and books on style--and there are an enormous number--feature cultivated Englishmen reacting to this or that bit of writing with adjectives like "flowing," "terse," "masculine," and the like. Sometimes we feel that they may be right, but we and they would be at a loss to demonstrate how and why they are right. Certainly they offer us nothing with which we can satisfy the simple-hearted pragmatists who sit before us in our classes and want to know what style is and what's to be done about it. But if we give up the comfortable subjectivism of the traditional gentleman of letters, and if we are unprepared or untrained, to follow some of the new work which linguists are producing in arriving at a definition and a theory of style, we are likely to feel baffled as to how to begin.

Louis Milic, in his essay, "Theories of Style and Their Implications for the Teaching of Composition," (CCC Journal, May 1965) makes the point that the only "teachable" theory of style--of the three which he finds extant--is the old notion that style is somehow distinct from content, that style is ornament, a frosting on the cake. According to Milic the other two theories, the individualist, or style-is-the-man theory, and the Crocean, or organic view, both leave the teacher handcuffed, since one says that a writer can't help his style, and the other insists that style is indivisible from meaning, i.e. that there is no such thing as style. While Milic overlooks some possibilities for a teachable theory of style within and among his three alternatives, he is probably right in urging a return to a primarily dualistic approach in dealing with students. Nevertheless, we need not be simplistic about it. One teachable variation of the dualistic theory which combines aspects of the other two would be to treat style as an aspect of usage. We have, most of us,

pointed out to our students the doctrine of usage, that a form is not Correct or Incorrect, but that it may exist on a number of levels, each one appropriate for certain audiences and contexts and not for others. If we push the doctrine of usage past the "levels" of formal, general, colloquial, and substandard--or whatever your categories happen to be--we see that the same sorts of choices, only infinitely more complex, apply to the understanding of style. In considering a usage problem we would be involved with such questions as when and where the appropriate utterance would be, "Them is his'n," instead of "Those are his" or whether to say "It is I," or "It's me." In considering a stylistic problem, we might face such choices as whether to begin a poem with "I think I know who owns these woods," or "Whose woods these are I think I know"; or whether to open a novel with "Call me Ishmael," or "My name is Ishmael"; or whether to title a theme "What I Did on My Summer Vacation," or "Beach Blanket Boredom." Of course, usage problems are also stylistic problems, but most stylistic problems are not usage problems. There are comparatively few opportunities in a person's use of the language when he must make a choice between optional points of usage, but he must make many of what we would call stylistic choices in every sentence that he utters or writes. Yet the principle is the same in all cases. A writer or speaker is faced with making a choice from several or numerous options. He makes a choice which will express whether or not he realizes something of his opinion of his subject, himself, his audience, and the group to which he wishes to ingratiate himself. He will, at all times be mediating between the demands of his subject and the demands of his audience, and he will do so by choosing one or the other alternatives. The process is the same in principle from the choice of a topic to write about down to the smallest choices made between two synonymous words. The sorts of choices a writer makes, over the long run, constitute his style. Such an approach will relate style to the work the student has been doing in this curriculum. He will see that style concerns merely the sort of choice-making which he has been engaged in all along, but now drawn down to the smallest parts of the sentence.

I. Lesson I: Your Style Is Your Character

The autobiographical exercise which forms the center of Lesson I was suggested by Walker Gibson to an audience of English teachers at the 1965 NCTE convention. It is an excellent means for coming down rather quickly from hazy "style-is-the-man" pronouncements about style, to an awareness of style as a writer's characteristic choices of words, sentences, and the like.

On the first day, ask students to write a few sentences about their birth and early life and hand these in. Before the next class period, ditto some of the students' responses (anonymously) and present them for discussion, along with the autobiographical selections in the unit.

In the discussion questions, an attempt is first made to introduce the students to the concept of the "speaking voice," or the "I" behind

the selections. What sort of personality comes through the voice which speaks to us out of each of the selections? Students should see, in response to question 2a, that factual material does not convey nearly so much of the personality of the "I" as the way that the facts are presented. What are the significant choices that each writer has made, which support one's judgment of his personality? (Begin the discussion by having the selection read aloud.)

1. (From "My Early Life," by Winston Churchill)

The factual evidence in the selection establishes the speaker as an English aristocrat, but his command of language reveals his personality more tellingly than do the facts of his early life. The two questions, one straightforward, the other metaphorical, with which the selection begins, establish the speaker as a sophisticated person, one who knows how to use questions to interest his audience, by arousing expectation over their answers. The "waving lights and shadows" suggest the difficulty of dredging up from his past a clear version of what he remembers, but there is nothing fuzzy or unclear about what follows. His paragraph is carefully organized, with a concluding sentence which restates in forceful, definite words the musing, dreamlike quality of the opening two questions. Most of the sentences in the paragraph are short and to the point. In the sentence about unveiling the statue ("a great black crowd, . . ."), he uses a series of vivid images, a verbless sentence, to give his reader the rush of impressions, as a child might see them.

His words are not particularly difficult, although his expressions are no longer heard much ("withering volley," "grandpapa"). When he is recalling the scene of the unveiling, Churchill describes the scene in the words of the child ("a great black crowd," "strings pulling away a brown shiny sheet," "loud bangs"). Obviously the speaker here is sensitive to the child's world, while at the same time his expression reveals him to be a mature adult, without any psychological quirks. He is straightforward, direct, and intelligent, just what we would expect (or at least hope for) in a famous statesman.

2. (From David Copperfield, by Charles Dickens)

The students will recognize that the language in this selection sounds "old fashioned," that nobody talks this way any more. The speaker here seems rather flippant and witty, a younger man than in the Churchill selection. He plays with words ("To begin my life with the beginning of my life..."), and his tone reveals that he is amused at the interest of the nurse and the local women in him long before he was born, and at their superstition about the particulars of his birth. He doesn't tell us much, factually, about his birth, but rather records what others said about it ("It was remarked," . . . "it was declared"). Those passive verbs reveal a speaker who, so far, hasn't committed himself to his reader. Nor does he ever try to express the world through a child's eyes, as did Churchill. He remains coolly detached.

The speaker's sentences are rather long, especially the last one, which is far longer than we would usually expect to find written nowadays. The use of the colon in this sentence is also unusual. The sentence is carefully organized, with a "first..., secondly..." structure whose parallelism makes the sentence less difficult to follow. The speaker uses the same sort of two-part parallelism in the sentence at the end of the first paragraph ("the clock began to strike, and I began to cry,...") The diction is rather more formal in its level of usage and more dated than Churchill's ("station," "simultaneously," "sage," "possibility of our becoming personally acquainted," "destined," "privileged to see," "inevitably attaching," "infants of either gender"). All in all, the speaker here is revealed almost wholly through his style, since there is little factual information given, and yet we do receive a definitie impression of his personality.

3. (From Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger)

The contemporary, youthful speaking voice of this selection will be easily recognized by students. There is no reasoned, mature attitude, as in Churchill, nor any ironic detachment, as in the voice of David Copperfield. The selection seems more like recorded conversation than writing. It does not bear the marks of careful organization and structure, like its predecessors. It rambles from one thing to another. It seems to assume that the reader perhaps will not be interested in what the speaker has to say, ("If you really want to hear about it,") or that the reader is not used to hearing things stated so baldly ("if you want to know the truth.") The "voice" seems determined to keep nothing hidden from the reader. There is no doubt about his candor and frankness, once he begins. Perhaps he "opens up" too rapidly and too completely to his reader, as if he has not yet learned to protect himself in a hostile world. (We learn, a few sentences later, that he has come out west to recuperate from a mental breakdown.)

His sentences are typical of speech, adding elements as they go along. (The first is a perfect example, with its string of clauses joined by "ands," each clause seemingly growing out of its predecessor.) He assumes that we will catch a meaning not clearly expressed ("They're nice and all--I'm not saying that--"), as he would if he were talking to someone. His diction is informal in its usage level, occasionally laced with slang or profanity, as if the speaker were talking to a social equal, rather than one whom he felt he had to "impress." But despite his occasional crudeness (which itself may be defensive), his sensitivity comes through. He alludes to David Copperfield and he is concerned about his parents' wish not to have their personal lives exposed.

One significant feature of punctuation is the italicizing of the word nice, another example of the oral quality of this style. We know just how someone would say, "They're nice and all," and are sure that it will be followed by some sort of negation.

4. (From The Adventures of Augie March, by Saul Bellow)

Like Holden Caulfield of The Catcher in the Rye, this speaker's style identifies him as a modern American. His restraint, in comparison to Holden Caulfield, marks him as more mature, but he shares Holden's concern for honesty and determination to get at the meaning of his experiences. Also like Holden, he seems to be speaking his lines, orally, rather than writing them. ("She didn't have much to teach, poor woman," is a good example of an apparently spoken sentence.) He seems more sure of himself and of what he is saying than Holden; his sentences do not ramble on, stream-of-consciousness-fashion, as do Holden's. Instead, he terminates his sentences abruptly, then turns to another subject, without the use of transitions. His short, terse paragraphs reveal these abrupt changes of subject. Although he seems rather cold (he admits little concern for his parents, refers to his mother objectively and dispassionately as "simple-minded" and "poor woman"), still his reflective nature marks him as sensitive. He breaks in on his opening sentence to tell us that Chicago is "that somber city." He quotes Heraclitus, and carries the metaphor of knocking at the door through two sentences and several variations. Obviously, he is no dull clod.

His sentence structure is difficult to pinpoint. Two of his sentences are long, two medium length, and two short. He uses colons in two of the sentences in order to prepare for a terse and metaphorical repetition of what has been said in the sentence, up to the colon.

His abrupt, decisive manner is reflected in his word choice. There are few qualifying adverbs or adjectives. Everything is stated baldly, as if he did not expect to be disagreed with ("Everybody knows there is no fineness or accuracy in suppression: if you hold down one thing you hold down the adjoining."). Transition words linking the paragraphs are not in evidence, as if, having said something, he no longer wished to bother with it, but preferred to get on to the next idea. His diction is neither very formal, like David Copperfield's, nor very informal, like Holden Caulfield's. He uses an occasional informal proverb "first to knock, first admitted," but follows it with a rather highbrow allusion to Heraclitus. His diction, in other words, is simply another manifestation of a speaker who seems to be doing just what he says he will: to "make the record in my own way."

Through class discussion, group the various responses to question #2 into the general categories of words, sentences, figures of speech, paragraphing, and punctuation. More specifically, some of the following subpoints might be considered for these categories:

Words
1. familiar or strange
2. abstract or concrete
3. formal, general, or informal in usage level
4. connotative or denotative

Sentences
1. sentence length, in words
2. grammatical types
3. use of questions, commands, exclamations
4. use of parallelism, subordination, and other means of enlarging the base sentence

Figures of speech, and imagery
1. allusions
2. metaphors, similes, and other poetic devices
3. irony
4. appeals to the senses

Paragraphing
1. long or short
2. tightly organized or discursive
3. sorts of transitions used (or not used)

Punctuation
1. use of punctuation for emphasis
2. other unusual features

With this sort of discussion, which should be applied to the students' autobiographical sentences as well as to the four selections in the unit, students should begin to see how style is actually formed. After this close study of the work of some professional writers, they should be ready for the two writing assignments at the end of this lesson.

II. Lesson II--Words

A. Abstract Words or Concrete Words: the point here is the simple but profoundly important one that teachers need to keep making over and over: good writing is full of specific details--the actual names of things, people, places, events. Of course, one specific detail or example after another would soon become wearisome or confusing if a writer did not stop occasionally to generalize, to pull these specific items together under a single heading. So good writing is both general and specific, alternating back and forth, but with more space devoted to specificity than to generalization. It takes a good many specific points to establish and support one generalization.

B. Show, Don't Tell:

The Mark Twain selection is rich in visual imagery and concreteness. Any of the details beginning after the colon in the fourth sentence would be noteworthy, depending upon one's personal preference. Rewriting the sentences in general or abstract words gives the same effect as the Twain selection would have if it ended after the third sentence, instead of being developed by the images to come.

Thomas Wolfe makes his description concrete through the use of olfactory images--the smells of the trains--rather than visual images,

which predominate in the Twain selection. The "speaker" behind the Wolfe sentence is one who is excited by the prospect of the circus, so much so that his senses seem keenly aware and expectant. Even the familiar smells are heightened by anticipation of the "strange sounds and smells of the coming circus."

Writing Assignment: Visual imagery is by far the most common type. Students should be encouraged to come up with images of smell (as did Wolfe), or of touch, taste, and sound, as well as those of sight.

Passage for Analysis: Sinclair uses the senses of sight, smell, and sound here, and in doing so recreates an almost total revulsion of the human being to the stockyards. Nearly all of the senses are assailed by it. Examples of words which convey vivid sensory images are found throughout the selection; for example, sight: "darker," "dingier," "parched and yellow," "hideous and bare," "thick, oily, and black as night"; smell: "pungent," "sickening," "rich, almost rancid" (a combination of smell and taste), "intoxicant"; sound: "murmuring of the bees," "whisperings of the forest," "endless activity," "a world in motion."

C. Metaphorical Words:

The Wilder sentence features a metaphor, a woman "hurling" herself at an immovable object. "Hurled" is a better word than "fought" or "worked for" because it suggests the more passionate, even violent actions of this woman. It suggests her total commitment to her goal, without any fear of the consequences. An object which has been "hurled" has the speed and the power to damage or destroy whatever it is aimed at.

"Attach" is a poor choice, since it too is metaphorical, but it suggests a gentle, careful action, not at all in character with "hurled." A better word might be "win (or seize, or capture,) a little dignity (for) women," in which the words are more in keeping with the violent nature of "hurled." One could also, of course, substitute a non-metaphorical expression like "provide a little dignity (for) women."

Discussion: "neutral" words and metaphorical words.

1. For scythe-stroke, substitute movement, operation, attack, campaign, etc.

2. Substitute "as nervous as could be," or anything

3. Substitute made, appeared, were evident, were seen, etc.

4. Substitute: every person agrees to that, everyone agrees with that, etc.

5. Substitute as follows: If a man does not agree with his companions, perhaps it is because he has his own ideas. Let him have them, however different they may be.

The implications, denotative and connotative, of the original metaphors and similes make them preferable to the substitutions. (For example, scythe-stroke suggests the inexorable blow of a hard, sharp instrument, dangerously efficient.) Discussion of the words in question in each case should reveal this.

Question three brings up the danger of mixing metaphors: one irons out wrinkles, not bugs. One might get rid of the bugs, however. Example (b) is a particularly ludicrous anatomical display, a university bending over backward in order to close doors.

Even this brief discussion should suggest to students that metaphorical language can be very effective in expressing an abstract concept in a direct, forceful way. But, since metaphors are likely to call attention to themselves, they had better be good, and they had better be consistent. If they are not, then the literal substitute would be preferable.

D. Fresh Words and Tired Words:

Clichés, trite expressions, and jargon may be less noticeable to students than to teachers. The limited reading and experience of students may prevent them from recognizing worn-out words or phrases, but if they are introduced to the notion of tired words and phrases as a concept of style worth considering, they should become more sensitive to them in the future.

Writing Assignments on Jargon:

1. What the student was trying to say was this: "I will limit my attention here to the sorts of goals a person strives for in his job. Since his job is such an important part of a person's life, I will consider only it, leaving the subjects of his personal and social life for another time."

2. The teacher may need to lead the way on this exercise. For example,

   A. In a number of cases occurring over a period of time it has been demonstrated to a conclusive degree that if educator and parent establish an interpersonal relationship of considerable rapport, difficulties arising within the context of the student's situation may be somewhat alleviated.

   B. The lower-level socioeconomic geographic areas may be characterized by the following environmental factors: grounds and buildings displaying inadequate maintenance, exterior wall surface cover failing to adhere properly,

cracking of glass window-panes, waste disposal containers carrying super-maximal loads and seemingly not clearly identifiable as to owner.

Final Writing Assignment:

One need read only a few lines before realizing that "Our Family Business" is a hodge-podge of bad diction, that it is vague and over-generalized, lacking in concrete details and examples, full of cliches, jargon and mixed metaphors, totally devoid of freshness or originality in its words. In short, it tells the reader almost nothing.

The other student paper, "Our Family Shade Business," tells the reader a great deal. It is clear, concrete, and crisp in its diction. It is full of specific information, but the facts are presented in an easy, informal manner, as if the writer realized that the window shade business, although it is important to him and his family, is certainly not the world's most vital industry. (Most of the essay's virtues in diction are obvious, but it may be necessary to call attention to the fine metaphor at the beginning of the fourth paragraph, characterizing "Big Business," as a sort of hungry animal, and to the simile at the end of the same paragraph.)

III. Lesson III--Sentences

A. Sentence Length:

1. This is probably written for an audience of laymen. The subject treatment here is not one which would exclude laymen, as would a selection aimed at a scientific audience.

2. The diction is breezy and informal, not highly technical. The sentences are often short and emphatic. Sometimes one short sentence comprises a paragraph, as if to create a stronger effect (#6 is a good example). A writer aiming at a scientific audience would probably not try so hard for these effects.

3. Sentences 6 and 9 seem very short. Sentences 7 and 8 seem very long.

4. longest sentence: 8 (85 words)
   shortest sentence: 9 (4 words)

5. about 26 words

6. The fact that Asimov's average sentence length is 26 words shows that he is writing here slightly longer sentences than do most professional writers. Yet the selection does not seem difficult, because he varies his structures so effectively and organizes his long sentences carefully, so that they are easy to follow. An analysis of this passage would be helped less by

knowing the average number of words per sentence than it would by looking at the exceptional-length sentences of question 3. Although Asimov's average sentence is 26 words long, none of his sentences are exactly that long: 8 have less than 20 words, 5 have more than 30 words. Averages are not really very helpful in this case, especially with such a limited sampling.

7. If Asimov's average sentence length were twelve words, #6 and #9 would still stand out by their brevity. If the suggested changes were made in sentence #6, the sentence would probably lose much of its force. It would become a more formal sentence, would sound less like the rest of the selection, less like speech, and would thus probably lose much of its force. (It is worth pointing out that sentence #6 is a "fragment," technically, although no one would complain about it, since it is rhetorically effective.)

8. Either change in sentence #9 would destroy its force. It is given a paragraph to itself and is compressed into four words because it is an important idea, a contradiction of what has gone on before, and Asimov wants to give it all the emphasis he can. It is the shortest sentence in the selection, and is given added "punch" by being placed after the longest one.

9. Breaking up the long list in sentence #7 would interfere with their cumulative effect--that of a catalogue of hare-brained ideas. Sentence #8 could be divided at several points, but then the last clause, which is the most important idea here, would not be so neatly opposed by the rest of the clauses, which are all different examples of people's attitudes toward writers of other types of fiction, and which belong together as a unit. The change at the end of sentence #8 would substitute a vague generality, "the things he writes about," for the more specific and concrete "flying saucers."

Summary: A good rule about sentence length would probably touch upon the necessity for varying sentence length to achieve the particular purpose at hand. There is nothing inherently good (or bad) about long or short sentences. But a number of very short sentences may seem to chop up one's ideas into little pieces, whereas a number of very long sentences may discourage the reader. Alternately short and long sentences, within a context of sentences of medium length (15-25 words), is probably the best practice.

B. Parallelism:

Students should be asked to copy down and bring in sentences with significant parallelism which they run across in their reading. Many of the examples in these exercises have been brought to light by alert students.

The exercise in which students "plug in" their own ideas and words to the structure of someone else's good sentence is a particularly rewarding one. In many cases, these will lead to the best sentences that the students have ever written. For example, in working with the first sentence, a mediocre student came up with "The sun shone on the park and warmed it, and in the shade under the trees the people moved, mothers wheeling babies in carriages, boys playing cowboys and Indians among the shrubbery, old men watching the stream of life and remembering their lost youth." The exercise is effective because it forces the student to add enough detail and information to his sentence to make it worthwhile. It is tempting to say that it is nearly impossible to be dull when writing in sophisticated sentence patterns.

Another useful exercise, along these lines, is to try to account for every single choice of word, phrase, sentence construction, word-order, and punctuation that a writer like Steinbeck makes in a sentence such as the one above. Any such analysis will repay the effort involved by opening the students' eyes to how much is involved in the writing of even one good sentence.

Errors in parallelism:

1. . . . external, or how someone appears and Newman's is internal, or how someone thinks.

2. . . . Some of the customs, however, are similar today, such as having to pay double price for refreshments inside the theater, having to wait outside because of a full house, and having to listen to boos and yells when the action seems to call for them. (Other options are possible.)

3. . . . that I was constantly in trouble, and secondly, that there were specific little games the neighborhood kids played. (Other options are possible.)

4. . . . that someone is telling you the story rather than that you are reading it.

5. both an intelligent person and an athlete.
   or
   both intelligent and athletic.

6. The first duty of a high school is that of educating its students, and the second duty that of providing activities for them.

C. Some Effective Sentence Structures:

This section seeks to make students realize that the sentences of effective writers often feature additions to the main clause which clarify, explain, qualify, illustrate, or expand the information in the main clause.

"Left-branching" Sentences

Exercises:

1. Ye who listen. . .
   and
   pursue. . .

   who expect that
   and
   _____that. . .the morrow,

   attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

2. Some carrying ancient rifles and shotguns, others with only a stick or a machete, they marched raggedly into the village square. (Other options are, of course, possible in all these exercises.)

3. a. After some trouble with the microphone and a crowd of noisy hecklers, he delivered a first-rate speech.

   b. If we don't all do our part, if we make even one small error, the plan will fail.

   c. With winds of hurricane force and rains of torrential magnitude, the storm did incalculable damage.

4. a. When the train leaves, you had better be on it.

The left-branching sentence used to be called in handbooks the "periodic" sentence, and was defined as one which cannot be understood until one has read it to the very end. As in this sentence, the main idea comes at the end. Hence they are unlike human speech, which tends to produce right-branching sentences, wherein the main idea comes first, and then additions are made after it. Being, in this sense, rather artificial, left-branching (or periodic) sentences take more forethought to produce, but they are likely to be very effective if well-done because they take advantage of an important fact about word order and the English sentence: the last part of the sentence is the most important, the most emphatic. (The sentences about Larreaux illustrate this. Whichever statement about Larreaux comes last, that is the one which will most influence our opinion of him.) So when one puts his main idea at the end of the sentence, he is using the important trait of the final position to increase the importance of this main idea. Of course, we need not overdo left-branching sentences but many students are unaware of their potency, and should be encouraged to make far wider use of them than they do now.

"Self-imbedding" Sentences

Exercises:

1. a. The attackers, mounted on horses and camels, swords flashing in the sun, bore down upon the fortress.

   b. The day for the game, bright, cold, and windy, finally arrived.

   c. Childish Johnny, the scourge of the neighborhood dogs and cats, the leader of infant rebellions, finally became John.

2. a. This car, which has cost me four hundred dollars in repair in one year, should be junked.

   b. Television, which is rich in violence, unfunny comedies and repetitious westerns, needs better programs.

   c. Parents who set impossible goals for their children are likely to be disappointed. (This would be a good point at which to explain to students the difference between the clauses which restrict or limit the word which they modify and which provide essential information like "c," and those, like "a" and "b" here, which are non-restrictive, or non-limiting, but which provide only extra, nonessential information. The latter clauses need to be set off by commas (listen to your voice pause for the commas when you say sentences "a" and "b" aloud); the restrictive clauses do not take commas (again, notice that your voice does not pause before or after the "who" clause in "c").

"Right-branching" Sentences

Just as the older term for left-branching sentences was "periodic," the older term for right-branching sentences was "loose." A "loose" sentence was defined as one that could be stopped at a point, or points, along the way without losing the sense of the sentence. It is thus the exact opposite of the "periodic" or left-branching sentence. Mencken's sentence, for example, could be stopped after "going into," or after "Beethoven," or "opera house," etc., without any vital loss of meaning. The newer terminology (left and right branching) seems easier to grasp and more descriptive of the structure of the sentences than "loose" and "periodic," and avoids the rather unsettling connotations of a term like "loose." Who wants to be accused of writing "loose" sentences?

The four examples in part B (p.20) which are alluded to as right-branching sentences are 1, 2, 4, and 5. #3 is self-imbedding. The greater frequency of right-branching sentences in English may

be accounted for by the natural adherence of right-branching sentences to English speech patterns. Adding elements to the end of a sentence is much easier, and more common, in speech than is adding elements to the beginning of the sentence. When we speak, we find it quite natural to keep adding to the ends of our sentences extra information which expands, explains, qualifies, clarifies, etc. This is also the function of the written right-branching sentence. The right-branching sentence seems to show the writer's or speaker's mind in action, generating new ideas as it goes along, and adding these to the existing communication. The left-branching or periodic sentence, however, must be thought out ahead of time and delivered "cold turkey." For this reason it is a "contrived" sentence, which strikes us as less natural to English speech patterns (but which is, nevertheless, occasionally very effective).

Exercises:

1. a. In all, there is little in the school store worth buying--[or colon, or comma] a few ragged paperbacks, a meager selection of pencils, paper, and ball-point pens, and an assortment of stale cookies and candy, noted for its complexion-destroying qualities. (Many options are, of course, possible in these exercises.)

   b. Today's pressures on youth are no worse than those of twenty years ago: [or dash, or comma] no worse than the anxieties which have always beset the generation reaching for maturity, whether in ancient Greece, in Elizabethan England, or in modern America.

   c. John came in last, gasping for breath, nearly fainting when he crossed the finish line, his knees still bleeding from the fall he had taken on the first turn.

   d. The team played well, cracking the enemy's line for large chunks of yardage when on offense, keeping the other team's attack off balance when on defense.

   e. Some gadgets are time consuming: the power mower which takes twenty minutes to start, the expensive sports car which needs a full tune-up once every week, the pencil sharpener which keeps chewing off pencil points instead of sharpening them.

2. a. He will always be my favorite person because he is always willing to listen to me whenever I need to talk to someone. Etc.

"Balanced" Sentences

Discussion:

1. The balanced sentences are appropriate because Johnson is

giving a "balanced" judgment of Pope and Dryden, contrasting them on first this point, then that one, not granting either one any great advantage over the other.

2. Yes, parallelism is indispensable to balanced sentences, since, by definition, the two parts of a balanced sentence are a repetition of the same form.

3. This is a difficult question, but an interesting one. The balanced sentence was used so much more frequently in the 18th century than today because it corresponded to an 18th century world-view and does not so closely correspond to a 20th century world-view. The 18th century viewed the universe as ordered and harmonious, with all things bearing an assigned place and value. The balanced sentence, like the main poetic form of the times, the closed heroic couplet, reflects this view of an orderly and balanced universe. Today, however, we are less sure of any sort of pattern of order and harmony in the universe. We are uncertain of absolute values. One manifestation of this in our prose style today is the greater use of sentences which reflect the complexity of our lives and times. We thus tend to use the balanced sentence less, and the sorts of sentences described in this lesson more, particularly the right-branching sentence, which is so close to the structure of speech, and which seems to represent most clearly the processes of thought. But the balanced sentence is still used occasionally, particularly when one wants to emphasize a contrast between two points of view by making a series of statements about them.

Exercises on sentence-structure.

1. Left-branching:

Skinny frame encased in blue jeans,
face half-hidden behind dark prescription glasses,

his...voice...evokes | the parched earth of the depression
and
the barren highways

2. Balanced:

While my father...with the pioneers, he worked for many of them;
although he were subdued, he knew many of the Indian fighters.

3. Right branching:

Baseball's clock ticks | inwardly
and
silently,
and
a man absorbed... | in rural time--
a slow green time of | removal
and
concen-
tration, --
and
in a tension that is... with each pitcher's
windup
and
with...lean
and
little half
steps. . . .

4. The Indy hustle is reflected in bursts of color:
a motorcyclist...;
checkered flags...;
and...mechanics....

5. Left-branching:

If you had...to be--
rum ships...,
beer-running trucks...,
illicit stills...,
the fashionable...,
ladies...,
and
Alphonse Capone, multimillionaire...,
driving...--
the innocent citizen's jaw would have dropped.

(Note that the description of Al Capone is saved for the emphatic last position in the series. He will be the subject of the rest of Allen's chapter, entitled "Alcohol and Al Capone.")

6. Right-branching:

Such an interview...she now did, | with the hot...burning...,
and
lighting up its
shame,
with the scarlet token...;
with the sin-born infant...;
with a whole people,
drawn forth...,
staring... | in...,
in...,
or
beneath....

(Students can see for themselves in all these examples the importance of punctuation marks to indicate parallel elements and to mark off the limits of structural units. They can also see sentences like the ones in these exercises can be easily understood if the structure is clearly evident. And it is often through parallelism that the writer quickly reveals this structure to his reader.)

7. Balance:

And so, my fellow Americans,	ask not...; ask what....
My fellow citizens of the world,	ask not..., but --------what together...man.

8. Left-branching:

Whosoever of ye raises...;
whosoever of ye raises...--
look ye, whosoever of ye raises me that same white whale,
he shall have...!

9. Balanced (Actually, a series of balanced sentences, like #7):

If	they were unacquainted. . ., they were deeply read in the oracles of God.
If	their names were not found. . ., they were recorded. . ..
If	their steps were not. . ., legions of ministering angels had charge over them.

10. Self-imbedding:

The dog, seemed...of him.
guiding his blind master along,
stopping...light to change,

Summary: Again, we might make the generalization that the writer of effective sentences is the one who is able to range up and down the different structures of sentences, using whichever one seems appropriate. He realizes that for every utterance he makes, he has a number of choices as to how it may best be structured. What will determine the right choice? His purpose, his subject, and his audience. What considerations of style will enter in? He will avoid becoming repetitious and predictable by avoiding using all left-branching, or all right-branching or all balanced sentences. He will vary these

structures and will use many short sentences as well, with no "branches" at all. When he does use a long sentence with several branching elements, he will make sure that his parallel structures are accurate and clear so that the reader will follow the sense of the sentence easily.

IV. Lesson IV: Tone

That Melville is being ironic about the missionaries and their opinions of the evils of paganism becomes clearer and clearer as the selection progresses. Reading the selection aloud ("with expression," as teachers used to say) will help to reveal this. The praise of missionaries becomes finally so fulsome and excessive that we realize that Melville is really on the side of the savages. The seeds of doubt are firmly planted in the last sentence. Melville was circumventing the genteel tradition when he wrote this, and he had to be careful. His audience would tolerate no obvious attack upon missionaries. Indeed, many of his readers, unused to anything but routine praise of such subjects, probably failed to see that Melville meant just the opposite of what he was saying.

"Queen Victoria": Questions for discussion.

1. One might describe Victoria as frugal, parsimonious, eccentric, odd, proud, vain, etc. Her order could be described as authoritarian, stern, vain, direct, forceful. The manner in which her order was carried out was complete and unquestioning.

2. The paraphrase plays down Victoria's eccentricities by not emphasizing them. She seems now more thrifty than parsimonious, more a harmless collector than an odd, prideful, iron-willed monarch.

3. Some words and phrases which convey Strachey's distaste for Queen Victoria are as follows:

   a. "nothing should be thrown away--and nothing was." (Her orders, however odd, must be obeyed unquestioningly.)

   b. "drawer after drawer," etc. (The repetition here heightens the sense of absurdity which Strachey sees in Victoria's order to preserve all her clothes, as if they were holy relics.)

   c. "But not only the dresses." ("The saving of all one's dresses is bad enough," Strachey implies, "but look at the other things she saved--all the frills and trappings as well!")

   d. "all were ranged in chronological order, dated and complete." ("Not only did she save all her clothing," Strachey seems to be saying, "she actually catalogued and dated everything as if it were going to be an exhibit in a museum.")

4. Strachey seems to regard Queen Victoria as a rather vain and stupid person who imagines that articles of her wearing apparel must be enshrined for posterity, and then gives orders, like a commanding officer, to see that these orders are carried out. Strachey, in other words, seems not to like Queen Victoria.

Selection for analysis:

1. Orwell's dislike of the "large numbers of people" who hated him is evident in such phrases as "no one had the guts to raise a riot," "hideous laughter," "sneering yellow faces," etc. But more important perhaps is the feeling that he gives us that he realizes that he is hated not because of what he is, personally, but because of what he represents: imperialism. Thus the tone here is rather complex. Orwell dislikes the natives, but dislikes imperialism (and his own part in it) more. Indeed, his dislike of the natives really masks his wish to be their friend, but his position as a British policeman makes it impossible for them to consider him anything but an oppressor.

2. Wodehouse makes use of exaggerated comparisons here to produce a humorous tone. He also uses rather prim and proper language ("a cautious pause," "descend to strike the ball squarely and dispatch it") to portray the humorous qualities of a weak, but undeniably consistent golfer.

3. "Fourscore and seven" is more formal, more Biblical, than "87." It establishes an elevated, dignified, almost religious tone, entirely appropriate for what is to follow.

4. By comparing an automobile to "poetry and tragedy, love and heroism," Lewis is satirizing Babbitt and his materialistic fellow-citizens, whose apprehension of such grandiose truths as poetry, tragedy, love, and heroism is limited to their infatuation with a piece of tin. The romantic language ("pirate ship," "perilous excursion ashore") also satirizes Babbitt's romantic and mystical adoration of his machine.

5. The statement begins in the conventional manner of a platitude: "conscience is the inner voice...," but by the end of the sentence we have seen this conventional opening turned into cynicism. The "inner voice" which tells us to do right is merely a fear of being discovered.

Summary: The summary in the Student Version urges the student to make his own style reflect the increased maturity and sophistication which ought to be his as a twelfth grader and as a student of style. The student needs to be encouraged to "take a chance," to try some of the techniques of the polished writer, even if he falls short of the mark. He needs to break away from the plain style, occasionally, to study and even to

imitate the work of pop-gun and fireworks stylists like H. L. Mencken.

Many of the activities within this unit may be, and should be, used from time to time throughout the junior and senior years. The student needs occasional practice in such things as reading and writing parodies, reading aloud, writing stylistic analyses as composition assignments, and duplicating, with his own words, the pattern of a sentence or paragraph by a professional writer. Such activities cannot help making the student more conscious of what style--<u>good</u> style--is.

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Rhetoric Curriculum VI

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Introduction

Psychologists have used white rats to study the processes of learning. One way in which this has been done is by using a maze, through which the rat must learn to pass, in order to be rewarded with a bit of food.

Perhaps there have been times in the course of your writing education when you have felt, unhappily, rather like a rat in a maze: two turns left, once right, three left, once right, and then you get your reward in the form of a grade. But no sooner have you mastered this particular maze, than someone changes the pattern, and you find yourself as baffled as before. "I did it this way last time," protests the poor rat. "Now, where's my cheese?"

But one thing a true education in writing does not do is to supply a limited number of combinations, like so many set maze patterns, which will always lead to a reward if followed according to the learned turns. It would be very unflattering to the human intellect and imagination if it were possible to do so.

The satirical writer, Max Beerbohm, once wrote a humorous essay making just this point. The object of his satire was a book entitled "How Shall I Word It," which professed to supply sample letters proper to all occasions, from telling off a future son-in-law to refusing an undesirable invitation. Supposedly, to be assured of a correct and effective letter, one had only to look up a letter corresponding to his needs, copy it out, and sign his own name. Beerbohm suggests that the book is too polite, lacking in insulting letters, and adds his own versions of these.

Actually, however large the volume, it would be impossible to provide a collection of letters to suit every occasion, much less all writers and recipients. Perhaps only certain kinds of highly impersonal business letters could be written according to some sort of prescription. But each time a writer begins a new letter he must deal, more or less, with a unique situation. Why is he writing to this particular person this particular time? What special thing does he want to say, this time? How can he best say this special thing to this particular person at this particular time?

On the other hand, even a sophisticated rat seems to solve new learning problems better than an unsophisticated rat; that is, he is apt to work them out more efficiently once he has some experience.

We hope you will agree that high school students enjoy a number of advantages over rats running mazes, however sophisticated the rats. And yet, too often, the beginner in writing may expect that the teacher is going to supply him with some "safe" formula for certain writing situations. He wants to know, with some security, that this is the way to write about a vacation and this is the way to write a friendly letter, and the realization that he is going to have to make certain decisions for himself in each new case may be a frustrating one. But to wish that things be made simpler, to look for and hold onto some semblance of propriety, a list of set rules and nothing more, is just asking to be a rat in a maze rather than an individual learning to express thoughts, feelings, or information, in a way unique to him and his situation.

What are some things we can learn about writing which will carry over from one situation to another? How do we go about solving problems encountered in each new attempt to express ourselves? These are questions you have been dealing with in your previous work, and will continue to deal with in subsequent lessons as well as in any writing you do in the future.

For some of you, this may be the last formal study you will make of writing. For others, this year is a link with or preparation for further study at a more advanced level. For still others, this may simply be the last time you will study writing in a theoretical sense, before you go on to jobs which demand that you put your education to use in a very practical way. And there are no doubt those of you who don't know yet what to expect, or ask, of the future.

It is an appropriate time for you to take stock, to evaluate, and clarify what you have been doing up till now, to look backward to see what sort of pattern has emerged in your studies so far, and to look forward to see what sort of future application they may have. It is a good time to ask yourself, just what have I been doing? What's the point of it all? For without such questions, experience all too often escapes us, leaving only the faintest and most incoherent imprint behind.

LESSON I: Searching for Substance

A character in a novel by James Joyce writes these words on the fly-leaf of his geography book: "Stephen Dedalus, Class of Elements, Clongowes Wood College, Sallins, County Kildare, Ireland, Europe, The World, The Universe." The novel is called "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," and it explores the universal problem of one individual's growth to self-knowledge.

How can you answer the question, "Who am I?" One way, in a sense, would be to place yourself, like Stephen Dedalus, within the universe. I I am the person who is presently occupying this exact position in time and space.

Whenever you begin to write any sustained piece of prose, you have to do something of this sort. You have to decide just who you are and where

you are in relation to your subject. Are you an expert, at the center of the problem? Are you an interested observer, watching events from the sidelines? Are you on one side or the other of a controversy? Are you completely in the dark?

The inexperienced writer faced with a task in writing may respond like the inexperienced housewife faced with a dirty house, or a boy who has just taken apart his first car engine. "I don't know where to begin," is a familiar cry. We all possess an abundance of information, impressions, ideas, and emotions, half-formed and chaotic. Whether this store is rich or meagre, it represents the starting point for almost all of our intellectual or imaginative endeavors. And yet, how do you begin?

The proper place to begin a discussion of writing may well be how to begin to write. Of course, before you can write you need something to write about. Can you imagine a day without weather? A face without an expression? An essay which isn't about anything? How do you find a subject?

Do you simply jot down all the words that pass through your mind and choose a subject from among them? Do you open a dictionary, shut your eyes, and place your finger on a word, to find a subject? Do you plunge right into the first paragraph, hoping that some combination of hand, pen, and paper will come up with something? Do you try to make a formal outline? Do you write something that sounds like a good conclusion and then try to figure out what might go before it? Any of these approaches might lead to what you want. Writers have tried everything from "automatic writing" in a trance, to cutting dictionaries into pieces, tossing the scraps into the air, and picking words up at random.

But in each case there is something else that would be involved, before your random jottings, your notes and floating thoughts could be turned into a conscious, coherent piece of writing. The first step in that "something else" would be finding your subject.

Finding a subject involves more than just settling on "Ants" or "My Vacation." "Ants I Met On My Vacation" would be more specific, but still does not account for more than a hint of what the essay is about, why it is being written, and for what sort of audience. Suppose that you are asked to write an essay on the general topic, "Who Am I?" You should have much more material than you could use in a short essay; what would you need to do before you really had a subject for your essay?

In a short story by Lionel Trilling, a class of college students write essays on this topic which range from the name-born-address sort of thing, to the main character's declaration that he is "Of this time, of that place," but something less definable than either. What will determine the nature of your essay?

When someone asks you who you are, you could answer in a great variety of ways. Make a list of some of the ways you might answer this question. Remember, giving your name is only one way of identifying yourself, and

not a very definite one at that. There may be quite a few other people with the same name as yours, but none of them is you. How did Stephen Dedalus identify himself? Do you tell who you are when you tell how you feel about something? You might identify yourself by saying, I am a person who does not believe in capital punishment, or I am a person who prefers wearing red and purple striped pajamas to any other sort of clothing.

Make a list of at least a dozen choices open to you in writing your essay. If you still cannot see how you could identify yourself other than by name, age, address, and so on, your teacher will give you some suggestions, but try to rely on your own imagination, for after all, you know more about yourself than your teacher does, and in writing you may later do you will need to exercise your own imagination rather than depending on someone else to supply ideas.

Just think what a complete list that would show all the material available for your broad topic would be like; it would have to include everything you had ever done, said, or thought; it would have to include all the facts about you such as height, color of hair, birthplace, and so on; it would have to include something about the sort of friends you have had and something about your family. It would be hard to say just where such a list should stop. Would you have to include a sketch of the town where you grew up, and a brief history of the United States as well? Would you have to include a list of all the meals you have eaten, or the dreams you have had?

Of course it would be unnecessary to make such a complete list, because you would soon have much more material than you could possibly use in a whole book of essays. What is your next step in finding your subject? Plan on an essay from three to five pages long. Now check your list for possibilities which seem most interesting to you, and which could be well developed in that length of essay.

Suppose that the item you choose from your list is, "I am what I like to eat." This would certainly be helpful in narrowing your subject to something workable. But again, is this your subject? What sort of essay would you have if you simply listed all your favorite foods? The essay that resulted would be very like any other essay which lacked purpose. It would be like an essay entitled "My Vacation" which said, when I went to such and such a place we drove down the highway and past some trees and past a lake and got to a cabin and stayed there three days and got back in our car and drove past a lake and past some trees and down a highway and home again. The end.

The facts would be there. The essay would have the order of chronology. It would be about your vacation. But would that be enough to make an effective essay?

Or suppose you are writing an essay on how to do something, how to sew a blouse or build a radio receiver. Would it make an essay to simply write down the directions provided with the blouse pattern or instruction manual? If the instructions answer completely and accurately the questions, how do you make a blouse, or how do you build a radio receiver, why do they not necessarily make an essay?

Consider the difference between these two statements of essay topics. "I am what I like to eat." "I may look like apple pie, but I prefer to think of myself as spaghetti." The first implies a list of all the foods you like, with some vague connection between them and your identity. The second suggests a light humorous piece, perhaps talking about what you consider the two sides to your personality, embodied in your two favorite foods. The second, however you read it, is certainly more suggestive of a specific sort of development.

Working with the item you have chosen from your list of possible ways to identify yourself, jot down several distinct ways that item might be developed in a short essay. These new subjects need not tell everything about the essay which might result from them, but they should definitely suggest some specific channeling of your more general topic.

Now choose one of these possible avenues of development and rewrite it into a well thought out statement of your essay subject. The resulting essay would answer, in one way, the question of identity with which you began.

An autobiography is a kind of extended answer to the question of identification. The following is an excerpt from the autobiography of Winston Churchill. You probably have some idea of who Winston Churchill was. What would you answer if someone asked you to identify Winston Churchill? How does Churchill identify himself in this passage? How does his identification of himself differ from your identification of him?

(For text, see My Early Life: A Roving Commission by Winston Churchill: Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1930, pp. 15-16.)

Study Questions

1. What "facts" does Churchill give you about himself?

2. Why does he say, "When I would have willingly displayed my knowledge, they sought to expose my ignorance"?

3. What is the general topic of this passage? What is the specific topic?

4. State the subject of Churchill's essay (consider this excerpt as a complete essay) in terms of purpose. That is, what does he intend to tell the reader, aside from the bare facts of the passage?

5. Do you think Churchill is writing this passage to show himself as a poor student? Does he mean to say that he was not very bright? Does he treat the incident as an unhappy crisis in his life? What do the last two sentences tell us about the subject of Churchill's essay?

6. In how many ways, besides by giving objective facts, does Churchill identify himself in this passage? Explain.

Writing Exercises

1. Write a short essay in which you answer, in some way, the question, "Who Am I?"

2. List all the steps you go through in finding your specific topic for the essay.

3. Make a brief outline, which might be used by anyone, on how to find a subject to write about. Do not concern yourself, at this point, with matters of internal organization or style, but restrict the problem to the actual process of determining a specific topic, limiting that topic,

stating it to show purpose, and similar considerations. Try to make this a sensible, usable outline, based on your experience in this unit.

LESSON II: Finding Sources

Obviously you are not going to know as much about every subject you may want to write about as you know about yourself. Finding your subject is not always the same as finding your material, which often involves a search outside your own storehouse of personal ideas and information.

Consider, momentarily, the subject of yourself again. Are there things you don't know about your own life? What do you know, for example, about the place where you were born? How would you go about finding out about your birthplace, or what sort of a day it was when you were born? List all the possible sources for such information. You might, of course, simply ask your parents. How would the information they gave you differ from the information you might get from an old newspaper, published on the day you were born?

Another thing you might not know about yourself is how others see you. Assume that you are writing an essay, "Myself as seen by _____". What sources would you have for material? You might mention something you had overheard. You might simply give your own opinion of what you would seem to be like to someone else, and your reasons for that opinion. You might actually conduct a survey. Can you imagine some sort of objective anonymous questionnaire which would give you access to this information? Why might you wish to use more than one source of information in your essay? Can you see any reason for quoting the opinion of someone such as a good friend, a teacher, your mother?

Remember, whether your material comes from your own observations and opinions, or from any other source, whether it is a recognized authority or simply an overheard opinion, you will need to select that material with the purpose of your writing in mind. Can you convince an unsympathetic audience that your point of view is more valid than theirs by simply telling them how you and your friends feel?

Writing Exercises

1. Where might you find material for essays on the following topics? Suggest more than one possible source for eahh. It is more to the point that you think of a general kind of place, or method of search, rather than some specific source.
   a. The history of newspapers.
   b. American family life during the Second World War.
   c. An event in the life of one of your grandparents.
   d. Daylight savings time, pro or con.
   e. College admission requirements.

2. If you were writing an essay on teenage opinions of draft laws, what purpose might you have for taking material from each of these sources: your friends; statistical records showing the number of teenagers in the armed services; an army sergeant?

   If you were writing an essay on each of the following subjects, why might you want to use material from each of the suggested sources?

   Your favorite book: a magazine review; quotes from the book itself; your own ideas.
   The local police force: a boy you know who was arrested for a traffic violation; the chief of police; a newspaper article.
   Parental discipline: your parents; your friend's parents; your high school principal; a social worker; all the members of your high school class.
   Teenage morality, then and now: Your grandparents; old magazines; a social history of the 1920's; the school guidance counselor; your own observations.

3. Read the following essay by John Updike. How many different kinds of sources does he seem to use? What is the difference in the purpose for which he uses the information about pigeons in the phone book and the fact that a third of the pigeons in London are killed each year? Why does Updike sometimes use quotations and sometimes simply paraphrase information? Do you see any place in the essay where he may be making something up out of his own imagination but phrasing it as if it were an established "fact"?

(For text, see Assorted Prose by John Updike, a Fawcett Crest paperback, New York, 1966, p. 49.)

4. Write a short essay (500 to one thousand words) in which your topic is something about yourself, for which you must go to some other source (s) for information.

LESSON III: Finding Form

Once you have a good subject and something to say about it you are well started on whatever you happen to be writing. You may even be able to sit down and write out a pretty good first draft. Now what?

Of course there are times when a writer may feel that nothing is so good as the ideas which come easily, instantly, naturally as possible, and when this happens the less tampering with them the better. You may judge for yourself how often this happens. Most of the time, even when we begin with a well-formed idea of our material, the first draft of any piece of writing is to the finished piece what a crude sketch is to a finished painting. It may have its own charms, or it may be a poor caricature of the final result; it may be a fragment or have a certain completeness of its own; but generally it just doesn't amount to as much as the finished work.

How, then, do you begin to make something out of your subject and material? Let's look back again to the general topic, "Who am I?" narrowed to the more specific topic, "I am what I like to eat," and stated, this time, even more specifically, "My daily ice cream cone is an index of my mood." Then we jot down all the ideas that occur to us on this subject, somewhat as follows.

MY DAILY ICE CREAM CONE IS AN INDEX TO MY MOOD

My father owns an ice cream store.
He has owned it for sixteen years.
He bought it from a man who couldn't stand ice cream,
who went into the shoe polish business.
I have never gotten tired of ice cream.
One of my sisters is allergic to sherbet.
Our storehas over twenty flavors.
I'll never forget the time Sue lost her boyfriend's
club pin in the black walnut.
I can't exactly say that I have a favorite flavor,
because it depends on how I'm feeling that day.
You'd be surprised how scientific ice cream making
has become.
Eight years ago my father branched out into party
foods and some dairy products besides.

On Sundays I usually prefer vanilla, except when
it snows.
Tutti-frutti means that I might burst out giggling
at any minute.
I once knew a girl who was a real pistachio nut.
Our dog's favorite flavor is burgundy cherry.
I eat burgundy cherry when I feel mysterious, and
peppermint when I feel wholesome and athletic.
When I'm in a bad mood and feel like sitting in a
darkened house, stuffing myself with sticky sweet
things and refusing to answer the telephone while
I think about how mean everyone is to me, I stuff
myself with rocky road chocolate ice cream with
nuts in it.
Hardly a day goes by when I don't eat an ice cream cone.
One day I ate a seven scoop cone with seven different
flavors, but I don't think I'll ever be in a mood
like that again.

How does one go about making an essay out of this? What would you cross out, for instance, and why? Do you see any pattern emerging in what remains, whether or not it is complete? What systematic method for organizing such material do you know of?

An outline is just what the word implies; it presents a thing only in its bare essentials, gives the shape of it without its substance in depth. The picture of an essay one gets from an outline is like a picture which emerges when a group of numbered dots are joined in sequence. When you make an outline, then, keep in mind that if you leave out just one dot in the sequence, the whole picture is not quite going to make sense; but on the other hand, don't try to get into the outline all the complexities which belong to the finished essay.

You are probably familiar enough with methods of outlining not to need a complete review here. Your teacher will supply you with any information on which you feel that you need review. How would you outline the material given above for the proposed "ice cream" essay? If you were actually writing such an essay you would, no doubt, have additional material; here, however, outline what is given, without necessarily considering it complete.

An outline is not an end in itself. It is, however, one of the useful tools for organizing the substance of our thoughts. One way an outline can be useful is in helping us to see the relative importance of different facts, ideas, or opinions. A conventional outline is organized as follows:

I.
    A.
        1.
        2.
            a.
            b.

B.
1.
2.

II.
A.
B.
1.
etc.

It may be helpful to think of the outline in terms of weight, or value, or size. That is, all items listed in the Roman numeral column would have approximately the same weight, value, or scope. Similarly, all items headed by capital letters would be approximately equal in some way, and in addition would have about the same relationship to the main heading under which they fall. For example, suppose we say that our topic is "Color." The outline for the topic might look something like this.

I. Primary colors.
A. Red.
1. Apples.
2. Valentines.
3. Blood.
B. Blue
1. Sky.
2. Birds.
a. Bluejay.
b. Kingfisher.
3. Forget-me-nots.
C. Yellow.
1. Bananas
2. Lemons

II. Secondary colors.
A. Green
1. Leaves
a. Laurel
b.
2.
B. Orange.
1.
2.
C. Violet.
etc.

You will notice, too, that each descending heading becomes more specific, narrower in a sense. In the conventional outline, which heading could be changed with least effect on the total outline, I or 1? Why? Why would you usually not find your examples listed as I, II, III?

A formal outline may be written out in complete sentences or in phrases. Can you think of any advantage in doing it one way or the other? Why is it a

good idea to be consistent, within a single outline, in using all complete statements, or all phrases, or simply all single words?

Discuss, in class, the function of the outline in the writing process. Suggest any other systematic way of accomplishing the same thing. Have you discovered any useful devices for organizing your ideas when you begin to write? For example, you may prefer to write out your rough ideas in paragraph form, and then number what seem to be your main points in the margin, underlining important ideas twice, secondary ideas once, and putting examples in brackets, simply crossing out material you decide not to include. What advantages or disadvantages do you see in such a method?

How might the outline be used as a test of relevance? For instance, in the "ice cream" essay, would an outline have been useful to the writer in deciding which of his notes to leave out, and which to give less emphasis than others?

Useful as an outline might be, however, it does not necessarily lead to an effective, finished piece of writing. It helps to bring order to existing material, but not necessarily purpose. It doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing interesting, informative, or effective. The outline headed "Color" brought order, but held little promise for development into anything but an outline. To further illustrate the nature of an outline, we might say that the numerals and letters themselves might stand alone, as a kind of unified order. Or we might make an outline of "Numbers," with the two major headings, "Even numbers" and "Odd numbers." You can probably imagine all sorts of outlines you could make, which would never be anything but outlines.

We can picture a kind of person who, wanting to write a speech, an essay, a short story, would make innumerable outlines of what he considered his material, but who would never get beyond this. In the same way, some people make lists of "things to do", but never get the things done, while for other people the making of the list becomes a useful start toward accomplishing something.

How else can we bring a fruitful order to our thoughts? What is present in the "Ice cream" outline, and missing in the "Color" outline?

You may offer more than one answer to that question, but chances are all your answers will be somehow related. The one hints at some purpose in writing, whether it be to amuse, to inform, or to explain. The other simply says, this <u>is</u>.

Your purpose in making a speech or writing out a description of the main street of your home town has a great deal to do with <u>how</u> you order that speech or description. Use your imagination and think of as many reasons as you can for writing a description of the main street, or one main street, of your hometown. You might, for example, be trying to persuade citizens that the downtown is a commercial eyesore. On the other hand, you might be writing a descriptive paragraph for a Chamber of Commerce brochure. Make a list of ideas, material available to you in describing your main street. Then decide on two different reasons for writing a description of it. How would the

purpose for which you are writing influence your choice and ordering of the available material?

Read the following essay by Robert Benchley, paying particular attention to the way in which you discover what he is writing about. What seems to be the purpose of this essay?

(For text, see "The Children's Hour," in Modern Essays, ed. Russell Nye. Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957.)

Writing Exercises

1. Make up hypothetical topics which you might order accordingly: chronologically; logically; spatially.

2. We tend to think of certain arrangements as more "natural" than others. That is, you tell a story "from beginning to end", or look something over "from top to bottom." If you begin at number one, you proceed to two, three, and four in that order. If you begin with the most general, you work gradually toward the more specific, or vice-versa. Make up a hypothetical subject for each of these methods of ordering material. For instance, you might tell about "The time I saw the President," from beginning to end.

   In addition, think of any other "natural" ways of ordering ideas, events, or opinions. When you have several examples, think of some contrary reason for disrupting the "natural" order. In other words, why is it sometimes desirable to go from four to one to two to three? Why is it sometimes a good thing to begin at the end? When might it be a good idea to keep things from being completely clear until the conclusion?

3. Write a straightforward, informative essay on some subject with which you are familiar. Try to choose a subject for which you have a wide variety of material to choose from, fact, anecdote, observations, etc.

4. Rewrite the same essay, rearranging the order of the material for some definite purpose. Include a statement of that purpose with your essay.

5. Write a third essay on the same subject, but this time use information which you purposely omitted from your first essay. Again, make a statement of purpose.

6. Rewrite the first essay, using no more than one fourth of the original ideas, but elaborate, for a definite purpose, on those ideas, so that this essay is the same length as the first.

LESSONS IV: Joining Purpose To Style

You write your aunt Elizabeth, thanking her for the driving gloves she sent you at Christmas, because it is the proper thing to do. You write your aunt Elizabeth, thanking her for the driving gloves she sent you at Christmas, because you like them very much and wish to make her feel happy at having chosen them as a gift. You write your aunt Elizabeth, thanking her for the driving gloves she sent you at Christmas, because your birthday is in two weeks and you hope she will send you a car.

The idea that writing or speechmaking is shaped by purpose is familiar to you. In previous years' work you have talked about writing for a reason, such as to explain, persuade, or amuse, and many of the considerations

that depend on that reason, such as logical argument, opinion and fact, generalizations and the specific, concreteness, abstraction, illustration, anecdote, and so on. But the term purpose, itself, is so general and widely inclusive that it might be well to review its meaning. What constitutes purpose in writing?

Clearly there is a difference between the two statements, "Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate," and "Give me liberty or give me death." But there are also similarities between the two. Both give directions. Both are brief. Both contain parallel structure. Both instruct an implied "you" how to treat, or not treat, some person or thing. How is the purpose of each statement different? In which one does there seem to be a more individual speaker? In which is there more feeling? How would you describe the intended audience for each?

The first, of course, is the standard direction we find on IBM cards. Can you see how a modern day Patrick Henry might use it for a purpose other than that for which it was intended?

"To open pull tab." "Cool at least one hour before serving." "This side up." "Print name in full." "Exit." These directions use language for a purpose. They aim at moving someone to perform in a desired manner, and seem devoid of personal feeling or implication.

How is language used in the following? "Two thousand three hundred and twenty-four people in 1966." "Four feet by eight feet." "Six out of a hundred."

What might be the purpose of the following? "Every decent man who calls himself a man." "The hearts of the people." "Somewhere, out in the dark, a child needs you." "Blood, sweat and tears."

What is asked of you in the following? "Sky like a canvas tent." "Glittered, green and gold." "The painful smell of onions, tang of chili peppers, dry old smell of boiling beans." "Warm and dry." "Like tambourines."

What is implied by the following? "John was the only person in the room at the time we heard the window glass shatter." "He had no choice but to fight or run, and he didn't run." "She never paid anyone a compliment unless she wanted something and so I looked up when she said 'That's a lovely dress you're wearing.'" "I had three apples and I gave one apple to John."

Of course a simple awareness of some of the purposes for which we use language does not necessarily mean that you will be able to write effectively. You may know that one can write to explain, describe, direct, arouse, argue, recreate, and so on. But how do you put such knowledge to use? What else must you consider?

Directions such as "Right turn permitted without stopping" pose little difficulty. The writer must simply make sure that they are worded so as to be easily understood by anyone who reads the language. As soon as we go beyond the statistic or the objective fact, we find ourselves involved in

matters of human feeling, choice, opinion, and judgment. Even at its most objective, writing is apt to reflect subjective considerations.

News reporting, for example, is supposed to be objective writing, anonymous, factual, written for an anonymous public. The reporter does not say "I". He does not say how he feels, or offer approval or disapproval. And yet even news reporting often reveals a personal bias. Two stories in two different newspapers with different editorial policies may reflect that difference while maintaining the appearance of "objective news coverage." What are some ways in which this may be done?

How is writing shaped by purpose? You have already dealt with some of the ways of shaping a finished piece of writing out of raw material in this unit. You began with yourself and your own storehouse of experience. You investigated not only what you are, but what you know, and how you come to know things which you don't know.

You may have answered the question, "Who am I?" in a number of concrete ways. You are the person who occupies a certain position in time and space. You have a personal history. You are a physical reality with memory for looking backward and imagination for looking forward and all your senses for perceiving now.

You are also an abstraction. You are public opinion, the individual, mankind, human nature. You feel, care, want, expect, hope for, demand, believe, disbelieve, like, dislike, and object to. And so does aunt Elizabeth.

It is in this extension beyond oneself and beyond the simple expression of facts or directions that we find the problem of puppose, and effectiveness, most pressing.

Your material is shaped by you, what you know, what interests you. It is also shaped by the time you have to write it, the length allotted to it, the time you can expect a reader to be willing to give to it.

What other considerations do you think shaped the following passage?

> We developed in our laboratories the color phosphor screen that produces the television picture. It contains the rare earth Europium. It's much brighter and more faithful to the original color.

1. Is the passage intended to
   a) explain
   b) arouse emotions
   c) describe
   d) persuade
   e) move to action?

2. Do you think the writer of the passage was,
   a) a scientist
   b) a poet
   c) a teacher
   d) an ad man?

3. Do you think the intended audience is supposed to be
   a) technical
   b) popular
   c) uneducated?
4. Which do you think would be a more suitable title for this passage?
   a) The development of color television.
   b) Buy our set.
5. Is it necessary for the reader to know what "color phosphor screen" and "rare earth Europium" mean for the passage to have the effect the writer desires? Do you think "much brighter and more faithful to the original color" sounds very scientific? Have you learned anything by reading the passage? Were you impressed?

Think of something about which you have strong feelings or a definite opinion, as well as a store of information and observation. For example, you may have had a car accident while your father was teaching you to drive. You then went on to take driving instructions from a professional instructor. You feel that people should learn to drive from professional instructors rather than from parents, friends, or other casual instructors.

Go through the steps for finding your subject and your material as covered in the preceding lessons, being particularly conscious of the question of purpose. Whom do you intend to be your audience? What is your relation to your subject? In short, as you consciously shape your essay, keep in mind subject, speaker, audience, and purpose.

This final paper should demonstrate what you have reviewed throughout this unit. It need not be a long paper but it should probably be approximately one thousand words long, so you should remember this in finding your subject and material. Include, also, a complete statement in which you set forth your purpose in terms of subject, speaker, and audience.

CONCLUSION

1. New York is big. It is a city. New York is a big, big city.

2. Approximately eight million people inhabit the city of New York.

3. A thousand hands reaching toward subway doors; ten thousand feet wearing away the sidewalks; a million faces and not one I knew: this was my first impression of New York City.

There are so many ways of saying any one thing, no wonder the beginning writer so often grasps at the first, most obvious choice, without looking further. Of course there are differences in what one person and another would consider obvious. A six-year-old might say, "New York is big," and feel that he had covered the subject adequately. There are cases where "New York is big" might be the best thing to say in mature writing. Someone

who wanted to convey exactly how big might express himself in figures. Another person, who felt that figures alone were not apt to move anyone to feel the physical sense of vastness which New York meant to him, might express himself as in the third example above.

Whatever you write, you can probably make it better. The problem is, what is better, and what is worse? What is good writing? If something gets the job done adequately, is it good enough? What foundations do we have for the fairly vague terms, "good writing" and "bad writing"?

Honestly, we must answer, none. None, that is, unless we can equate "good" and "bad" with something more concrete, something which we can actually determine.

Throughout this curriculum you have been asked to think of the effectiveness of expression as a measure of whether or not it is "good." This is not a new idea. The harmonious relation of form to function as a key to beauty is a familiar aesthetic concept. That is, the house, car, tool, garment, furniture, what have you, which is shaped so as to perform its function most effectively may be more beautiful than the object whose shape bears little relation to its use.

But we can express this in a way which may seem more practically applicable to you. There is little point in writing something which just doesn't work. Why write a letter which brings with it an impression of you that is nondescript, dull, or simply more or less nonexistent? Why write an account of a trip you found exciting if none of your excitement comes through in the essay? Why write a "persuasive" sppech which doesn't persuade anyone?

If there is any purpose in your writing anything at all, or in giving a speech or simply putting forth your ideas in a discussion, then it is important that you do so as well and effectively as possible. And to be effective you need to know why you are writing or speaking. You can hardly be expected to hit the target if you have no idea where it is.

We hoppethis unit will have reminded you of some ways to find that out, so that when you are later faced with new problems in expressing yourself you will feel not like a rat guessing which way to turn around blind corners, but an individual with a storehouse of information which may not always include what you need, in the shape you need, but should include some ideas on how to go about finding and shaping it.

Student Version

UNIT II

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

Lesson I: Your Style Is Your Character

One of the three main parts of our study of rhetoric has been style. Although the term style is a difficult one to define precisely, most people think of a person's style as his way of making himself an individual, of separating himself from the rest of the mass of men. A person's style is his characteristic way of expressing himself, whether it is in the clothes he wears, the friends he chooses, or the way he writes orspeaks. You yourself have a style in the way you live and in the way you write. Since the rhetoric curriculum is concerned with sharpening your awareness of your "written self" as it comes through on paper to your reader, you will probably find it helpful to look more closely at your own style. It is the purpose of this unit to help you with this kind of self-examination.

Now style in writing can be looked at not only as "the man himself," but as what it finally comes down to: the very smallest parts of a writer's sentences, his individual words and arrangements of words. If you have felt that "style" has been a pretty nebulous term so far, you may find that looking hard at the smaller elements of writing, especially the sentence, the clause or phrase, the word, the punctuation mark--offers some surprisingly concrete evidence of style.

To start with, imagine that you are writing an autobiography of your own life. The first pages of many autobiographies could be paraphrased this way: "I was born in _____, on (month) _____, (day) ___, ___ (year) _____, and had a {happy / unhappy / indifferent} childhood." But repeatedly, what such a paraphrase leaves out offers more insight about the writer than the facts. This might be, and more than likely is, already true of your writing. To test this statement, write down a few sentences about your birth and early life. Then, further test the validity of the comment that style reveals more than does the factual substance of most writing by reading the following accounts of birth and early life--some actual, some fictional.

#1 (For text, see My Early Life by Winston Churchill; Thomas Butterworth, Ltd., London, 1937; p. 15)

#2 Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously.

In consideration of the day and hour of my birth, it was declared by the nurse and by some sage women in the neighborhood who had taken a lively interest in me several months before there was any possibility of our becoming personally acquainted, first that I was destined to be unlucky in life; and secondly, that I was privileged to see ghosts and spirits: both these gifts inevitably attaching, as they believed, to all unlucky infants of either gender born towards the small hours on a Friday night.

#3

(For text, see The Catcher in the Rye by J.. D. Salinger; Little, Brown Co., New York, 1951; New American Library Signet Books, 1962; p. 5)

#4

(For text, see The Adventures of Augie March by Saul Bellow; Viking Press, New York, 1953; Compass Books Edition, 1960; p. 3)

Questions for Discussion:

1. List the facts presented in each selection, and then decide what if any personality traits emerge from these facts.

2. A list of personality traits, though potentially endless, could include adjectives like nervous, reflective, satiric, clear-headed, shy, unassuming, pessimistic, aggressive, diffident, reflective, quizzical. Add any others that quickly come to mind. Which of these traits would you assign to the "I" of the selections you read? Why?

   a. Are the factual items sufficient justification for your choice?

   b. If not, can you point specifically to any unusual words or phrases, any sentences (or sentence length or structure), any figures of speech, any habits of paragraphing or organization, or any unusual uses of punctuation that support one or another personality trait?

3. Now re-examine your sentences concerning your birth and early life. Do any stylistic features stand out? Beneath your own autobiographical piece, indicate which two features most clearly express you--diction, sentence arrangement, paragraph organization, punctuation, or any others that seem noticeable to you.

Writing Assignments:

1. Using the substance of your own autobiographical material, rewrite it in several different ways, trying each time to imitate the style of one of the above professional examples. Decide, when you have finished, if a "new you" emerges. Which stylistic features forced the greatest personality change?

2. Are you satisfied that your original autobiographical statement is as honest and interesting an expression of your individuality as you would like it to be? Rewrite it in the light of what you have learned about style--and yourself--from this lesson.

Lesson II--Words

If we are going to learn something important about style, we are going to have to learn how to analyze it, that is to discover its component parts and to find how they work together to produce meaning and effect. In order to analyze a style of writing we will need to look at it carefully and in detail, as we would look at a slow-motion film of a pole-vaulter, in order to discover his style and to learn something from it. Suppose we begin with the building blocks of prose, the words themselves. What qualities do good writers seek in their words? How can we identify these qualities and apply them to the improvement of our own writing?

A. Abstract Words or Concrete Words:

Suppose you were judging a one-sentence contest about "My favorite teacher." Which one of the following would you judge to be most meaningful and convincing?

1. Mr. Jamieson, my favorite teacher, is really a good instructor.

2. My favorite teacher, Mr. Jamieson, who teaches history, has a sense of humor, a broad knowledge of his subject matter, and an ability to make history exciting for his students.

Here are more pairs of sentences, both sentences in each pair attempting to say about the same thing. Which one does the job better in each case?

1. The king had a large force.

2. The king had five million men with guns and bayonets.

* * *

1. Captain Bloor was a cruel man.

2. Captain Bloor regularly flogged men unconscious.

* * *

1. Hemingway's short stories are very interesting.

2. Hemingway's short stories are full of the action of bullfights, war, big-game hunting, and fishing.

* * *

1. That country persecutes its intellectuals.

2. That country persecutes its composers, sculptors, writers, scientists, and critics.

* * *

1. He was driving a flashy automobile.

2. He was driving a metallic bronze '66 Barracuda with wire wheels, whitewall tires, and racing stripes.

* * *

1. John possesses aggressive tendencies which are often manifested upon those within his geographic environment who may be of lesser physical stature.

2. John often bullies the smaller children in his neighborhood.

* * *

Chances are you picked the second sentence in each pair as the most effective one. Why? Is it because the second sentences are longer than the first? What about the last example? There must be a reason that goes beyond length. What is better about the words in the second sentences? Out of an explanation of why the second sentences are better can you draw some principle about the abstractness or concreteness of the words in good writing?

Your principle will probably be something like this: "Good writing has a high percentage of concrete words." By concrete words we mean the sorts of words which are specific and definite, which name actual people, actual places, real things. They are the kinds of words that are full of juice, and that give life to writing. Without them, one's prose is dead.

Ernest Hemingway commented on the two sorts of words in his book A Farewell to Arms, when he has his young, war-weary hero, Frederic Henry, say

> I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. . . . There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

We may not feel as strongly as Frederic Henry did about those abstract words of war, but modern readers do demand a high degree of concreteness in what they read. Of course, abstract words are often necessary, but we should always try to fasten them down to something concrete.

Exercises:

1. Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts, makes the abstract concrete in his Happiness Is. . . books--"happiness," the abstract term, becomes "a warm puppy." And then the punsters turned it around--"misery is a cold hot-dog." Now it's your turn: give concreteness to the following abstract nouns by linking them to a tangible object:

friendship, success, faith, beauty, freedom, terror, sadness, fun

2. One feature of highly generalized, abstract writing is the overuse of nouns and noun modifiers to take the place of verbs. In the following examples, change the generalized phrases into concrete verbs.

Example: He came to a realization of the fact that he was lost

He realized that he was lost.

a. The suggestion was made by him that she could take over the presidency.

b. Her behavior was evidence of the emotion of anger.

c. The enjoyment of sports is a noticeable trait among those boys.

B. Show, Don't Tell:

How can a writer remember to choose words which make his prose concrete and real? One method is to show, not tell.

Picture a scrubbed, sunned first-grade class. It is Monday morning. One by one, the youngsters get up to recount and share their weekend adventures. "We drove to the coast and walked along the beach and got our feet wet in the ocean," says one. His audience is polite, but unmoved. Another rises, reaches into a grease-stained paper sack, flips his elbow down, his wrist up, and reveals a dead fish. The brown body, stiff now and curled a little from the sack, holds the gaze of the youngsters. They see the fish's white underbelly, the faint iridescent shine of dried scales along the sides, the delicate fins, the bulging and yet somehow mild blue eyes. The smell invades the room, sand dribbles on the floor, and for an hour afterward, each time someone sniffs the air or scratches his soles on the now gritty floor, he knows that Johnny has been to the sea-shore.

The writer's job is to get as close to the experience as the child who shows, not tells.

* * * *

Examine how, in the following sentences taken from both fiction and non-fiction, professional writers have shown, not told.

> Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep--with shingle-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee"; a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the dense forest away on the other side; the "point" above the town, and the "point" below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one.
>
> --Mark Twain, <u>Life on the Mississippi</u>

What are some of the best examples of Mark Twain's concrete images here? Rewrite some of the Twain sentences in general or abstract words. What happens to their effectiveness?

Twain's words are designed to make you <u>see</u> clearly. Obviously, there are other ways of making language concrete.

> And to all these familiar sounds, filled with their exultant prophecies of flight, the voyage, morning, and the shining cities--to all the sharp and thrilling odors of the trains--the smell of cinders, acrid smoke of musty, rusty freight cars, the clean pineboard of crated produce, and the smells of fresh stored food--oranges, coffee, tangerines, and bacon, ham, and flour and beef--there would be added now, with an unforgettable magic and familiarity, all the strange sounds and smells of the coming circus.
>
> --Thomas Wolfe, "Circus at Dawn"

For Discussion:

1. How is Thomas Wolfe trying to make this description concrete?

2. How does Wolfe's method differ from Twain's? With no attempt to find the myriad kernels in Wolfe's long sentence, we could, nevertheless,

strip and reverse the sentence to "All the strange sounds and smells of the coming circus would now be added to the familiar sounds and thrilling odors of the trains." What do Wolfe's additions describe? Can you remember from your study of poetry what such language is called? Why is it apt here?

3. What does the sentence tell you about the speaker or voice behind it? What relation does this voice have to the subject? to heightening the reader's anticipation of the circus?

4. The injunction "show, don't tell," then could just as well be "smell, don't tell." The point is that by bringing in images which appeal to any of the senses you are likely to make your writing clearer and more effective.

Writing Assignment:

Describe any three of the following, using one sentence for each.

1. Your first hour class this morning
2. The halls during class change
3. The school parking lot on a Sunday morning
4. A theater five minutes before the show is to begin
5. 30 seconds of a dog fight
6. Anything else

Use as much detail as you can to evoke the experience or picture; use as much imagery as you can, and try to avoid too much visual imagery. Bring in images of smell, touch, taste, and sound, if you can.

Passage for Analysis:

The following passage is from Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, a 1905 novel exposing early conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry. To what senses does Sinclair refer, as his group of Lithuanian immigrants enter Chicago?

> A full hour before the party reached the city they had begun to note the perplexing changes in the atmosphere. It grew darker all the time, and upon the earth the grass seemed to grow less green. Every minute, as the train sped on, the colours of things became dingier; the fields were grown parched and yellow, the landscape hideous and bare. And along with the thickening smoke they began to notice another circumstance, a strange, pungent odour. They were not sure that it was unpleasant, this odour; some might have called it sickening, but their taste in odours was not developed, and they were only sure that it was curious. Now, sitting in the trolley-car, they realized that they were on their way to the home of it--that they had travelled all the way from Lithuania to it. It was now no longer something far off and faint, that you caught in

whiffs; you could literally taste it, as well as smell it--you could take hold of it, almost, and examine it at your leisure. They were divided in their opinions about it. It was an elemental odour, raw and crude; it was rich, almost rancid, sensual, and strong. There were some who drank it in as if it were an intoxicant; there were others who put their handkerchiefs to their faces. The new emigrants were still tasting it, lost in wonder, when suddenly the car came to a halt, and the door was flung open, and a voice shouted--"Stockyards!"

They were left standing upon the corner, staring; down a side street there were two rows of brick houses, and between them a vista: half a dozen chimneys, tall as the tallest of buildings, touching the very sky, and leaping from them half a dozen columns of smoke, thick, oily, and black as night. It might have come from the centre of the world, this smoke, where the fires of the ages still smoulder. It came as if self-imperilled, driving all before it, a perpetual explosion. It was inexhaustible; one stared, waiting to see it stop, but still the great streams rolled out. They spread in vast clouds overhead, writhing, curling; then, uniting in one giant river, they streamed away down the sky, stretching a black pall as far as the eye could reach.

Then the party became aware of another strange thing. This, too, like the odour, was a thing elemental; it was a sound--a sound made up of ten thousand little sounds. You scarcely noticed it at first--it sunk into your consciousness, a vague disturbance, a trouble. It was like the murmuring of the bees in the spring, the whisperings of the forest; it suggested endless activity, the rumblings of a world in motion. It was only by an effort that one could realize that it was made by animals, that it was the distant lowing of ten thousand cattle, the distant grunting of ten thousand swine.

Why do you suppose Sinclair refers to several senses, rather than just one? How does this make his description more effective? What particular words convey especially vivid sensory images?

C. Metaphorical Words:

Though descriptive writing calls more naturally for imagery than some expository writing, the problem in any composition is to get the reader close to what you want him to experience, whether that experience is sensory or intellectual. How does this next example do that?

She hurled herself against the obstinacy of her time in her desire to attach a little dignity to women.

--Thornton Wilder, The Bridge of San Luis Rey

For Discussion:

1. Thornton Wilder's sentence might be paraphrased, "She fought for women's rights." Underline the one word in Wilder's sentence that is most important, and that the paraphrase leaves out.

2. Examine how this underlined word works to realize Wilder's meaning. (Why is "hurled" a better verb to use than "fought" or than "worked for"?)

3. The sentence is not perfect as it stands. What is wrong with the choice of the word "attach," especially after such a word as "hurled"? Supply a better word in place of "attach."

Wilder has used a metaphor, "hurled," to make concrete the idea of a lone woman combating stubbornness and indifference. She is pictured as literally throwing herself against some immovable object. This metaphor sharpens our impression as no abstract phrase could. Here are some other examples of metaphors and similes used to clarify ideas.

1. (A description of the German Army's movement upon Dunkirk) "I have said this scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk."
   --Winston Churchill, "Dunkirk"

2. "She was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs."
   --Tennessee Ernie Ford

3. (Animal tracks in the snow) ". . .tracks of field mice were stitched across its surface in the morning."
   --Josephine Johnson, Winter Orchard

4. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string."
   --Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self Reliance

Sometimes the metaphor is carried out through several sentences.

5. (The need to respect individualism) "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."
   --Henry David Thoreau, Walden

For Discussion:

1. Substitute "neutral" or abstract words for the underlined words above. What denotations and connotations do the underlined metaphors have in each case which makes them more powerful conveyors of meaning and effect than the non-metaphorical substitutes?

2. Can you come up with <u>other</u> metaphors which might be used to express the same ideas in each of the examples above?

3. What is wrong with the metaphors used in these sentences:

   a. Before we can try this idea, we'll have to iron out the bugs.

   b. In bending over backward to conform to NCAA standards, the University is closing its doors on promising athletes.

4. Can you see why metaphors must be handled with care? Formulate a few principles for using metaphors to make language concrete.

D. Fresh Words and Tired Words:

1. Supply the missing words:

   dead as a _____.
   conspicuous by his _____.
   catching forty _____.
   life is no bed of _____.
   raining _____.
   smart as a _____.
   a chip off _____.
   a _____rise to stardom.
   gone but not _____.
   brown as a _____.
   last, but _____.

Why were you able to supply the words so easily? What does this show about these expressions? Do you know what such expressions are called? Can you supply a fresh word or words in place of the tired ones? (If you need to, you may alter the wording.)

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph in which you show

   a. Clichés of the sports writers
   b. Clichés of politics, or the fashion industry, or the teen-agers

2. Here are some tired words of a different sort.

   Commencing with my initial contact with the field of athletic endeavor, it has been my desire to enter the ranks of the coaching profession.

What the student meant who wrote this was simply that ever since he began playing sports he has wanted to become a coach. The sort of highfalutin language he used to say what could, and should, have been said simply, is called <u>jargon</u>. It is another kind of weary, weak language. It is an attempt to sound elegant, to take ten cents worth of idea and puff it

up with four-dollar words. Not that all language must be simple. Far from it. Complex ideas and difficult concepts often require a complex and difficult verbal expression. But jargon is bad because it complicates a simple idea. The sentence on page 5 about John, who "possesses aggressive tendencies. . ." was an example of jargon, and you saw then how simply and clearly the same idea could be expressed. The reason that this example was included on page 5 ought to suggest why jargon so often fails as meaningful communication: it is full of vague, fuzzy, abstract words, usually nouns, which simply get in the way of clear expression. Therefore, if you wish to say that the janitor's duty is to sweep the floors, don't confuse and annoy your reader by saying that "the function of maintaining optimal walking-surface cleanliness is entrusted to the appropriate custodial engineer."

Sometimes students are strongly attracted to using jargon in their writing because they do not wish to appear as "greenhorns" and so write the way they imagine that learned people write. They often adopt a false voice and attempt to sound mature and profound, but only make themselves look a little silly. Here is an example from a student paper:

> The scope of the present discussion shall be delimited to the idea of goals pertaining to the job endeavor as the present writer is convinced that not only does this act of our life performance consume the bulk of our waking hours, thereby deserving the primary focus of our attention, but the energy devoted to family and socialization activities requires another unit of discussion, not to be overlooked but to be considered at another point in time.

Can you tell what this student was trying to say?

Writing Assignments:

1. Rewrite the above sentences ("The scope of the present discussion," etc.), getting rid of jargon and clichés. Try to make the diction (words) as clear and fresh as you can. (Before you begin, you'll have to spend some time figuring out just what the student was talking about.)

2. Now try the reverse; that is, try to inflate the following sentences by adding jargon and clichés.

   A. Often, if the teacher and parent approach each other as friends, not enemies, the student's problem is easier to solve.

   B. Uncut lawns and unkempt buildings, peeling paint and cracked windows, bulging and deserted garbage cans--these are universal signs of the slums.

Can you see what happens to the simplicity and clarity of the original sentences when you puff them up in this way? No wonder that good writers are constantly on guard against this sort of "overweight" language. They

recognize that jargon reduces their effectiveness; it prevents them from doing what they want to do with their words and sentences.

Summary and Final Writing Assignment:

What generalizations have we drawn about diction in effective prose? Perhaps the most important principles we have learned are that in good writing, ideas and experiences are made vivid through the use of concrete words, through images, metaphors and similes that appeal to our senses, and through fresh expressions and the avoidance of cliches and jargon.

As a test of your ability to determine good diction from bad, write an essay in which you analyze the diction in the following two student essays. Compare and contrast the diction in them according to what you have learned in this lesson.

"Our Family Business"

In my old home town is a hardware store owned by the members of my family. It is a tried and true family business, and all of the members of my family manage to keep busy as bees working in the store.

Naturally, there are many jobs to perform in such a hardware store as this. A number of things have to be done, and done right, if the business is to stay on an even keel. Some things have to be done each day, and others only occasionally, but all of these things are necessary and important for the optimal functioning of this intra-familial enterprise. Whether hardware stores require more attention than other stores, I don't know, but what I do know is that the average person would be very surprised at the many, myriad tasks which surround the hardware business. If I tried to tell you all the things that need to be done, it would take a great deal of time. It would be a long list indeed, and I still wouldn't be able to think of everything. It takes plenty of savvy to run a hardware store.

My dad is the kingpin of our hardware business. He is the idea man, and also the brains behind the business. No matter how rough the going gets, in good times and bad, he is always calm, cool and collected. Sometimes, on days when the business is fast and furious, and people are hollering, and one thing and another, some of us get a bit rattled, but Dad always soothes ruffled feelings. It is well worth knowing that he is always there in a pinch.

Naturally, a store like this handles many items. It would be impossible to list all the different things we carry, but the numbers of them would surprise you. A store like this has to handle many things because you never can tell when you'll get a call for a thing, and so you had better have it on hand or else suffer the consequences. Some things

sell like hotcakes, naturally, while others nobody seems to buy. But you never can tell. Progressive management of the aforementioned enterprise suggests the wisdom of judicious pre-awareness of possible supply shortages and underscores the necessity of adequacy in the practice of acquiring an appropriate inventory.

In the summers and on vacations I sometimes work in the store. I want to know the business from the ground up, so that I can take over when Dad reaches the age of retirement. At times the store keeps me as busy as a beaver, but at other times the time hangs heavy on my hands. My Dad is a real go-getter, and never seems to be still for a minute, but I'm often tempted to take it easy and loaf when I should be in there pitching for the old business. I'm really trying now to follow in my father's footsteps and give it 100 per-cent all the time, just like he does.

Last, but not least, the hardware business is a very seasonal business, and so we find that we are selling different things at different parts of the year. In one season, you'll find yourself selling one thing and in another season something else, but that's the way it goes and you just go along with it and do the best you can. Things generally even out in the long run. If you don't keep up with the march of progress you'll find yourself caught in the undertow and left out on a limb.

Thus, you can see that the hardware business has its ups and downs, but that it offers many attractive emoluments and incentives to those who endeavor to ascertain and attain those qualities necessary to the achievement of success in this particular field of endeavor. At times it may be a rat-race but if you just put your shoulder to the wheel you can usually keep your head above the water and keep rolling smoothly down the highway of life. I wouldn't trade the hardware business for anything. It's just about the greatest business in the whole, wide world.

"Our Family Shade Business"

I have been raised in a family shade business. This fact may not cause the President to call on me for advice, but it does qualify me to say something about the surprisingly complex business of making and selling window shades.

The complexity of the business is the result of the many tasks required to produce a window shade. Shade-making involves skills in using cutting machines, stamping machines, an eyelet punch, and a sewing machine, plus the ability to cut accurately by hand, to calculate costs, and to sell the product to the customer before he has even seen it. In order to perform all these tasks window shade makers must add on to an already diverse background of skills. Tailoring and dressmaking are especially good apprenticeships. A seam must be sewn

along the bottom of the shade in order to insert the slat which keeps the material straight. Fancy scallops and fringes also require even seams. Another helpful skill is experience with accurate, high-speed machines. The most vital part of making a shade is a demanding exactness. An eighth of an inch "off" on a shade may bring a customer back to the shop angry and indignant because it doesn't fit. Similarly, customers often come in saying that their window is "just average size," whereupon it must be explained that there is no such thing. Many insist that if we simply make a shade they can tell if it's going to fit or not. This is a particularly difficult problem because one has the alternatives of telling the customer that he doesn't know what he is talking about, or making the shade only to have the material wasted when the now-enlightened customer, red-faced and apologetic, returns it.

Another good background for the business is super-salesmanship. My family's business, now in its thirty-first year, is helped somewhat by a long-established reputation which "sells itself." But salesmanship once the prospective buyer arrives in the store is another matter. No two shades are the same price unless they are absolutely identical in every aspect of material, roller, size, design, pull, and decorations. Each is made to order for the buyer when (hopefully) he brings with him the correct measurements of his windows. The costs begin small and mushroom out as the shades get bigger and the quality of the cloth increases. Two dollars and fifty cents for a kitchen shade becomes thirty-five dollars for a grandiose creation of the finest material with fringe, a tassel, and a brass rod along the bottom.

"Big Business" with its voracious appetite for profits, has been attempting for years to gobble up the shade market and the little window shade shops. Its attempt to undercut the small business by the introduction of the plastic shade has failed. Plastic shades are sold in dime stores, department stores, and even small businesses which have had to stock them for a limited customer demand. But after the first flash of interest buyers became aware that plastic, when subjected to heat and sunlight, curls, fades, and tears. It soon looks like a disintegrating copy of one of Shakespeare's original folios.

And so the public returns to the muslin shade. But changes have been occurring and the cloth shade is found much improved. Scientific experimentation has produced a vinyl covering which makes the cloth waterproof and wear-resistant. Many new colors have appeared: tangerine, geranium pink, magenta, and all shades of ordinary colors. There are new patterns such as polka dots, candy stripes, animal prints, and mural scenics. New designs have come, with the use of lace, braid, fringes, tassels, and pulls in the form of gold lion's heads, fleurs-de-lis, and an endless variety of circles, rectangles, and teardrop shapes in metal and plastic.

So the small business adapts itself and makes its living, still from the plain standard shade, but increasingly from what the trade calls the "fancy shade." And the magnates of business find an awesome obstacle in this because the small business is now capitalizing on those things which it is best equipped to provide: diversity in products and individual service.

Lesson III: Sentences

In the preceding lesson, we looked closely at some of the qualities of words which made for effective--and ineffective--writing. Now we are ready to move on to some of the important stylistic features of the sentence. Although sentences, like words, are small enough to hold under the analytical glass, they also, like words, tend to merge into the larger context of which they are a part. But we can still focus our attention upon them, even if they do slip out of place at times and seem to be leading us back down to a discussion of words, or beyond, to a discussion of the paragraph or the whole work.

A. Sentence Length

Let's begin with the sentences in the following excerpt from Fact and Fancy by Isaac Asimov. Mr. Asimov, a well known writer of scientific prose and science-fiction, is an Associate Professor of Biochemistry at Boston University who now devotes all his time to writing. Among his books are The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science, Life and Energy, and I, Robot.

Scan the excerpt once. Then do a second, close reading in which you jot down your observations about Asimov's sentences: their length, ease or difficulty of reading, unusual features, or anything else which you can find. (Do not include Asimov's footnote in your observations.)

(For text, see "My Built-In Doubter" in Fact and Fancy by Isaac Asimov, Pyramid Publishers, New York, 1963; pp. 184-185.)

Questions and Discussion:

1. Do you think that Asimov is writing this selection for a scientific audience or an audience of laymen?

2. Is there anything about his sentences or words that led you to choose one or the other kinds of audience in question?

3. In a third look at Asimov's selection--this time limiting yourself to a timed one-minute glance--does the length of any sentence (or sentences) strike you as exceptional? Note which ones.

4. Find the longest sentence and the shortest sentence in this selection. Record the number of words in each. (Ignore the footnote.)

5. Find the average length in number of words of Asimov's sentences.

6. Does the average sentence length tell you anything about Asimov as a writer, for example, about his purpose or audience? Which gives you more clues with which to analyze the passage, the average length or your answers to question No. 3? (You may find it helpful to know that most modern professional writers average about 21 words to the sentence.)

7. Sentences No. 6 and No. 9 stand out because of their brevity. (If Asimov's average sentence length were 12 words, would this still be true?) Sometimes, to understand why a writer chooses one thing over another--a situation, character, rhyme scheme; a word, sentence placement, paragraph break--it helps if we try to imagine his original choices. What if, for example, Asimov had said instead of No. 6, "And at my response, a great deal of surprise came over her face," or, "She showed a great deal of surprise at my response"? What might the differences be?

8. What if No. 9 were changed? Try to change it these ways:

   a. by making a 15-word or longer sentence of it.

   b. by adding it to either the preceding or succeeding paragraph.

   What effect have your changes made?

9. Placed between these two short one-line paragraphs (6 and 9), are two other one-sentence paragraphs (7 and 8), but these sentences are exceedingly long. Rewrite each of them, making two to four sentences out of the originals. In this process, what do you lose by way of meaning? Or, what is it about the subject of these paragraphs that fits their length?

   (If you haven't already considered something like this as a tail-end clause for No. 8, try, "but a science fiction writer apparently must believe in the things he writes about." What is the rhetorical effect of this clause contrasted to the original?)

10. Re-examine two consecutive paragraphs in any previously written paper of yours. Is the average length significant? (Too short to hold and fully express meaning? Too long for sustained interest?) Is there any variety in length? Does the variety serve a purpose in relation to your subject?--in relation to your audience?)

Writing Assignment

Write a description of this lesson to a student who has missed it. Let your description stand as a model of how and when to use long or short sentences.

Summary:

Can you devise a universal "rule" about sentence length which you could use yourself or pass along to another writer, which would sum up what you have learned from looking at Asimov's sentences?

B. Parallelism

Look back at Asimov's sentence No. 7. Do you see how the prepositional phrases beginning with "in" are stacked up at the end of the sentence?

". . . because I sometimes write science fiction,

I believe	in flying saucers, in Atlantis, in clairvoyance and levitation, in the prophecies of the Great Pyramid, in astrology, in Fort's theories, and in the suggestion that Bacon wrote Shakespeare."

This repetition of similar forms is called parallelism. It can exist, in the smallest form, in the mere repetition of words of the same class.

For breakfast, I had	hotcakes, bacon, eggs, toast, and coffee.

Or, it can be a series of phrases, like Asimov's sentence No. 7, or a series of clauses, like his 8th sentence.

"No one would ever think	that someone who writes fantasies for pre-school children really thinks that rabbits can talk, or that a writer of hard-boiled detective stories.. or that a writer for the ladies magazines...
but	
a science-fiction writer apparently must believe in flying saucers."	

Or, sentences themselves can be parallel, as in the following examples:

It was there that we met.
It was there that we fell in love.
It was there that we had our first quarrel.

(Even paragraphs can be parallel, although we need not be concerned with that at this time.)

Parallelism is pleasing to the reader because it suggests an underlying order and structure to the prose, and it makes this order easy to follow. The skillful writer will use it, then, as a means for making his ideas coherent. In fact, professional writers do make much wider use of parallelism than most students. Looking hard at the parallelism of good writers and forcing yourself to use more parallel structures in your own writing will probably help you to write more sophisticated prose.

Study the parallelism in the following sentences:

1. The sun lay on the grass and warmed it, and in the shade under the grass the insects moved, ants and ant-lions to set traps for them, grasshoppers to jump into the air and flick their yellow wings for a second, sow bugs like little armadillos, plodding restlessly on many tender feet.--John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath.

2. An old-timer walking up Sixth past the Jefferson Market jail misses the elevated railroad, misses its sound, its spotted shade, its little aerial stations, and the tremor of the thing.--E. B. White, Here Is New York.

3. . . . no literary tourist, however waspish he may have been about Washington, Niagara Falls, the prairies of the West, or even Boston and New York, ever gave Baltimore a bad notice.--H. L. Mencken, Happy Days.

4. The story is founded on the testimony of the earth's most ancient rocks, which were young when the earth was young; on other evidence written on the face of the earth's satellite, the moon; and on hints contained in the history of the sun and the whole universe of star-filled space.--Rachel Carson, The Sea Around Us.

5. Russia is symbolized by the peasant or by the factory worker; Japan by the Samurai; the national figure of England is Mr. Bull with his top hat, his comfortable clothes, his substantial stomach, and his substantial balance at the bank.--E. M. Forster, "Notes on the English Character".

After you have studied the sorts of parallelism in these sentences (you may wish to discuss them in class), chart out the parallel structure as was done at the beginning of this section with Asimov's seventh sentence. Then substitute a new idea for the original idea and rewrite the sentence retaining the original structure. For example, suppose you were asked to rewrite

Asimov's seventh sentence, keeping the same structure, but turning to the subject of teenagers. You might write,

> It is assumed by the world, it seems clear, that because I am a teenager, I am wild about rock'n roll music, about indigestible foods, about Ann Margret and Elvis Presley, about the activities of the Beatles, about convertibles, about cokes, and about the zombies who do the latest dances on afternoon television.

(Notice how the voice behind this sentence has the same attitude toward "the world" that Asimov has.) Now, try your hand at this kind of rewriting, using the following for your subjects, and keeping the same structure as the previous five examples. That is, make sentence one, below, correspond in structure to sentence one, above.

1. people in a park ("The sun shone on the park and warmed it and in the shade under the trees the people moved, . . .)
2. walking tnrough a changed section of your neighborhood or city.
3. your favorite literary character.
4. } You're on your own here. Choose your own subject.
5. }

Correct the errors in parallelism in the following sentences written by students.

1. The main difference, I feel, between these two concepts is that the manufacturer's is mostly external, or how someone appears and Newman's is internal, or in the mind.
2. In conclusion, the state of the theater in the time of Johnson's London reflects what the people and the times were like. Some of the customs however are similar today, such as the price of refreshments inside the theater being double in price, having to wait outside because of a full house, and, depending upon the incident, there are still boos and yelling.
3. The things I remember most about my early childhood are, first of all, that I was constantly in trouble, and, secondly, the specific little games the neighborhood kids played.
4. In Irving's work, you get the feeling that someone is tel g you the story rather than being read.
5. I found him to be both intelligent and an athlete.
6. The first duty of a high school is that of educating its students, and secondly activities.

C. Some Effective Sentence Structures

You probably discovered, in the exercise at the end of section B, that the sentences were a good deal harder to write than the kind you write yourself. Why is this? What made those five sentences so hard to duplicate? Was it the parallel form, or was it the difficulty of finding enough things to say to fill all the slots that you had to fill? Chances are that you had trouble filling all those parallel structures because you are not in the habit of forcing yourself to come up with several examples or illustrations to make your point, but are satisfied with one or two. Professional writers, however, like those whose style you were trying to match, are likely to bowl their reader over with many examples for the point they are making. Does this suggest one reason why they are successful professional writers?

Take another look at their sentences. Look at sentence No. 1, by Steinbeck. As Professor Francis Christensen has pointed out, anybody could write the main clause of a sentence like that, "The sun lay on the grass and warmed it." Or even the next clause, since it is equal in value to the first, . . . "and in the shade under the grass the insects moved." The talent of Steinbeck, however, comes out in what is added to this rather simple opening, that is, in the parallel phrases naming the different insects and their actions. One mark of the real professional, then, is found not in the main clauses of his sentences, but in what he adds to them that clarifies, explains, illustrates their main clauses. Going back to what we said about diction, it is what a writer does to make his ideas concrete, real, visible, that determines whether he is likely to be an effective writer or not.

"Left-branching" Sentences

Now there are several ways in which material can be added to a sentence. You can find how a sentence has been built up, or added to, if you see where the parallelism is. Look at this example from the Bible:

> And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing.

Here, the additions all come, in parallel form, at the beginning of the sentence. The sentence is called "left-branching" because, if charted, the branches or additions are at the left, coming before the main clause, "I am nothing."

And though I	have the gift of prophecy,	
	and	
	understand	all mysteries
		and
		all knowledge;
and though I	have all faith so that I could remove mountains	
	and	
	have not charity,	

I am nothing.

"Left-branching" sentences, then, look something like this: _____,
_____,
_____,
main clause.

Exercises:

1. Here is a left-branching sentence by Samuel Johnson, the first sentence of his 18th century novel, Rasselas:

> Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

Chart this sentence as has been done with the sentence from the Bible.

2. Rewrite this sentence as a left-branching sentence:

> They marched raggedly into the village square, some carrying ancient rifles and shotguns, others with only a stick or a machete.

3. Use the following statements as main clauses and make left-branching additions to them:

a. ...he delivered a first-rate speech.
b. ...the plan will fail.
c. ...the storm did incalculable damage.

4. We may find that sometimes our idea is best expressed with only one left-branch rather than several parallel ones. In the following statements, add a main clause to the opening left-branching clause, thus making an effective sentence:

a. When the train leaves, ...
b. Although he has the qualifications for the job, ...
c. Either you give up your wild schemes to get rich quick, ...
d. If he tries hard enough, ...
e. Since the causes of the American Revolution are many and varied,...
f. Finally reaching home, ...

These left-branching sentences must be read to the very end before they can be understood. Those having a number of left branches, like the sentences from the Bible and from Johnson, are not common writing and should be saved for special effect, as in a concluding or opening sentence. They are, by their nature, suspenseful and somewhat artificial, but they can be very effective. Let us see why. Look at the two sentences below. The order of the main clauses in the two sentences is reversed. The sentences both contain the same words, but is there a slight difference in meaning between the two sentences?

Larreaux is foolhardy, but he is a daring mountaineer.

Larreaux is a daring mountaineer, but he is foolhardy.

Which sentence leaves you with a generally favorable impression of Larreaux? Which with a generally unfavorable impression? Can you see why?

What is likely to be the most emphatic and important position in the English sentence? Why? What does this suggest about the effectiveness of left-branching sentences? If left-branching sentences, by saving the most important words for the emphatic position at the end of the sentence, really are most effective, why shouldn't we make all of our sentences left-branching? (Before you are able to answer this last question, you may have to wait until you finish learning about the other types of sentences to be discussed in the following pages.)

"Self-Imbedding" Sentences

Occasionally, a sentence will have its additions in the middle, and will look like this _____, _____. This pattern is called

_____,
_____,
_____,

self-imbedding. Here are two examples:

1. Her boyfriend, short, talkative, and cheerful, surprised us all.

Her boyfriend, surprised us all.

short,
talkative,
and
cheerful,

2. No other contrast, certainly not the contrast between the human being and the animal, or the animal and the plant, or even the spirit and the body, is so tremendous as this contrast between what lives and what does not.--J. W. Krutch, "The Colloid and the Crystal".

Charted, this sentence reads

No other contrast,		is so tremendous as this contrast between what lives and what does not.
...between	the human being and the animal, or the animal and the plant, or even the spirit and the body,	

Exercises:

1. Try several self-imbedding sentences. Slip your parallel additions between the main subject and verb.

   a. The attackers...bore down upon the fortress.
   b. The day for the game...finally arrived.
   c. Childish Johnny...finally became John.

2. Sometimes another whole clause is put into this slot between the main subject and verb. For example, The man who was here yesterday was my landlord. Add one clause to the slot between main subject and verb in the following:

   a. This car,...., should be junked.
   b. Television,...., needs better programs.
   c. Parents,...., are likely to be disappointed.

Since self-imbedding sentences are not common, we need not spend a great deal of time with them now. But you may want to add them to your stock of effective sentence-structures.

"Right-Branching" Sentences

The main type of sentence containing parallelism--by far the most widely written--is the right-branching sentence, where the additions and parallel structures stack up at the end.

Here is an example from H. L. Mencken:

> In all that gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate there is not a single picture gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing the nine symphonies of Beethoven, or a single opera-house, or a single theater devoted to decent plays, or a single public monument that is worth looking at, or a single workshop devoted to the making of beautiful things.
>
> --"The Sahara of the Bozart"

Notice how the parallel additions are placed after the main clause.

In all ..., there is not	a single picture gallery worth going into or a single orchestra..., or a single opera house..., or a single theater..., or a single public monument..., or a single workshop....

Four of the five examples of parallel sentences in part B of this lesson (page 20) were right-branching. Can you find them? What is the structure of the one which is not right-branching? The preponderance of right-branching sentences among those with internal parallelism becomes quickly apparent when you begin looking at sentences which writers actually write. How do you account for this greater number of right-branching sentences in our language?

Exercises:

1. Make several parallel right-branching additions to each of the following main clauses. Because the form is more familiar to you than either the left-branching or self-imbedding kind, concentrate on composing full, imaginative sentences.

   a. In all, there is little in the school store worth buying...
   b. Today's pressures on youth are no worse than those of twenty years ago...
   c. John came in last...
   d. The team played well...
   e. Some gadgets are time-consuming...

2. Just as clauses can be added in the left-branching or imbedding slots, so can they be added in the right-branch position. Add a clause to complete effectively the meaning of the following sentences:

   a. He will always be my favorite person because....
   b. We hear many calls to return to the good old days, but....
   c. I managed to come to school today, although....
   d. He had eight hours' sleep last night for the first time in a week; consequently,....

What we must remember with all three of these structures, left-branching, self-imbedding, and right-branching, is that they are usually effective because of the extra evidence that is brought into the sentence in the "branches." The mediocre writer is the one who stops without adding the levels. He writes his main clause and thinks his job is done. Lincoln could have written, or said

And that government shall not perish from the earth.

But the skillful writer or speaker achieves a certain richness of style by his additions, as Lincoln did when he lifted his prose out of the ordinary by adding a bit of self-imbedding:

"...and that government | of the people, by the people, for the people, | shall not perish from this earth."

"Balanced" Sentences

One more type of structure deserves comment here. It is the balanced sentence. Look at the following examples:

1. They stayed until the game was over, but we left at half-time.

2. On the outside, the buildings all look alike; on the inside, they are enormously different.

Can you see why these sentences are called "balanced"? They are balanced because their main parts are grammatically equal, or coordinate. A balanced sentence, then, is one in which two main clauses of about the same length and structure are joined by a coordinate conjunction or a semicolon. Occasionally, a balanced sentence may have only one main clause, but because the NP and VP halves of the sentence are so similar in length and structure, the sentence could be called balanced, as in this example in which the author is summing up the liberal and conservative trends in American history: "A period of imaginative leadership, of experimentalism and democratic innovation has been followed by one of sober reflection, of digestion of the gains and renewed vigilance for the rights of property."--(Arthur M. Schlesinger, Paths to the Present) The structure of Schlesinger's sentence looks like this _____ _____ Hence, we could

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____.

certainly call it "balanced." Sometimes balanced sentences are carried along for a paragraph or more, as in this comparison of the poetry of Dryden and Pope, written by Samuel Johnson.

> The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller.
>
> --Samuel Johnson, "The Life of Pope," in The Lives of the Poets.

Discussion:

1. Why are the balanced sentences particularly appropriate to what Johnson is saying about the two poets?

2. Will parallelism be an important feature of balanced sentences? Why?

3. Balanced sentences often are like sentences with left or right branching or imbedding in that they contain extra information which has been brought in to beef up the main clause, to make it clearer and richer and more meaningful, yet balanced sentences are not nearly so common today as they once were. Can you think why?

Exercises on sentence-structures

Identify the following sentence-structures and analyze the use of parallelism within them. Comment upon the effectiveness of each of the sentences.

1. Skinny frame encased in blue jeans, face half hidden behind dark prescription glasses, his familiar, thirsty, twangy voice hauntingly evokes the parched earth and the barren highways of the Depression.
   --"Woody's Boy," Newsweek, May 23, 1966, p. 110.

2. While my father did not go to Montana with the pioneers, he worked for many of them; although he had come West after the Indians were subdued, he knew many of the Indian fighters.

3. Baseball's clock ticks inwardly and silently, and a man absorbed in a ball game is caught up in rural time--a slow, green time of removal and concentration--and in a tension that is screwed up slowly and even more tightly with each pitcher's windup and with the almost imperceptible forward lean and little half step with which the fielders accompany each pitch.
   --by Robert Angell, "The Cool Bubble," The New Yorker, May 14, 1966, p. 141.

4. The Indy [Indianapolis "500" Race] hustle is reflected in bursts of color: a motorcyclist speeding to town for the race; checkered flags waving from overloaded, painted-up cars in the party line that waits all night long before the race on 16th street outside the speedway; and inside, in gasoline alley, mechanics toiling nightly with urgent delicacy in a tense world insulated from the swinging party around it by the exceptional responsibilities of speed.
   --"A Big Hoosier Hurry," Sports Illustrated, May 30, 1966, p. 33.

5. If you had been able to sketch for [the average citizen of the 1920's] a picture of conditions as they were actually to be--rum-ships rolling in the sea outside the twelve-mile limit and transferring their cargoes of whiskey by night to fast cabin cruisers, beer-running trucks being hijacked on the interurban boulevards by bandits with Thompson submachine guns, illicit stills turning out alcohol by the carload, the

fashionable dinner party beginning with contraband cocktails as a matter of course, ladies and gentlemen undergoing scrutiny from behind the curtained grill of the speak-easy, and Alphonse Capone, multi-millionaire master of the Chicago bootleggers, driving through the streets in an armor-plated car with bulletproof windows--the innocent citizen's jaw would have dropped.

--Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday.

6. Such an interview, perhaps, would have been more terrible than even to meet him as she now did, with the hot midday sun burning down upon her face, and lighting up its shame, with the scarlet token of infamy on her breast; with the sin-born infant in her arms; with a whole people, drawn forth as to a festival, staring at the features that should have been seen only in the quiet gleam of the fireside, in the happy shadow of home, or beneath a matronly veil, at church.

--Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter.

7. And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

--John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address."

8. Whosoever of ye raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw; whosoever of ye raises me that white-headed whale, with three holes punctured in his starboard fluke--look ye, whosoever of ye raises me that same white whale, he shall have this gold ounce my boys!

--Herman Melville, Moby Dick.

9. If they were unacquainted with the words of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them.

--Thomas Babington Macaulay, "The Puritans."

10. The dog, guiding his blind master along, stopping at street corners to wait for the light to change, seemed to understand perfectly what was expected of him.

Writing Assignment

Write a 600-800 word essay describing the changes which have taken place in your neighborhood, town, or city. Use a before-and-after organization, with plenty of concrete examples, names of real places, streets, stores, people, etc. Use at least one sentence of each type studied in Part C, and label the sentences in the margin. Include (and label) extensive parallelism in at least six of your sentences.

Summary: Can you formany sort of universal "rule," as you did after Part A, for the sorts of structures which are likely to lead to effective sentences?

Lesson IV: Tone

"You're a real pal!" This statement, when spoken in one way, can mean just what it says: "You are a good and helpful friend." Spoken in another way, however, it can mean exactly the opposite: "You are mean and unhelpful; although I thought you were my friend, you obviously aren't." The minute we hear someone speak the statement, we know immediately whether he is being sincere or sarcastic. How do we know? Mostly we know by the tone of his voice. Any speaker of the language has a number of devices which he uses, many of them unconsciously, to help give meaning to what he is saying to a listener: a shrug of the shoulders, the lifting an eyebrow, raising one corner of the mouth, hand gestures, but, most of all, tone of voice. You have probably heard a friend describe the words of another person by saying, "It wasn't so much what he said as the way that he said it." What your friend was doing was indicating how important tone of voice is in conveying meaning.

Language scholars have pointed out that while spoken language is full of little extra hints as to the speaker's meaning, written language has no clues except what can be gotten from the written words themselves. Yet written words have tone, too, that can convey meaning in the same sense that a speaker's tone of voice does. The only difference is that in writing, the tone is not so readily apparent as it is in speech. Since there is no speaker present when we are reading his written words, we have to pay closer attention to the few clues which are available, in order to determine the writer's tone. This attention is most helpful in analyzing a writer's meaning or his style. Indeed, if you have misread a writer's tone, you are much worse off than if you don't know some of the words he is using.

Before we can begin looking more closely at examples of tone, we need a working definition of the word. What is tone? We can consider it the writer's attitude toward what he is writing about.

It may help if you imagine that there is a "speaking voice" and a personality behind everything that you read on the printed page. To find the tone of that "voice," look for the written words which tip you off as to the "voice's" attitude, his feelings about his subject. Suppose, for example, you read a selection which begins, "Once upon a time. . . ." What sort of guess could you make about the tone of that "voice"? Even though you have read only four words, you should know a great deal about the tone. You know already, if you remember the way fairy tales began when you listened to them as a child, that this voice regards what he is going to tell you as fable, rather than truth. Chances are, the voice will go on to tell a story that will entertain and perhaps instruct. But you already realize that neither the speaking voice nor you are expected to take the story as being the literal truth.

Not all examples of tone are so quick to reveal themselves. A writer's "voice" in a written selection may be bitter, pleasant, sarcastic, earnest, or reveal any of a number of other attitudes towards the subject. You have to consider the words, and the evidence of emotion or attitude which they contain. For example, the poet Dylan Thomas begins a description of childhood memories with these words: "I like very much people telling me about their childhood, but they'll have to be quick or else I'll be telling them about mine." Here, the "voice" of Thomas reveals immediately a friendly, warm feeling for his subject, his memories of childhood. The words "like very much" and the banter about jumping into his stories of childhood before others have finished telling him theirs--these are the most obvious clues to the good-natured tone of Thomas' speaking voice.

Sometimes, the speaking voice may reveal that it <u>feels</u> the opposite of what it <u>says</u> about its subject. For example, here is a passage from Herman Melville's book <u>Typee</u>, a novel based on his experiences on a South-sea island, after he had jumped ship on a whaling voyage in 1842.

> Although I had been baffled in my attempts to learn the origin of the Feast of Calabashes, yet it seemed very plain to me that it was principally, if not wholly, of a religious nature. As a religious solemnity, however, it had not at all corresponded with the horrible descriptions of Polynesian worship which we have received in some published narratives, and especially in those accounts of the evangelized islands with which the missionaries have favoured us. Did not the sacred character of these persons render the purity of their intentions unquestionable, I should certainly be led to suppose that they had exaggerated the evils of Paganism, in order to enhance the merits of their own disinterested labours.

How long is it before you realize that the "voice" here is really attacking the missionaries rather than praising them? What are the clues which reveal the actual venomous tone of this seemingly innocent selection?

Now, let's look more closely at a short selection, to see how tone is revealed in the words and phrases of another professional writer. The following sentences by Lytton Strachey come from his <u>Queen Victoria</u>, a biography. Decide, as you consider these sentences, what attitude Strachey conveys to you about Queen Victoria.

> She gave orders that nothing should be thrown away--and nothing was. There, in drawer after drawer, in wardrobe after wardrobe, reposed the dresses of seventy years. But not only the dresses--the furs and the mantles and subsidiary frills and the muffs and the parasols and the bonnets--all were ranged in chronological order, dated and complete.

Questions for Discussion:

1. With what adjectives would you describe Victoria? her order not to throw things away? the manner in which her order was carried out?

2. Here is a paraphrase of Strachey's selection.

She gave orders that nothing should be thrown away, and these orders were carried out. All of her remained there in the drawers and wardrobes. But not only the dresses--some warmer clothing and subsidiary frills were also arranged and marked.

Does this paraphrase evoke the same adjectives that appear in your answer to #1? Explain.

3. Which of Strachey's words or phrases best convey the tone of the selection? Explain.

4. What does Strachey's tone finally indicate that he thinks of Queen Victoria?

Writing Assignment:

Modeling your writing on Strachey's,

a. Write a paragraph about a faded, jaded movie queen giving orders at the end of her life. Write it once for a movie magazine; once as a feature story for a national news magazine.

or b. Write a paragraph about one of the following subjects in which the tone is really satiric while the words themselves seem to be praising the subject: babies, children, athletes, relatives, homework.

Passages for Analysis:

Try to determine the tone of these selections. Find as much concrete evidence as you can from the selection which supports your opinion, and be prepared to defend your opinion to the teacher or the class.

1.

(For text, see "Shooting An Elephant" in Approaches to Prose, by George Orwell, eds. Caroline Shrodes and Justine Von Gurdy; Macmillan Co., New York, 1959.)

2. It was his practice before playing a shot to stand over the ball for an appreciable time, shaking gently in every limb and eyeing it closely as if it were some difficult point of law. When eventually he began his back swing, it was with a slowness which reminded those who had travelled in Switzerland of moving glaciers. A cautious pause at the top, and the clubhead would descend to strike the ball squarely and dispatch it fifty yards down the course in a perfectly straight line.

--P. G. Wodehouse, "The Letter of the Law"

3. Fourscore and seven years ago....

--Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address"

4. To George F. Babbitt, as to most prosperous citizens of Zenith, his motor car was poetry and tragedy, love and heroism. The office was his pirate ship but the car his perilous excursion ashore.

--Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt

5. Conscience is the inner voice which warns us that someone may be looking.

--H. L. Mencken

Summary:

During this lesson on tone, as well as during this entire unit, you have been asked to do a great deal of analysis of other people's writing. All of this analysis is of little purpose, however, if your own style does not deepen, become more sophisticated, as a result of the new insights which you have gained. The improvement of your own style through an awareness of the stylistic features of professional, effective writers--this is the real aim of the close study of style.

What you must do now is have the courage to take a few chances. Instead of playing it safe, writing the same old things in the same old way, try to add some of the techniques which you have observed during this unit to your own command of written language. You are not the same person you were a year ago, nor are you even the same person you were when you began this unit. If "style is the man," then shouldn't a more mature, more aware you demand a more mature, more sophisticated style?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A. The quotations in Lesson I are from the following sources:

#1 from Winston Churchill, My Early Life (London: Thomas Butterworth, Ltd., 1937), p. 15.

#2 from Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, p. 1.

#3 from J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (New York: Little, Brown Co., 1951; New American Library Signet Books, 1962), p. 5.

#4 from Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March (New York: Viking Press, 1953; Compass Books Edition, 1960), p. 3.

B. The Asimov selection (pp. 16-17) from Fact and Fancy is published by Doubleday and Company, whose permission to reprint this selection is gratefully acknowledged.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

TEST

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

Rhetoric Curriculum VI

Instructions to students:

Answers to the questions are to be recorded on the separate answer sheets provided. PLEASE BE SURE TO USE ONLY SIDE A OF THE ANSWER SHEET, THE SIDE THAT HAS ROOM FOR 5 CHOICES.

Use a soft lead pencil (#2 or softer) and completely fill the space between the lines for the response you choose as the correct answer. Your score on this test will be the number of correct answers you mark. There is only one best answer for each item.

Sample test item: Who is the chief executive of the United States Government?
(1) The President
(2) The Secretary of State
(3) The Secretary of Defense
(4) The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

Since the correct answer is 1, the answer sheet is marked like this:

Sample test item: 1 2 3 4 5

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1. In its broadest sense, the style of a particular individual includes all of the following except

   1) his manner of speaking and writing.
   2) inherited physical characteristics.
   3) the clothes he wears.
   4) his choice of friends.

2. In order to analyze a writer's style, we might begin by

   1) reading his autobiography.
   2) counting the number of words used in a certain selection.
   3) examining the words used by the writer.
   4) reading a critical analysis of the writer's style.

3. Of the following terms, which is the most <u>concrete</u>?

   1) language
   2) ballad
   3) rhyme
   4) poetry

4. Of the following terms, which is the most <u>abstract</u>?

   1) population problem
   2) 20,000 people in an eight-block area
   3) crowded tenements
   4) too many people

5. Lieutenant Henry, Hemingway's hero in <u>A Farewell to Arms</u> prefers dates, the names of villages and the numbers of regiments to the words sacred, glorious, courage and honor because

   1) he has ceased to believe in courage and honor.
   2) as a writer, he prefers concrete terms to abstractions.
   3) he associates the realities of war with actual events and places.

6. The following statement defines an abstract term in concrete terms. Happiness is--

   1) the extinguishing of desires.
   2) three in a sandbox and no fighting.
   3) success in life.
   4) the result of upright living.

7. Good writing should contain

   1) more general terms than specific details.
   2) more specific details than generalizations.
   3) no generalizations.
   4) an equal number of both.

8. The furniture had been herded into the middle of the room and covered with canvas--old, paint-flecked, organic-looking canvas.
(Salinger, J. D., Franny and Zooey)
The most striking feature of this sentence is its use of

1) literal details.
2) metaphor.
3) parallel structure.
4) punctuation.

9. The consistent use of lengthy sentences (those over 25 words) would be appropriate if the the writer were

1) describing a prison break.
2) recreating a conversation overheard at a bus stop.
3) presenting arguments for the adoption of a sales tax.
4) discussing for a scientific audience the dynamo concept of the earth's geomagnetic field.

10. His most serious problem is his lack of confidence in himself; a lesser handicap is that he seems to have few interests.

This sentence could be made more effective by eliminating the error in

1) parallelism.
2) punctuation.
3) subject-verb agreement.
4) spelling.

11. _____,
_____,
_____,
main clause.
_____

This diagram represents the structure of

1) a kernel sentence.
2) a right-branching sentence.
3) a left-branching sentence.
4) a self-embedding sentence.

12. Parallel sentences are particularly effective for

1) comparing or contrasting ideas.
2) expanding an idea.
3) offering support for a generalization.
4) none of these.

13. For disarmament without checks is but a shadow--and a community without law--
(Kennedy, John F., Speech to the United Nations, Sept. 25, 1961)

Complete the sentence above, keeping the structure parallel.

1) can only be a shell
2) is but a shell
3) is nothing but a shell
4) can never be more than a shell.

14. The professional writer, more frequently than the amateur, is likely to

1) avoid the use of parallel structures.
2) keep the length of their sentences about equal.
3) add material which explains or illustrates their main clause.
4) use verbs in the passive voice.

15. I really cannot help feeling, after viewing every side of the problem, that the Board of Governors of the Mulligatawny Club did exactly the right thing about Epsom Felch. Say what you want, they had the best interests of our whole little group at heart, and the very basis of the Club has always been one of good informal fellowship.
(Marquand, John P., "Sun, Sea, and Sand," in Thirty Years)

The personality of the speaker is indicated most clearly by his use of

1) unusual proper names.
2) figurative language.
3) cliches.
4) an humorous tone.

16. Jargon is objectionable because

1) it consists of terms with which the ordinary reader may not be familiar.
2) it substitutes vague, blanket terms for precise terms.
3) it leads the reader into making false analogies.
4) the writer is attempting to coin new expressions which may rapidly pass from use.

17. He entered the elevator which greeted him with the small sound he knew, half stamp, half shiver, and its features lit up. He pressed the third button. The brittle, thin-walled, old-fashioned little room blinked but did not move. He pressed again. Again, the blink, the uneasy stillness, the inscrutable stare of a thing that does not work and knows it will not. He walked out. And at once with an optical snap, the lift closed its bright brown eyes.
(Nabokov, Vladimir, Bend Sinister)

In this paragraph, the elevator is personified by the use of the word(s)

1) greeted.
2) half-shiver.
3) brittle.
4) inscrutable stare.

18. Because speakers and writers of English frequently add information to the main idea, one of the most common sentence patterns is

    1) the self-embedding.
    2) the right-branching.
    3) the left-branching.
    4) the balanced.

19. From the sentence "Larreaux is foolhardy, but he is a daring mountaineer"

    The reader's impression of Larreaux is

    1) generally favorable, because the more positive term appears in the emphatic position at the end of the sentence.
    2) generally unfavorable, because the positive connotations of "daring" overshadow the negative connotations of "foolhardy."
    3) neutral, because the two adjectives cancel each other out.

20. The balanced sentence was used more frequently in the 18th century than today because

    1) in our modern view, the world is a simpler place and our view of it demands expression in simpler structures.
    2) modern writers have discovered sentence structures more effective in emphasizing contrasting points of view.
    3) the 18th century view of the world as an ordered and harmonious place, and the balanced sentence reflected this belief in a balanced universe.

21. Yet this morning, driving the little car which she and her sister owned together, apprehensive lest they might still realize that she had come after all and just taken it away, going docilely along the street, following the lines of traffic, stopping when she was bidden and turning when she could, she smiled out at the sunlight slanting along the street and thought, I am going, I am going, I have finally taken a step.
    (Jackson, Shirley, The Haunting of Hill House)

    The pattern of this sentence is

    1) balanced.
    2) self-embedding.
    3) right-branching.
    4) left-branching.

22. She stood alone beside here suitcase, her coat still hanging over her arm, thoroughly miserable, telling herself helplessly, Journeys end in lovers meeting, and wishing she could go home.
    (The Haunting)

    The pattern of this sentence is

    1) balanced.
    2) self-embedding.
    3) right-branching.
    4) left-branching.

23. Eleanor, wanting to sit on the hearthrug beside her, had not thought of it in time and had condemned herself to one of the slippery chairs. (The Haunting)

The pattern of this sentence is

1) balanced.
2) self-embedding.
3) right-branching.
4) left-branching.

24. In fact, it was he who shifted his ground, if anyone said a word against religion to him; for instance, when we complained against going to church he would attack us and show us that our objections were merely selfish.
(Cary, Joyce, A House of Children)

The pattern of this sentence is

1) balanced.
2) self-embedding.
3) right-branching.
4) left-branching.

25. Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens), the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove, that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.
(The Dolphin Book of Speeches, George W. Hibett, ed. Washington, George, Farewell Address)

The serious and urgent tone of the address is most evident in

1) the imagery.
2) the abstract terms.
3) the words in parentheses.
4) the structure of the sentence.