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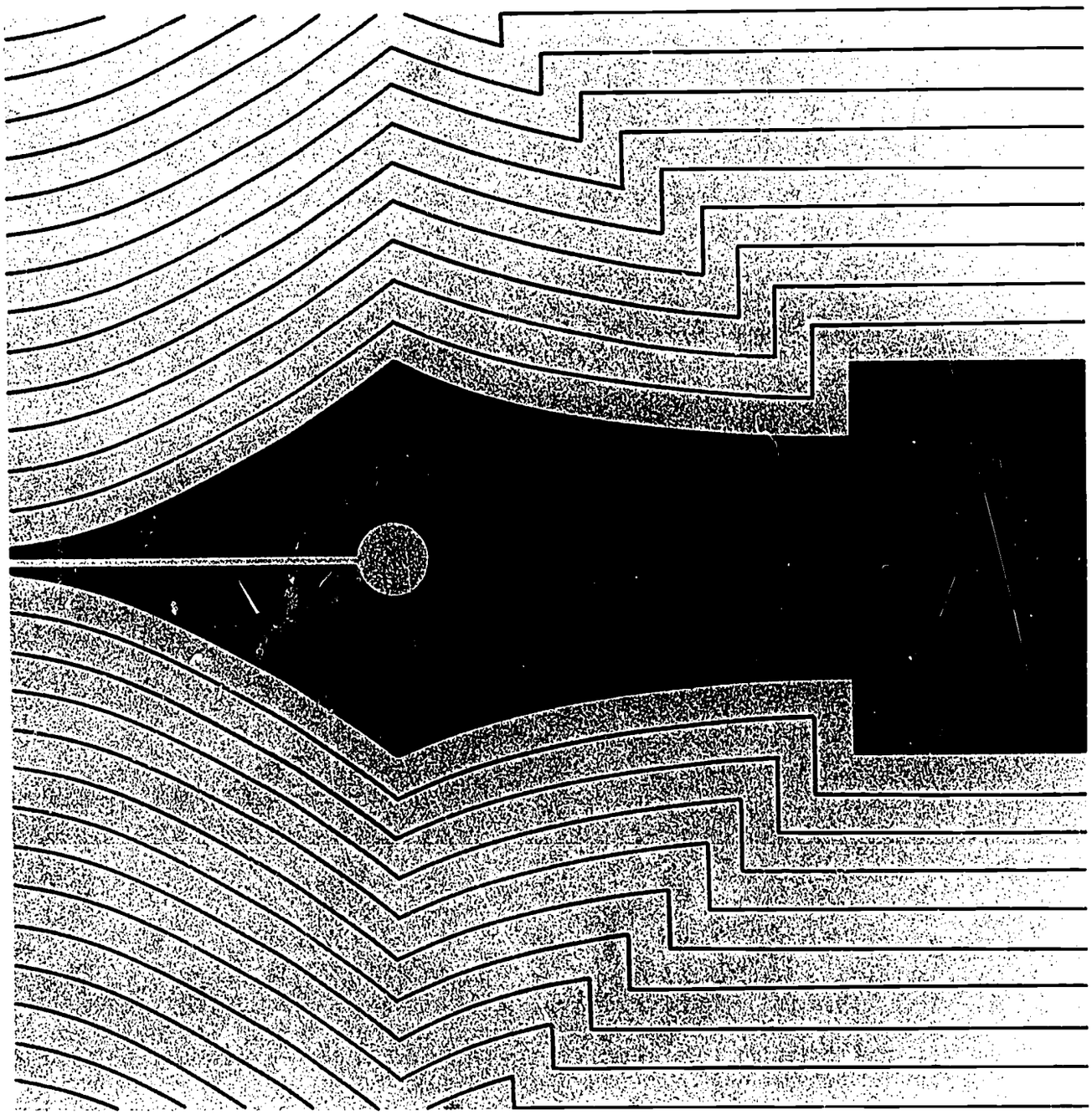
ABSTRACT

Articles written by members of the Commission on Composition which define how and why to teach composition at all school levels are contained in this publication of the National Council of Teachers of English. Each article is on a major topic and is not a committee report, but is based on the author's own philosophy and experience. Among the topics discussed are creativity, motivation in teaching composition, rhetoric, usage, evaluation, and grading compositions. The appendix contains questions to stimulate discussion on each article. Included is an opinionnaire to be filled out by educators. (RS)

The Student's Right to Write



A PUBLICATION PREPARED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON COMPOSITION
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NCTE COMMISSION ON COMPOSITION

This collection of essays, representing the views of individual members of the Commission on Composition, is by intention provocative rather than definitive. Although theoretical rather than practical, the essays are not research oriented. Together they constitute an inservice bulletin created for the purpose of generating discussion.

Unidentified verse and prose pieces appearing on pages 24, 38, 62, and 63 are by students from the Chicago area.

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Although we don't begin to use the knowledge we already have collected in the training of teachers of composition, it would not hurt us to find out some more.

Richard Lloyd-Jones

Teaching writing with emphasis on the psychic and sensitive man is in part a response to this generation of students' affirmation of the beautiful and loveful in spirit. They affirm the non-material as no other generation has affirmed it. And they share their spiritual affirmation with students around the world to an extent that no other generation has found such community.

Priscilla Tyler

Having expended a good deal of effort in recent years on the task of defining the discipline of English, we may have prepared ourselves at long last to explore the psychological and social implications of our programs.

Lionel Sharp

PREFACE

As far back as 1959, Harvard president James B. Conant brought to the attention of the profession the low state of the teaching of composition in our secondary schools. His most specific recommendations were that composition be given equal time with literature in the high school curriculum, and that the ratio of students to teacher be reduced to free the teacher for the added paper load. But even in schools where his suggestions were taken seriously and literally, no spectacular improvement resulted. The Squire-Applebee report, based on a survey of American high schools begun in 1963, highlights the same weaknesses.

Then came the Dartmouth Conference. In the late summer of 1966, about fifty leading members of the English teaching profession from the United States, Great Britain and Canada met at Dartmouth for a month to discuss moot points in the teaching of English, K-12 and beyond. Reports emanating from this conference suggest that more time was spent considering approaches used with grade school children than with high school and college students, together. And the reports also provide evidence that, for whatever reason, the lower-form child in the United Kingdom composes with far greater zest, originality and cogency, on an average, than does the grade school child in the United States. Partly because of the need to explore the implications of this discovery in the light of research already undertaken in the States, and to make available to the profession the results of these explorations, the Commission on Composition was set up by the NCTE, following the Hawaii convention in 1967.

The first business of the commission, as the members saw it, was to determine the state of theory on the teaching of composition in the United

States, and the first task to which we addressed ourselves was the construction of a position paper.

Definition of the purpose or purposes of the teaching of composition proved to be the most troubling and divisive problem facing the members of the commission. One member raised the question, "Why teach composition at all?" "For growth," said some. "To help the child come to terms with himself and the world he lives in": in other words, for purposes adumbrated by the title of the first British report on the Dartmouth Conference, *Growth through English* by John Dixon.

"For use," maintained others. "To prepare the student to meet the demands of the academic program he is presently engaged in and to help him measure up to the requirements of his future job or profession": such purposes as are suggested by the title of the U.S. report on the Conference, *The Uses of English* by Herbert J. Muller. This vast over-simplification does not of course do justice to the various shades and modifications of opinion brought out in many hours of discussion, but it may perhaps define the polarities around which our argument revolved.

Failing to reach consensus as to purpose, we turned to other issues in the composing process. As the discussions continued, it became evident to all of us that no agreement could be reached, except on generalities, among a group so diverse in attitude and experience. At this point in our deliberations, we came to the unanimous conclusion that we were

> As a starter, we can restore to the students some of the features that worked so well with them when they were children: providing them with a live audience and an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and assistance.
>
> Sister M. Philippa Coogan, BVM

not ready to publish a position paper. We settled, instead, on a few topics we considered crucial, discussed them rather thoroughly in the light of Dartmouth and other findings, and assigned them to persons who seemed best qualified to do the job. Each was encouraged to write from his own philosophy and experience, using such of the concepts generated in our discussions as seemed relevant to him, but not attempting to compose a committee report. Nuggets of wisdom, too valuable to be tossed out of the assaying pan, have been scattered among the longer offerings, in the belief that they will add luster to the publication.

In order to involve the members of the profession as fully as possible in the work of the commission, we are appending provocative questions, generated by the essays, for use at affiliate and departmental meetings, and we are asking individuals and groups to respond to the enclosed opinionnaire. The wider the response, of course, the more reliable will be the sampling. We will use the evidence thus gathered to help us plan the future work of the commission.

> The experiences of a student in a college composition course should encourage exploration of his consciousness. This kind of opportunity cannot be offered in a clenched curriculum.
>
> Lionel Sharp

The members of the Commission on Composition whose signed articles appear in this publication will be the first to grant that their contributions were enriched and strengthened by the discussions to which every member contributed, and by earlier papers as well. *The Student's Right to Write* was in all ways a cooperative project. Grateful acknowledgements are due, therefore, to all the members of the Commission on Composition, for their labors in behalf of

this project; to the NCTE officers and staff for their support and assistance; and especially to G. Rodney Morisset for his tact, humor and critical acumen.

Sister Mary Philippa Coogan, BVM
Niles College of Loyola University

COMPOSITION: THE STATE OF THE ART

Wallace W. Douglas, Northwestern University

It is safe to say that the reasons that have supported the teaching tradition in composition have been neither many nor complex. The following four would probably be accepted by most teachers as not merely necessary but also sufficient justifications for all that they do and hope to accomplish in the composition parts of the school timetable.

Reason One. Compositions are a means of testing a child's command of grammatical principles and whatever dictates about usage are found in the textbook in hand. A somewhat softer version of this reason would be that compositions give children a chance to practice whatever grammar they have been given in language study.

Reason One may be called the primitive reason for composition, since it derived from the "methodology" of teachers of Greek and Latin, which English teachers took over when they set up shop in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is still very widely held and forms the basis of much practice, though perhaps not very many teachers are now comfortable talking about it, at least not in public or official publications.

But the notion must still persist. For it was only a couple of years ago that teachers were being told by a perfectly reputable publisher that the ability to recognize errors in writing is one of the skills, perhaps the chief, that children ought to expect to acquire by writing, at least when they do it in school.

> When a pupil writes a poor composition, he is not interested in doing it over. But he will take an interest in rewriting it

> if he sees clearly how he can improve it each time. In rewriting a composition, a pupil can be led, mostly by skillful questioning, to see his errors. *Each must make his own mistakes, see his own errors, and correct them himself if he is to improve.* [The emphasis is in the original.]

Most readers of this bulletin will, no doubt, dismiss that last sentence (if not the whole of the passage) as the aberration of a poorly educated advertising copy writer. They need to remember that, of necessity, most or all people who write ads have gone through the whole gamut of schooling; in other words, they do not quite write from either innocence or ignorance. It is also to be presumed that either they or their bosses suppose that they know the interests and values of the market.

> A child who has purposes for composing which are more valid than just following his teacher's directions can assume reasonable responsibility for his work. He will seek help from all available sources: teachers, peers, parents, materials. -Esther Westendorf

Reason Two. Compositions are means of helping a child develop linguistic maturity and, at the same time, a test of his having done so.

Generally discussions of "linguistic maturity" treat it in quantitative terms, the sign of its achievement being found in an increase in the length and (grammatical) complexity of a child's sentences, which are conceptualized as syntactical units only. Sometimes such increase is spoken about as if it were thought to be a result of natural growth. But probably most teachers, if put to it, would say that the cause is their teaching--in the form of sentence development or enrichment exercises and vocabulary building drills. A child's writings then become (or are searched for) evidence of how well his teacher's teaching has succeeded. It seems clear that Reason Two is only a sophisticated version of Reason One, in which sentence length is added to grammatical correctness and dialectal propriety as a sign of a child's language proficiency.

Reason Three. Compositions are a means of giving children practice in the kinds of exposition and argument that they will use as adults, especially as "citizen adults."

This reason probably comes down to us, however debased, from the ancient higher schools of rhetoric. And if young people in school today were in training to become proficient in whatever kinds of public discourse substitute for or supplement the great classical triad (forensic, legislative, ceremonial), then no doubt we could develop a *techne* of that as yet unnamed art at least as effective as that of Quintilian, or as those of Corax and Tisias may be supposed to have been. Aristotle is not for us to emulate, his *Rhetoric* being, on the whole, somewhat too advanced a textbook for the purposes of modern schools.

But of course most young people in school today are not going to be making speeches of any kind, except perhaps as school exercises. (That is not to say that they will not be talking in more or less public situations, for example reproving a check-out girl for ringing up the wrong amount.) And those in whose lives speechmaking may be expected, or for whom it may be hoped, will no doubt learn all the necessary techniques in the later years of their schooling or even out of school, when vocational intention is clearer than in grammar and high school or even, generally, in undergraduate college.

In the absence of its ancient vocational base, this reason is now most often found in a form that makes development of the judgmental functions one of the ends of composition. Writing teaches thinking, it is said. And it is added that this is important because children need to develop protections

against the wiles of politicians, advertisers, salesmen, and other practicers of rhetoric.

> The manner in which colleges and universities attempt to fulfill their commitment to literacy is usually determined by notions about the future social roles of their graduates--and of their dropouts. Most of the notions are formulated in practical terms related to meeting the responsibilities of citizenship, responding to the demands of a job (often simply the job of being a student), and acquiring linguistic credentials for social mobility. When composition programs are designed for these purposes only, they ignore the value of writing as an effective means for achieving perspective on one's perceptions.
>
> Lionel Sharp

Reason Four. Compositions are a means of helping children and young people discover structure in the world.

Reason Four probably derives from the speculations of linguists like Edward Sapir and of philosophers, or philosophical thinkers, like Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer. In the process it has become entangled with various practices that have long been present in the teaching tradition. For example, the structure that teachers are suggesting is discoverable in the world seems to be little more than that of categories and classes. Those lead pretty directly to what was once called--and very likely still is--the Formal Outline. Classes and categories may be useful tools for the construction of research papers in English classes, for the putting together of reports by shop foremen, or for the composition of the more pedantic sort of scholarly article. But they can hardly be said to represent the highest reaches of human thought.

Sometimes English teachers now speak of school writing as a means of discovering not merely structure but indeed meaning in the world, though not, it would seem, in the world of the child or the young person. Even less often, but still from time to time, teachers speak of school writing as a means of

self-discovery. As a matter of fact, it seems likely that the world and the professions are in such state that a good many English teachers are paying a kind of formal or ritual respect to the bearing that statements like this one by Eldridge Cleaver may be said to have on composition:--

> After I returned from prison, I took a long look at myself and, for the first time in my life, admitted that I was wrong, that I had gone astray--astray not so much from the white man's law as from being human, civilized--for I could not approve the act of rape. Even though I had some insight into my own motivations, I did not feel justified. I lost my self-respect. My pride as a man dissolved and my whole fragile moral structure seemed to collapse, completely shattered.
>
> That is why I started to write. To save myself.
>
> I realized that no one could save me but myself. The prison authorities were both uninterested and unable to help me. I had to seek out the truth and unravel the snarled web of my motivations. I had to find out who I am, what I want to be, what type of man I should be, and what I could do to become the best of which I was capable. I understood that what had happened to me had also happened to countless other blacks and it would happen to many, many more.[1]

But however numerous, the protestations of understanding Cleaver can hardly be said to be accompanied by any of the changes in textbook materials or teaching practices that would seem to be required by acceptance of the reality of the value that Eldridge Cleaver found in writing. The Four Reasons that have been set forth here have too much authority for that; so have the demands that adult society expresses through the mechanisms of schooling. And so children can expect little attention to be given their needs and interests even as children, let alone as individuals.

* * *

Perhaps it ought to be noted that until quite lately (and then only sporadically and even a little surreptitiously) children and their ways

1 From *Soul on Ice*. Copyright © 1968 by Eldridge Cleaver. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

have not been much considered by the reformers who have been busy in the schools since the middle Fifties. So far as composition is concerned, reform began early in that decade, when young instructors and assistants

> The main value of compositions is as a means of helping the student find form in his world. The younger or more inhibited the student, the more his compositions should be oral; in his daily experience he creates forms in speaking, but writing intimidates him. The better schooled student needs to acquire the precision of feeling and thought that are associated with written composition. He should be encouraged to write the truth as he feels it and sees it. A simple subject, fairly and honestly treated, is much better than an academically impressive one which depends on second-hand sight. His writing to discover what he is in relation to his world need not be directed to any audience other than his peers or his alter-ego. His purpose is to formulate his perceptions and sensations rather than to communicate them; the teacher's purpose is more to help him to see rather than to tell others. When he gets older and more enmeshed in the world of affairs he doubtless will wish to share his experiences with his peers, so then more stress can be placed on communication.
>
> Richard Lloyd-Jones

at the major state universities, influenced by the pre-eminent value then being assigned to literary "texts" by writers in the critical quarterlies, began to say that the only worthwhile writing was of the exegetical sort known as "critical analysis." They were of course only emulating a practice that had begun at some eastern colleges and their feeder schools shortly after the publication of Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* in 1938. As the older generation of freshman English chairmen retired or moved on to safer pastures in upper division and graduate courses, it began to be proposed that the reading and writing in freshman English courses should be pretty generally of a literary sort. Close reading of literary texts would be reported in papers of critical analysis. This was, of course, a considerable change from the "sociological"[2] and political articles and student

2 A conjur-word, very pejorative, used to express extreme distaste for the material in freshman anthologies of the Thirties.

papers--generally on current problems, and generally of a journalistic sort--that had been the popular fare for the reading and writing in freshman courses since the late Twenties, when interest in the essay, formal or informal, had begun to decline.[3]

Sometime later (perhaps following the abandonment of old English A at Harvard in 1951), freshman instructors began to be touched by an interest in the contribution that the study of logic and rhetoric might make to the exposition that was about that time becoming the chief and in some cases the only "form of discourse" that freshmen were doing. The logic was syllogistic and the rhetoric was largely classical, but it would be hard to argue that the people who proposed adding them to the matter of Freshman English were not, in fact, as they contended, toning up a fairly depressed area of the college curriculum. Logic and rhetoric are certainly much closer to the central intellectual interests of college English teachers than is the kind of grammatical study that was then wasting so much time in freshman courses. And no doubt quite a few school-assimilated young people found what was then known as intellectual challenge in such studies, or at least were able to tell themselves they did.

Eventually, of course, these changes in freshman English made their way into the school curriculum, thereby forcing the development of a great national

3 The great popularity of the Locke, Gibson and Armes, *Readings for Liberal Education* (New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 5th edition, 1967) is evidence of the persistence of the idea of the Thirties, that one of the functions of freshman English was to fill students up with right ideas, and Right Reason too, perhaps; in this case, however, the ideas referred less to politics and sociology than to the Great Tradition, which is further evidence of the point made here about the cultural backgrounds of teachers. Note the titles of the two volumes of *Readings: Toward a Liberal Education* and *Introduction to Literature*. Apparently the best was being made of all possible worlds.

program of inservice training and retraining of teachers, to bring them into touch with the thinking of the college specialists in English, by whom many of them had been trained in the first place.

It was at first assumed and always said that this was an effort to propagandize a New English. But it was soon discovered that even Old English was not exactly within the range of experience or training of most teachers. Either they lacked formal, certifiable preparation; or, irrespective of the number of English hours on their transcripts, they had somehow never been brought into touch with the cultural and teaching traditions which most of the reformers, given their collegiate and graduate school trainings (to say nothing of their "backgrounds"), took for granted. That these traditions were also taken for granted by the makers of the CEEB entrance examinations is not just a coincidence. The means of retraining teachers were the subject matter conferences of the Advanced Placement Program and the program itself, of course; the John Hay Fellows Program; the Institutes and Report of the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board, the work of which seems to have been a concrete expression of the ideas in "Basic Issues in English" (1958), and the NDEA Institutes that were funded by the Office of Education.

In the composition sections of the various inservice training programs, participants were reminded of the pains and penalties of writing an assignment for a teacher. Indeed, if the reports from the institutes are to be trusted, the experience did not so much remind as introduce teachers to the effects of their role. Perhaps some teachers also began, most likely on their own, to get a feeling for the various sorts of acts that are parts of the producing

of a piece of writing. At the same time, in the discussions of rhetoric and logic, teachers *were being given* (the immemorial pattern of teacher training was never even touched, much less broken) material that certainly enriched their classroom discourse and at least made possible more helpful ways of responding to papers. And so too with the information about language that was given. There is no question that by, say, 1965 or 1966 the level of school work going on under the general rubric of "composition" had been much strengthened, made more vigorous and challenging. It is, however, a question how (or indeed whether) these additions to teachers' repertoires affected the deeply ingrained assumptions about children and writing in the schools that were set forth above in the discussion of the Four Reasons. After all, there is no evidence that the college folk who were carrying on the training had made any changes in their versions of the Four Reasons.

Yet evidently something has been happening, perhaps especially in the last four or five years. It is now possible to find not just a few but many teachers who are dissatisfied and uncomfortable with the Four Reasons. They seem to feel that there is something more that they ought to be accomplishing. They are seeking ways to bring themselves and their teaching into touch with the interests, the capacities of the children they meet. They are trying to see children as individuals, not as members merely of a grade or classroom, still less as collections of data spaced along some statistical ranking. Though perhaps only dimly (and in many cases, no doubt for quite prudential reasons), teachers seem to be beginning to feel their way toward a new view of children, their writing, and English. They are seeing that writing is, do what we will, a part of the expressive life of children. Putting it

another way, they are seeing the writing of children as one of several media in which growth in awareness and responsiveness can occur, growth also in what, for lack of a better word, I must call communication. I say "lack of a better word," because what I am talking about is rather broader than just communication, and I need a word that will connote sharing and perhaps something of communion too. But does any such word exist?

BURIAL

Daddy's locked in his
candle-lit crypt,
smoking fingers
and lining his box
with yew branches
and scale moss.
He sees all faces
and makes love to the women
who have passed on,
nailing their lucid bodies
to the vault floor,
then settling himself
among them like a
Greek God.
Daddy leaves them nothing,
no pocket watches
or property investments,
just an urn--
charred--
with curves of a woman.

By Ava Winthrop. Reprinted from *Poetry 70*, published by the Toronto Board of Education.

While writing is always addressed to a reader, it is not always addressed to a person other than the writer: sometimes we write to a future self; sometimes we write to discover what we mean to write; sometimes we write to play.

Lionel Sharp

* * *

In the next decade work on adjustments in the present system (that of the Four Reasons) will persist, carried on chiefly in developing and refining ways in which rhetoric and some rather eclectic versions of the newer grammars may be applied to the teaching of composition. Indeed that kind of work will

probably be what most teachers will find themselves called upon to do, as the pressure for curriculum revision becomes more and more insistent. And by no means will it be without advantage; all the talk about audience, voice/persona, and various desired qualities of style and perhaps some that will go on about the figures of the syllogism in their several moods must certainly end in students who will be better informed about "writing" than those who now go through the present haphazard and more or less Sophistic experience of studying or practicing composition. And this knowledge will undoubtedly prepare them to handle the operations set by their teachers, who will themselves, sooner or later, of course, have a rather fuller repertory of requirements and suggestions than is now the case. And certainly satisfaction and value will accrue from successful performance in that way. After all, they always have, at least for some children and young people.

But obviously if, as I have suggested, English teachers do have a new feeling about their work, of the sort I have described, there is likely to be some dissatisfaction among them with the abstractness, the impersonality--the otherness and the outsidedness--of official curriculum development. And at least some teachers will be setting out--on their own, it is to be hoped--on other lines of investigation.

Some teachers will set about learning as much as possible about the process of writing, and they will try to devise ways of incorporating their findings into the circumstances of school writing. Considering that the process of writing (in the form of the stages of composition) has been textbook material for thirty-odd years at least, it may seem surprising to suggest that it still needs investigation and development. But of course the fact

is that the activities referred to as "stages of composition" were very early assimilated to the various parts of the teaching tradition. Thus "finding a subject" was equated with "developing a thesis sentence." "Gathering material" became the sort of analysis by partition or categorization that is typical of textbook treatment of outlines. "Planning the paper" became "making an outline," with latterly some attention to audience and other topics from the new rhetoric. And so on, right down the line. In other words, whatever there was (and it was not much) in the early discussions of the stages of composition that was connected with activity, with process, with development was soon converted to the abstract and discrete exercises of the tradition.

There are perhaps seven knowable facts about people who make compositions in writing. First, they take (and probably need) a great deal of time to make their pieces. Second, they hardly ever do a whole draft of a piece in one period of writing. Third, they most often work from material to idea, rather than the other way around, as our books are prone to suggest. If they do start from an "idea," it is really an "idea-for-a-piece"; that is, a notion that contains not only an "idea" (i.e., "thesis") but also at least some suggestions of approach, tone, and form. Fourth, they have material available in memory, notebooks, or files that they can go to to support whatever they collect for particular jobs. Fifth, they do much of their composing unconsciously, when they may seem to be engaged wholly in other tasks or entertainments.

Sixth, in most cases, writers are likely to be somewhat specialized. Even scholars have their little writing specialties, areas of investigation

where they are up on material, the going problems, the received attitudes. In the same way, with not many changes being necessary, more popular writers may do Broadway or Hollywood personalities (Maurice Zolotow, Rex Reed), medical-scientific stories (Berton Roueche), the world of bars and sports (John McNulty), "light pieces running from one thousand to two thousand words" (the late James Thurber). Seventh, in most cases, writers prepare their final copy as part of a group, including an editor or editors and a considerable number of technicians, such as copy editors, proof readers, and so forth.

Accommodating the realities of the composing process to the exigencies of classrooms and school timetables is not easy, and indeed may well be impossible. But of course the fact is that we are already asking children to make that accommodation *on their own, without any assistance from us.* If we do go on asking children to compose whole pieces of writing for us--papers, themes, whatever they are to be called--it would seem that the least we can do for them is make some effort to provide them favorable conditions of composing, and also, perhaps, give them some practice in the actual "parts" (in Aristotle's sense; see *Poetics*, Chapter VI) of the composing art. Even if it should turn out that we cannot accomplish all that we know that we should, still it is hardly to be doubted that our efforts would leave us better--more sensible, more knowledgeable--readers of student works.

Teachers on the other more or less unofficial course in curriculum developments for composition will, first of all, be working toward a more holistic view of schooling, in which "English" may refer more to a teacher's area of specialization in college than to any set of instructional activities or any portion of the child's day in school. So far as writing itself is

concerned, teachers will be learning to consider it just one of the media of expression and communication available to children, which they will use quite naturally, as children, when they want to, or when their feelings or purposes demand being put in written form. In other words, teachers will be learning to treat writing as one of a number of pleasurable and satisfying activities of children, or of some children. It will then become necessary for teachers to develop strategies to make it so in the classroom, assuming for a moment the continued existence of classrooms.

In the end perhaps some teachers will even ask whether composing written works and pieces has, in itself, any special value for the individual, any special efficacy in achieving the social ends of education, such that it must be exacted of all children that they write papers. We do now of course have various answers to that question. Personal value, we say, may be associated with the relative permanence of written works, as compared to, say, the transitoriness of talk or pantomime. The creator's finding satisfaction in the contemplation of his work is not without precedent, and we do have testimony to such effect from children: "And seeing it in our class newspaper made me feel like I did something of my own for the first time." But the permanence of a wax model is at least as great as that of words on paper. We impute social value to the opportunity for development, clarification, and organization which may be supposed to accompany composing in writing, at least under favorable conditions. But form and understanding can be achieved

> If composition teaching is to be justified in the schools, it must help students exploit what they already know, teaching them how to do more and do it better; it must free and expand the mind.
>
> Robert Gorrell

and demonstrated as well in paint as in words. In the present state of our knowledge, then, it does not seem likely that we can get any very sure answer to our question. Indeed finding one may be our chief task in the years ahead.

CREATIVITY

Richard Lloyd-Jones, University of Iowa

"Creativity" is generally understood as a word of approval. It appears in situtations which suggest liveliness; imagination, originality, intelligence, and life at its most intensely human pitch. Although these associations suggest the value placed on the word, they do not suggest a precise meaning which will guide a teacher even to say what it is, much less how to encourage it. Therefore, it's useful to think of the term in contrast with "conventionality" even as one thinks of "freedom" in tension with the idea of "discipline."

At first the contrast does not seem to help much because "conventionality" is understood often as only a word of vague disapproval; it is associated with stereotyped, dead, abstract, routine, thoughtless, nonengaged, and gross shackles of the human mind. In spite of all of these associations, because conventionality implies predictability it is the language of power, both in contracts and in common communication. The conventions of language are the subjects in discussions about craft in writing. Professional writers are people who have mastered a large range of the conventions. Without some kind of conventionality there could be no social dimensions to language. As a result creativity in the classroom can be talked about meaningfully only within the context of a statement about the function of conventionality.

Talking usefully about creativity is further complicated by equivocal usage of the term. At one extreme it is used to describe society's artists. The "creative writer" is a person who writes poetry or fiction, and good ones are very rare creatures. The paradox is that a good poet, for example, is

likely to be a master of convention. His originality is recognized in the context of his mastery of his craft. For the student contact with this kind of creativity is ordinarily in the reading rather than the writing of literature, although particularly in the grades most students are encouraged to take a try at writing fictional narrative and some poetry. Their efforts are self-expressive (and therefore good for them) but necessarily lack the mastery of convention which sets off socially valuable creativity from accidental novelty. Students who choose to undertake such expressiveness in college are ordinarily segregated into the creative writing courses. Often their exercises have neither freshness of vision nor control of convention to recommend them, but they usually satisfy a human desire to make things with words and provide a basis for making more effective readers.

In a large sense more useful to teachers of writing, however, the term "creative" is applied to novelty expressed by all human beings. The goal is the lively human being rather than the artist. This is creativity as it allows every school child to make sense out of his world and to formulate his unique vision of experience; it need not refer to fiction or poetry. The teacher is more interested in the process of mind than in the artifact produced. The student's pride in the product becomes a means for the teacher to encourage the student to be more venturesome.

To permit both of these meanings we might then say that creativity in writing requires the useful and novel formulation of experience in language. This may be the poem of the master poet, but it is probably not the doggerel of the town's occasional poet. It may be the effort of the seven-year-old to say exactly how he felt about the butterfly moving among the weeds, but

it does not count the fifth grader's report culled from the children's encyclopedia. It may include equally the account of the seventeen-year-old to his friends about what happened last night on his date and the first effort of a college freshman to analyze and make sense of a number of primary documents about the local parking situation, although the creative element may be handling of the problem (dialectic, organization) rather than in the handling of language (style). On the other hand, one probably should not get too enthusiastic about the remarkable metaphor created by a six-year-old child. He may merely have chosen the "wrong" word and some adult with his greater awareness of convention and his greater general sophistication understands a comparison that might not have been in the mind of the child at all. The metaphor then is the work of the creative reader rather than the child writer. The teacher would be pleased to have the child make a metaphor and might explain it to the child who made it so as to encourage him to try it on purpose, but the creative effort here is with the teacher not with the child.

Conventionality alone can do nothing but repeat itself. Since point of view must change in time and space, convention must always be somewhat inadequate to represent a situation. Even the most minor utterances must have some element of novelty in order to be even vaguely useful, so linguists can think of any utterance as being creative. The greater the change in time and space, however, the greater the need for drastic modifications of our verbal formulations. Sensibility and events cannot wait forever on convention. Each individual is necessarily placed in the world differently from each other individual. Unless his is to be an automaton in a new social order, he must have some way of formulating his unique vision of the world. Here is one

justification for emphasizing creativity, the ability of the person to find meaningful novelty in the formulations of language. He cannot have any meaning at all without conventional formulation, but he cannot have useful interpretations and extrapolations of meaning without novelty. He must acquire the intellectual and verbal machinery which will allow him to initiate and assimilate change.

As a practical matter, teachers at various levels must decide how to encourage creativity without, at the same time, neglecting their obligation to extend the student's experience of the conventions of language. Conventionality is easier to deal with--one can codify what already exists--so teachers have stressed convention to the point of deadening some pupils. Since the elementary school child has already picked up orally most of the conventions of language he basically needs and since he is already having a considerable struggle in transferring the oral patterns to written patterns, probably the emphasis in the classroom should fall very heavily on encouraging experimentation and personal expression. Praise, not correction, should be the mode. The sharing of writing is important. Most people need to test their expression against the reactions of their peers, although there should be no invasion of privacy if the child wants to write partly for himself. Exposition is as important a form of expression for the child as poems or stories. The problem of the teacher is to find out why the child would want to tell the material to someone else and then encourage him to follow up on that desire. The criticism of any such effort should content itself with whether the child accomplished his objective, not whether the teacher can find errors to correct.

As the child becomes older and gains more confidence in his ability to

master written language, he can be encouraged to want to write about subjects which require more conventional formulations into reports and essays. Although his grade school poems may have been little more than extended images held together by the rhythm of his speech, as he reads more poems he may be encouraged to adopt the conventional forms, but only if he understands why a poet writes in conventional forms at all. In the same way, if he's going to write a report in a conventional form he should understand why the form was constructed in that manner. When there comes a time to discuss paragraphing there also ought to be time to discuss why the conventional advice about paragraphs is given at all. Unless the teacher can explain the convention accurately and precisely in terms of its social need, then he probably ought to be silent. The student might better then try to imitate the oral patterns he's already mastered within the social world.

By the time this child is ready to enter college he has already gone from the world of immediate sensations to the world of intellectual abstraction. Although he has not necessarily found a way to cope with the expression of all of his perceptions, still he needs to know more of the formal conventions of exposition. It is quite proper that a college preparation course should emphasize exposition and argument. On the other hand, if a course in exposition does not in its turn emphasize how the person can honestly and properly use his own point of view to make sense out of intellectual material, the teaching is not satisfactory. Rote learning of systems of order or characteristics of different modes of discourse will probably not make better writers.

During the earlier levels of schooling, the open and supportive teacher is a prerequisite, we all agree. Suggestions about useful conventions can be posed as new ideas jointly arrived at. As a student gets older, he is forced

to accept responsibility for having encountered many conventional situations whether or not he has done so. Many students in the middle years of their schooling learn that writing is one error after another. Ideas don't count, only the absence of error. An activity which so regularly provides the ego with failure is one which is soon avoided and neglected. Sometimes the successes of the stars in the class are additionally used to make less favored students think of themselves as hopelessly incompetent and thus deny themselves the rewards of using language expressively in writing. Even those teachers who put full emphasis on the ability of the student creatively to examine the world must point out an increasing number of conventions as the student becomes more and more involved with social structure. If a person is to rise above his world and improve it, he must first know what it is. Creativity is not the function of ignorance, but of original vision and a determined will. The problem is strengthening the will, not breaking it, showing convention, not worshipping it, demanding thought, not page-filling labor.

The pressure to produce official grades for the student and for the system of education tends to put undue weight on the identification of error. The student needs to develop his own standards about what he writes. Any great poet is his own most severe critic. The student writer, too, must develop very high standards for himself. He must have a chance to evaluate his writing in comparison with other students and their purposes, so that he really understands where he rates in the world. Undoubtedly he needs the experienced judgment from a mature person. These needs for evaluation, however, are different from grading. He does not need an efficient score based on

some arbitrary point system which is institutionally fair to all registrants. As soon as he is conscious of the peculiarities of any system, he adjusts to it. If that means avoiding error, he can be simple-minded and avoid error. He learns only the worst side of conventionality because "fair" and "objective" scales emphasize the most readily indentifiable elements of convention, so he becomes fearful of his own powers of creation. The higher the level of the student the greater the temptation to let the grading system discourage the creative spirit. The grading system itself illustrates the degree to which conventionality is power.

Language Arts
My Ambition

I am going to be a stock-
Broker. Because I think-
they have one of the most.
skillfull jobs there SP is.
I watch on the new when } gr.
they be talking about.
The Dow-Jones and ?? Unit
so I decided that I was going
to be one.
This will just be my first
ambition.

1/2

J.C. 2/7/68

It's bad enough that outsiders think we are doing nothing but correct punctuation, but when we have large numbers of those on the inside who limit their goals in such a narrow way, we have real problems. We have not gone anywhere near far enough toward solving them.

Richard Lloyd-Jones

MOTIVATION IN THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

Alvina Treut Burrows, New York University

The writing a child does in school must be related to childhood's basic motivations if it is to be productive and dynamic. To feel oneself a competent individual and to be respected by one's society are pervasive motives. Emphases change from early to middle childhood to adolescence, but the basic need for self-realization and for affirmative social relationships remains.

Motivation to Learn to Write is Allied to Basic Human Needs

In early childhood, one manifestation of the child's desire to gain social approval is his urge to do what grownups do. Before formal instruction begins, children dramatize adults' reading and writing. They make charming scribbles; they laboriously copy letters from titles and headlines; they type random combinations of letters that they later "read" and often expect others to read. With this experience as a basis, children later move readily into composition in the classroom. From beginnings in dramatic play and with continued interest in acting out grownup doings, children move readily into early composition. They dictate letters and messages to parents and teachers, sign their names to them, and add their own illustration. They mail or otherwise deliver letters; they use memos as actual reminders; they post notices and signs for various purposes. These activities satisfy the basic motivation for each composer because they extend him as an individual and win social approval for him.

The sense of power that emerges from early dictation--or from combinations of dictating, copying, and writing independently--is often attached to writing for practical tasks having visible and useful results. It may, however, be

the forerunner or the accompaniment of another kind of satisfaction. Dictating and telling imaginative stories brings a somewhat different but equally important reward--the reward of self-realization--by enabling the author to play many different roles. Keeping one's classmates entertained by telling imaginative stories contributes to two basic and closely related motives. The composer enlarges and projects himself through created characters--giants, monsters, animals that talk, supernatural beings, people who behave in familiar or surprising ways. Making characters solve problems through great strength or through magic or cunning reflects favorably upon their creator. One's protagonist does mighty deeds, and the author's self-image is strengthened.

The second kind of satisfaction is social in nature, and it springs largely from the respect of an appreciative audience. Children in middle grades and adolescents write primarily (but not solely) for their peers. Reading aloud the story one has written or dictated permits the author to sense the listeners' response to rugged action or suspense, a sudden turn of events, or a playful or vivid use of language. *And he feels the response immediately*. Eye contact tells him instantly what holds his audience and what does not. Analysis is usually unnecessary. Indeed, discussion should be minimal and limited to positive features. Pointing up what the audience likes brings to consciousness techniques that make for effective writing--choice of sensory details to convey immediacy, use of suspense and surprise along with some logical prediction of plot, development of characters through what they say and do and the ways they interact with one another.

For the middle-grades child, the immediate meeting of minds through oral reading of his written product seems most likely to produce the kinds of ego satisfaction he seeks. Occasionally collecting class writings in pupil-made

books or in other semi-permanent format is fortifying as a supplement to the face-to-face experience. For the adolescent, publication in class or school journals with less emphasis upon oral sharing appears to be more productive. At either age, appreciation of the child's writing continues to foster his self-image and therefore makes him more open to the interests of his society and responsive to its needs.

Stimulation and Motivation Are Related but Different

Many stimuli are available to teachers and effective teachers use them to foster children's learning. Invitations to real meetings and parties, letters that persuade or inform school personnel or community leaders, explanatory captions and expository accounts that accompany school exhibits and displays--these and other pupil-to-public writings give reality to composition. Trips, movies, pictures, exhibits, and other first-hand experiences stock the reservoir of ideas and convictions necessary for clear and vigorous expression. *They are not, however, motivations for writing.* True, they furnish much of the content of what is written, but the need for writing springs from the need to affect others through the impact of the written word. The school trip or fair or film program, no matter how significant, is not in itself *a reason* for writing. (Many a pupil swears classmates to secrecy about vacation journeys or other experiences to avoid an assignment to write reports about them!)

Because competition has so long been viewed as a necessary stimulus for school learning, it deserves more than casual mention. Indeed, if one includes competitive grading as well as awards and prizes, competition has been the stimulus most used in the teaching of composition in American schools. However, many schools are beginning to try to turn away from this largely negative

approach. And with the pressure of competition removed, students have actually found writing a more valuable experience.

Questioning the virtue of competition in learning inevitably brings up the values of competition in American life. The distinction is that of *voluntary* versus required competition. In American industry and in sports, entry into competition is voluntary. No one is compelled in our free society to open a store or to be a football player. And in the sports world, pitting unequally qualified participants against one another is strenuously forbidden! Yet in our schools such unequal competition is not only allowed but mandated. The individual has no choice but to enter even though only a few pupils can get high grades, and this is known to begin with.

When children are faced with the near certainty of poor ratings rather than cordial acceptance (and in addition write only by requirement), the experience cannot enhance the individual in his quest for self-hood nor in the esteem of his fellows. It is small wonder that so much composition teaching alienates children from writing and from school generally.

> Our concern about motivation and attitudes is usually prompted by troubled or troublesome students. If they do not respond to the conventions of classroom procedure that we have established, or if their compositions are consistently inadequate, we assume that they are "unmotivated" or that they have The Wrong Attitude. Then, we compound the problem by creating remedial classes that frequently intensify the students' alienation from the goals we have set for them. Furthermore, students in remedial classes are viewed as "immature" by virtue of their alienation; so we challenge them with drills and exercises that prevent them from growing. Ironically, we tend to become more mechanistic with those students for whom such an approach is least effective.
>
> Lionel Sharp

In the realm of written composition, as in other learnings, motivation lies in the essentials of human behavior. The relation of an individual to his society is at the core of

this motivation. When composing facilitates the growing individual's sense of self and of power, and when such composing begets constructive means of affecting and relating to one's society, optimum learning can occur. Within this structure, many kinds of content and stimuli are worthy.

> If we examine a competently directed composition session in the lower grades, we will discover, more than likely, a tremendous interest among the children, whether they be bright or dull. They are motivated by an awareness that what they have to say is unique with them, that they are sharing the experience with an eager, friendly, not-too-critical audience, that they will be rewarded by enjoying, at the very least, a moment of glory among their peers. Composing still contains for them an element of play: oral and written communication interact with one another; subjects for composition arise naturally out of their daily intercourse with one another; experimentation with language goes on in a congenial, non-threatening atmosphere; the watchbird isn't watching too closely.
>
> Sister M. Philippa Coogan, BVM

> Classes should be inductive and experiential rather than instructor-dominated. The best text is writing which the students have prepared for the class. Whenever a course is dominated by some secondary subject, such as literature or language or the American society, the focus of the class falls on the subject itself and the papers most frequently are the student's communications on the subject. The ordering of experience is subordinated to filling out the formulas of academic papers. If students are to discover perceptions and reactions which they wish to refine, then the teacher must accept the position of counselor rather than prescriber, the subjects of papers must be primary to the student, but secondary to the teacher.
>
> Richard Lloyd-Jones

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COMPOSITION IN VANGUARD BRITISH SCHOOLS

Priscilla Tyler, University of Missouri--Kansas City

Not only in politics and economics has England taken a new stance in the latter half of this twentieth century but in education, also. An energetic vanguard of British teachers now emphasize (as characteristic of significant learning) imagination, sensibility, and engagement rather than memory, organization and criticism. Because they tend to scorn systematic presentations of subject matter, because they teach even ghetto children the values of imagination and the livelier arts, their ways seem strange and impractical to American observers. Intangible though their program seems, young teachers all over England are mastering its tenets and teaching with the faith that this new education will make a new England and a new man. At the center of this British educational movement is a teaching of English which calls on the individual student to speak and write so that what he says is sensed as coming from his own psychic experience of its reality, not from an external fortuitousness or convention. It is only by such a psychic engagement with words, these British teachers feel, that a writer or speaker can create a message or communication that is valid and "real."

As a member of a school survey team, I watched teachers in many classrooms in many parts of England as they stirred a fresh spirit in their students and then stood by to let its psychic strength brim over into the words those students spoke or wrote. This country is not facing the same radical political and economic change that England is but it has the same deep need to strengthen the spirit, especially in view of the possible over-dominance of the machine and the machine-image in American cultural life. Some of the ways in which

the British encourage this committed, nonmechanical use of words by their students may, therefore, be of interest to American teachers of oral and written composition. (The observations reported in this article were made during a survey of secondary English teaching in Britain conducted in 1966 by James R. Squire for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Characteristic of the new English curriculum are class activities which interrelate dramatics and the arts with speech and writing. The students frequently role-play, pantomime and put on class-made plays. On windowsills and tables stand models and artifacts the students have created to go with the stories they have written or acted out. Music, also, is often a part of the English class. For example, at Priesthorpe School near Leeds, I observed a group of over a hundred pupils as, first, they listened to a story told them with a symphony recording accompaniment; then, in groups of three, they pantomimed the story, listening this time only to the music. The large room in which they assembled seethed with moving groups as each child acted out his role in accordance with the way he half imagined, half heard it in the beat and melody of the music. Such an activity ensured that any later wording of this happening would be made with an awareness of its underlying rhythm and imagery. Wording is empty, these British teachers feel, without an imagined, rhythmic experience as its source, and the imagined, rhythmic experience is empty, in another sense, without a wording of it to serve as its objective emblem.

In another class later in the day, I watched a small group of these same children as, seated several seats apart, they listened quietly to music. Then, as the record played again, this time more softly, they wrote the story of

their music-accompanied imaginings. All their compositions, as read aloud by their authors were rhythmic, imaginative, coherent and highly individual. It was irrelevant to this kind of language activity that some of the written transcriptions, which the teacher and I looked over after class, were elliptical and nontraditional in both spelling and grammar. This was a class of retarded children and they had just made a powerful use of language in coining their own worded emblem to embody their own imagined experience.

These British teachers of English conceive of their teaching as more dramatic, more psychological and more arts-filled than American teachers of English. They extemporize more easily and try out new combinations of subject matter more readily. It is not surprising, then, that they are also more eager than we are to welcome contemporary culture into the school. For example, they welcome the worded affluence from films, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, advertisements as a special kind of living subject matter imaginatively coined by this century for the delight of English teachers and their classes. Students talk about the programs they see and hear, keep records of their "telly" viewing, check each other on what they get from a newspaper story and sharpen their linguistic sensibilities by noting the word-play in advertisements. Teachers particularly encourage appreciation of all these lively arts in the inner city schools whose many early dropouts get the major part of their education from resources in the nonacademic community. Because mass media are accessible to all members of the national society, they stress that fostering responsiveness to them is potentially a way of not only educating but of reaching and uniting all members and all groups in the society. In the schools I visited, some of the teachers who were most involved with the new ideas were in the "shop" department, teachers of ironwork and woodwork.

These teachers' workrooms often adjoined the art teachers' rooms. Their "shop" students produced artistic and skilled work in wood and iron. Some of it was brought into use in English classrooms as well as put in the many display cases lining the corridors. The teachers of various fields unite in these British schools to give a context for the production of the arts in relation to each other.

Though classes are in general handled as malleable groups rather than as composites of individuals, the individual gets an anchorage of his own through his writing journal. He considers his writing journal to be a personal document, not just an anthology of short pieces written at the suggestion of his teacher. Pupils write frequently and willingly in these journals, sometimes about assigned topics, often not. They use various forms: poems, stories, letters, personal essays, persuasive arguments, advertisements and graffiti of various sorts.

A pupil's sense of having a personal stake in his writing is undoubtedly fostered by the open and generous attitudes of his teachers. It is not the custom in England for teachers to scrutinize closely every rough gesture of compositions pupils write. They expect an adolescent will no doubt move somewhat awkwardly with words in writing as he moves somewhat awkwardly with arms and legs in playing on the athletic field. So they give him the freedom of many practice sessions undisturbed by coaching intervention. Furthermore, lest the close relationship of a young person with his language be interrupted, themes are not slotted into a predetermined set of critical categories. Rather, the teachers comment sparingly and do not grade. The interaction between pupils and teachers, unconfined by a formal system of rewards, is as free

to be as multiple and changing and generous as are the best human relationships. Teachers are mainly concerned with a student's assets, what he has to go ahead on as a speaker and writer. They consider it a more profitable use of their own creative energies to concentrate on his potential excellences as a maker of words rather than on his possible weaknesses. David Osbourne of the Priesthorpe Comprehensive School said the measure of excellence in a written piece is the "engagement" it shows; that is, the dynamic relationship a writer achieves in his words between his language and his psychic experience. Another teacher at the same school said that closure in writing, as in other activities, comes with public performance. A pupil gauges that he has written or rewritten a theme sufficiently when it gets posted on the bulletin board, printed in the class magazine, read aloud or shared in silent reading with other members of the class.

The teachers' concern for "engagement" also brings some of them to drawing a distinction between teaching "real English" and teaching "non-English." Real English is participating in the language of a writer who knows how to make words work "for mortal stakes." Non-English is the study of language as a set of rituals associated with conventionalism and social prestige. They do not exclude but give low priority, therefore, to grammar as a set of conventions not directly associated with successfully using language in a creative or imaginative sense. They suggest that to give training in secretarial type language skills is not a major responsibility of society and should be left to the apprenticeship training programs of those businesses which require workers with such skills. The conventional use of conventional English is not what these men and women want most to teach. They want most

to teach the word-supported imagination which finds ways of being constructively responsive to external experiences. They want their pupils to have the psychic energy, if necessary, to take over an Auschwitz, break out of a Treblinka, stand up to a brain-washing, or rise out of an end-of-empire malaise. They are intent on finding, in and through education, new sources for national strength and pride. And they start with helping their pupils find, in and through their use of the English language, new sources for their own personal strength and pride. In so far as this happens, the class is one in "real English."

These teachers of a real English teach the use of words not only for an ultimate and basic kind of bravery but also for a special kind of aggressiveness and stamina. They feel that the programed set of rituals which a machine-imagining society produces might, if an inertia of the imagination debilitated that society, become its Frankenstein-monster. Teaching, therefore, in the machine age, means for them winning and keeping more and more segments of life for the dominion of the imagination and giving that dominion a continuously renewing emblem in words. It is the faith of these British teachers that the inner resources of imagination are accessible to all men and can be tapped endlessly and fruitfully by man's wording powers, once the vents are opened. The masterful users of words, they also believe, become not just the interpreters, but the makers of society. They are intent on bringing about the dealienation of youth from the modern world but it is a different, nonconventional world they seek relevance to. In this, their distinctive world, they seek to extend dynamic reciprocal relationships between the individual and all that lies around him, near and far, including in their sensibility

not just the human segment but the whole created cosmos.

Some of the vision of this postwar England is in the words of the Education Act of 1944, a sentence of which reads, "It shall be the duty of the local authority for every area to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of the community." British teachers of "real" or new English feel they have a distinctive and essential role in carrying out the implications of this act. And at the center of their work is their insistency-in-common that each student's words are of worth as they are fresh-minted from his own creative inner life.

> The formulas of rhetoric are inadequate for getting the student to make sense of his world, but they may be very helpful in guiding the inexperienced writer and may be all that is really necessary in helping people write for limited purposes.
>
> Richard Lloyd-Jones

My Ambition

My ambition is to graduate from high shool and go to college so I can get a good education. and succeed in having a good life

Then after that I am going to be a stockbroker and settle down and get married and have two children, a boy and a girl. These are only a few of my ambitions.

J.C. 2/20/68

RHETORIC AND THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

Robert Gorrell, University of Nevada

The teaching of composition in the schools has two broad purposes. First it must free the student for self expression. It must encourage him to use his language to develop his mind, help him gain confidence in the power of his language, and stimulate his imagination. To insure this freedom, it must protect him from the stifling effects of negative instruction, from the attitude that success in composition is primarily the avoiding of errors. Second, composition teaching must provide whatever information and advice are needed to help the student whenever he needs help. Obviously these two approaches stand constantly on the verge of conflict. Overprotection of the student's freedom can discourage development and produce only contentment with stability. Overemphasis on advice can dull the imagination, induce fear rather than creativity.

These two purposes are not separated in the classroom and should not be; but they present some differing pedagogical problems. Problems of stimulating writing are considered elsewhere in this discussion. Problems of selecting and presenting the subject matter of composition involve the uses of rhetoric. The traditional label, "composition and rhetoric," once reflected this dual purpose, *composition* referring to practice and criticism of writing and *rhetoric* to a body of advice, some of it distorted from classical rhetoric, much of it proscriptive.

For the past thirty or forty years especially, the teaching of composition has been criticized, sometimes on the ground that its content is nonexistent and sometimes on the ground that its content is so extensive that composition

cannot be considered an individual discipline. Both extremes can be justified, by varying definitions and interpretations. Supporting the first position, writing cannot occur in a vacuum. Writing must be about something. Therefore the only subject matter for a composition course is the material to be written about--which includes everything under the sun and provides no unified or restricted content justifying a separate discipline called composition. From another point of view, composition is the orderly symbolization of thoughts in language. The content for composition teaching therefore embraces everything related to this complex process-the history of language, linguistics, semantics, logic, grammar, usage, rhetoric, and literature.

Since both these positions, and many between, have some validity, the content in composition teaching has been varied--and sometimes confused. One alternative is abandonment; students are assigned themes, which are graded, and the English course turns to other matters. As another alternative, the composition teacher tries to provide something for students to write about, and the composition class discusses problems of pets or drug use or parental obtuseness, about which students can later write. On the assumption that composition is all-inclusive, the teacher can also use composition as a warrant for promoting his enthusiasms--outlining or the research paper or sentence diagramming--or enthusiasms that invade the entire profession from time to time--semantics, logic, linguistics, rhetoric. A possibly pardonable cynicism, reminding the teacher that public sentiment supports emphasis on composition, may encourage zealous activity with workbooks and red pencils. And the tendency of English teachers to be overly conscientious--to feel guilty at the lack of clearly defined subject matter like that of algebra or

beginning Spanish--is also involved, tempting the teacher to present some kind of information or some set of rules, whether it seems valuable or not. Rhetoric has been revived and refurbished during the past decade in the hope that it will provide some unity or focus for a subject matter for composition.

In spite of the current enthusiasm for rhetoric, there is no general agreement about defining it. A major confusion is that the word is frequently used, typically preceded by *empty* or *mere*, as a stick for beating an opponent. In this sense *rhetoric* discredits the speech of a political opponent or suggests that the apparent cogency of a rival opinion is only superficial trickery, relying on flowery language or artificial eloquence. When it labels an academic discipline, rhetoric is still frequently thought of in the classical sense defined by Aristotle, as the art of finding the available means of persuasion for any particular case. Modern classical rhetoricians, while retaining emphasis on argumentation, have broadened the definition by extending the implications of persuasion, sometimes asserting even that all language is persuasive. As early as the eighteenth century definitions of rhetoric were also shifting and broadening in other ways. George Campbell's 1776 definition is echoed in modern dictionaries--"that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end." Richard Whateley in 1828 observed that "the province of Rhetoric . . . comprehends all 'Composition in Prose'."

One contemporary definition, useful for considering rhetoric in relation to the teaching of composition, is that rhetoric is the study of choices among available means of expression. This definition, like most others current today, recognizes how rhetoric draws on other disciplines--those describing the means of expression--but also identifies rhetoric as a separate discipline

by its focus on choice. Grammar, logic, etymology, orthography, dialect study, usage, and literature are all therefore pertinent to rhetoric because they describe language and its uses--the means of expression. But rhetoric is a separate discipline from these because it considers the problems of choice among the materials these related disciplines study. Questions of choice introduce additional considerations. In order to select, the writer must anticipate results or effects. He is therefore concerned about his purposes in any discourse, about his audience, about the stance and tone he will adopt. His main concern with language is not to analyze or describe what it is or how it developed or how it works but to discover principles which will help him choose locutions most likely to do what he wants them to do.

An example or two may clarify the distinction. A modern grammar describes the rules for the passive transformation. That is, it reveals that roughly the same idea can be expressed by alternatives: *The girl ate the artichoke* or *The artichoke was eaten by the girl.* It also formulates the rules whereby the first pattern can be changed to the second. The business of rhetoric is different; it is to consider how the writer can decide which of the two patterns to use in a particular context. It is therefore concerned with differences in the effects of the two sentences, differences in emphasis or rhythm, for instance, which the writer should consider. Or a study of grammar reveals that *He dragged the trunk upstairs* and *He drug the trunk upstairs* are grammatical alternatives for describing the same activity. Dialect study reveals further that *dragged* has currency in standard written English and that *drug* is characteristic of uneducated speech and is more frequent in some areas than others. These are facts useful to rhetoric, but the particular concern

of rhetoric is the choice between the two, involving the purposes of the speaker and his audience and applying the information supplied by the other disciplines.

These examples only illustrate on a very small scale the approach which distinguishes rhetoric from related disciplines like grammar or dialect study. The concerns of rhetoric are far more extensive, embracing the entire composing process, traditionally thought of in three main parts: invention, arrangement, and presentation or style.

In the classroom there has always been attention to the first of these, invention, usually indirect and informal--the supplying of readings or films or pictures to provide material for student writing; discussions designed to stimulate student enthusiasms; or assignments requiring students to collect information. Contemporary rhetoricians have been seeking more orderly approaches to invention. Some have advocated revival and modernization of the classical topics, places for locating pertinent arguments, providing for the student a catalogue of possible devices for development like comparison, contrast, definition, or analysis. Others have formulated sets of questions that a writer may ask himself in order to draw from his memory or imagination the material he needs. There has been much interest in the "stance" and the "voice" of the writer, in the implications of his choices of a point of view and an attitude toward his material and his audience.

Especially influential in school composition programs have been new rhetorical approaches to arrangement. Traditionally rhetoric has formulated patterns for ordering material--spatially, chronologically, and logically, for example--with an introduction, body, and conclusion. It has classified paragraphs into types and provided blueprints for paragraph construction. Modern

rhetoricians have been re-examining the tradition, particularly as it presents the paragraph. They have suggested, for example, looking at arrangements as sequences of generalizations and specifications rather than formalized paragraph units. Or they have suggested patterns of coordination and subordination as methods for organizing material.

Linguistics has contributed greatly to new approaches to presentation and style. At times during its history rhetoric has been directed almost exclusively to studies of style, with the elaborate classifications of figures of speech in the Renaissance or the preoccupation of the schools in the early twentieth century with prescriptive usage. The reaction against treating composition as usage drill shifted some attention to other aspects of rhetoric but also encouraged new interest in studies of style based on modern linguistic knowledge. In stylistic analyses objective descriptions of grammatical and semantic properties of writing have often replaced impressionistic evaluations based on metaphoric terms like *turgid* or *urbane* or *stilted* or *rollicking*. For guiding composition rhetoric has applied new information about how language works to questions of choice among grammatical alternatives—among sentence patterns, for example, or among types of modifiers—and among semantic alternatives.

The new rhetoric has not achieved enough to vindicate the subject entirely from the dreariness that had overwhelmed it by the early years of this century. And neither the new nor the old has solved all the problems of composition. One difficulty is that rhetorical analysis of existing writing may aid understanding and imitation without stimulating creation. Another is that the results of rhetorical research do not translate readily into precepts or advice;

evidence that cumulative sentences are much more numerous in modern prose than periodic does not justify advising students to avoid periodic sentences or to "use them sparingly." In addition, any formalized advice or general precepts may suppress ingenuity.

Nevertheless, conceived broadly as applying to the entire composing process, rhetoric is the discipline most clearly central to the course in composition. I am not suggesting that composition classes should undertake a formal study of rhetorical theory or survey historically the centuries-long accumulation of advice on persuasion, although some acquaintance with the discipline should be part of the preparation of every teacher of English. I am suggesting that rhetoric, as it is being revitalized, offers a possibility for replacing the confusion in the content of composition teaching. It provides a method of organizing a composition course. It offers a focus, a way of apportioning attention to related disciplines and directing them to one end.

> The more brilliant the student the less amiss it is to encourage play. It is play their childhood probably lacked due to their mad effort to emulate adults; it is play their intelligence needs to awaken its real potential; in fact, it is probably through play that their hidden selves might at last be found. Their writing will be very correct, very controlled; however, the real power of words often escapes them. If they cannot play with words, try having them play with, for instance, clay--a medium they do not usually associate with their mannered facades. Perhaps if they can learn to play with one other medium they can transfer their new relaxedness onto words.
>
> Robert Sweet

> The composing process has its psychological roots in the desire of almost every human being to relate to other human beings through words. Any theory of composition that cuts off this process from its roots deprives it of its life-giving principle.
>
> Sister M. Philippa Coogan, BVM

COMPOSITION AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J.N. Hook, University of Illinois

Obviously the English language is the tool of composition. (What else it may be is outside the purview of the Commission on Composition.) We write in graphemes, words, and syntactic structures. The choice of words and structures helps to determine the degree of clarity of a composition and also is a primary determinant of style.

The study of language can increase the precision of word choice by expanding students' vocabularies, by alerting them to connotations, by helping them to recognize archaisms, poetic diction, and the like, by acquainting them with the histories of many words, by increasing their familiarity with dictionaries, and in general by arousing in them a keen and constant interest in words. The study of language can improve students' mastery of sentences by acquainting them with the ways in which sentences combine in systematic fashion the multiple thoughts that flood into human minds; this study of syntax should emphasize synthesis more than analysis--putting sentences together more than taking them apart.

A person who writes well usually enjoys playing with the language. He

experiments with different ways of saying things, trying various words and combinations of words, achieving a variety of tones, and playing at times with fragments, alliteration or assonance, or other stylistic devices--even puns. The attitude of language-play can be instilled in students of varying degrees of ability, even though the results will not be uniformly successful.

In the past, instruction in the language has largely ignored the element of play. It has concentrated instead, in deadly seriousness and deadening dullness, on grammatical analysis and on the correction of "errors." Though study of grammar and discussion of matters of usage merit a continuing role in schools, the amount of attention to these matters may be reduced in the interest of a wider-ranging understanding of language and how it works and how it may change over a period of time.

To make its maximum contribution to the improvement of composition, the study of language should be rich, not impoverished. A well-planned curriculum includes consideration of such content as the following (in addition to grammar and usage):

1. What language is
2. Animal "language"
3. Major language families of the world
4. The Indo-European languages, with emphasis on the Germanic branch
5. The history of British English, perhaps related to English literature
6. The English language in America, perhaps related to American literature
7. Dialectology
8. Semantics
9. Lexicography, including the work of lexicographers, the story of dictionaries, and the use of a dictionary
10. Lexicology--examples of etymology and other ways that words develop and change
11. Relationships between oral and written English
12. Language and style

The emphasis throughout should be on language as a living, vibrant thing, an indispensable tool but also an instrument of pleasure. Discussion of language,

if not confined to the usual analytical and corrective functions, can be as lively as discussion of literature. If students enjoy language study and gain a wealth of information about language, their performance in composition will inevitably profit.

> We need to find ways of re-engrafting the processes of composition on their psychological roots. This involves close examination and experimentation; first, in our own processes of composition, both now and in retrospect, then, in the processes of composition of our students, insofar as they can be brought to share their insights with us.
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> Sister M. Philippa Coogan, BVM

USAGE

Delores Minor, Detroit Public Schools, Michigan

Without polarizing it seems essential for teachers of composition to consider what the student says of more importance than how he says it--at least initially. The practice is a humanizing one which may encourage students to express their thoughts without losing a little of themselves with each written assignment.

The little boy who writes about his reaction to riots, specifically about the charred ruins of his house, is conveying his feelings about something very real to him. The fact that he does not use standard language for expressing what he feels the need to say should not decrease the importance of his work.

A teacher concerned about inculcating human skills of understanding accepts the language of students and also involves them in an exciting study about different facets of language. He helps students understand that language changes, that the choice of usage items is relative, that a difference exists between grammar and usage, that the social status of usage items changes with time. It is this perspective of language study which enables students to realize that language *is* living and that its study can be enjoyable. The study can help them begin to recognize their human potentials, and make them comfortable using language that accords with their needs and environment. Language in itself is neither inferior or superior; its quality can be judged only by particular contexts. Paul Roberts suggests in the May 1963 issue of the *English Journal* that the study of language "is a good thing to know. Of all the humane studies it is the most humane since it is the one thing that is central and common and peculiar to mankind"[1].

1 "Linguistics and the Teaching of Composition," *English Journal* 52 (May 1963): 333.

In essence, this view of usage holds that effective usage is more important than correct usage since there is no one right way in matters of usage in spite of social pressures which support and demand a preferred usage. Certainly, the view is not a new one, for in 1935 W.W. Hatfield defined correct usage in an NCTE monograph as that "which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language."[2]

Everyone tends to make at least occasional adjustment in his language; he does not talk, for example, in quite the same way to infants as to adults. The person who uses "improper" language may change to "proper" language for an important social affair just as he dresses appropriately for the occasion. Likewise, effective speakers like Stokely Carmichael can move with ease from one language style or register to another.

However, the student who is restricted to "they be" and "I seen" is incapable of such fluidity in his use of language. Therefore, the teacher--without condemning "they be" or "I seen"--attempts to add to the student's repertoire the ability to use "they are" and "I saw" when occasion demands. Inability to make such linguistic shifts may limit a student's social and professional options through his entire life.

One way to accomplish such an objective--that of fluidity--is to involve students in many different, *real* situations for using language. As a result,

2 *An Experience Curriculum in English* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company for NCTE, 1935), p. 242.

students begin growing in their operational knowledge of language and become discerning in its use both in speech and writing.

> Correctness in writing usually refers to the absence of minor errors of usage or editorial custom. Like most minor virtues it is worthy of praise, but writing greatly suffers when correctness is given too much attention. Those who are preoccupied with error often lack the energy to pursue major virtues--imaginative formulation of ideas, powerful agitation of the minds and hearts of readers, or precise definition of thought.
>
> Richard Lloyd-Jones

> Primarily negative, the "correctness" approach encourages the attitude that the composition course is a form of punishment, in which success is achieved mainly by avoiding "errors."
>
> Robert Gorrell

> From grade school on, the student learns to please the teacher, not himself. The unfortunate effect of this is that by the time the student reaches college he may be unable to think independently. He may have been reduced to a kind of imitative or reflective force. The question is too often, "What do you, as teacher, want from me?" Only the rare teacher asks, "What do you, as student, have to give, and how can I help?" The most 'successful' student, then, is often the one who learns to anticipate--or as they would put it, "psych out"--the teacher. Thus teachers reward, they punish and they prevent independent growth by indicating that there is a way, if the student can find it, of pleasing the teacher. In other words, teachers function not as persons who through greater knowledge may open doors to ever widening possibilities but as limiting, authoritarian figures bristling with the war-like weapons of grades, credits and sometimes even attendance-taking. Fear closes the student's mind and mouth. And there are far too many teachers who exult in the fear they cause. It is for this reason that the composition student is often heard saying, "I'm writing a paper for Mr. So-and-So."
>
> Robert Sweet

EVALUATION: BY WHOM? WHAT? HOW?

Esther Westendorf, State University of New York, College at Plattsburg

What a person prizes, he does.
What the teacher values, he teaches.[1]

Much has been said about values in teaching. Much, also has been said about evaluation, measurement, and testing. Are these complementary concepts? To a degree, they are, for what one does reflects what he values. To the extent that they differ, they often reflect lack of clarity in objectives. Differences between what a teacher says he values and what he actually evaluates create unexpected results, for students tend to attach importance to what teachers test and rate. A teacher may want to stress effective writing, but his marks emphasize errors. He may want to make his students more proficient in using language, but his remarks make them distrust their ability and dislike the act of composing. Surely most teachers believe that their prime objective in teaching composition is to foster individual growth. But closer examination of their evaluation procedures often discloses that they give disproportionate attention to comparative grading. It is imperative that a teacher consider his priorities and act in ways that support them.

Evaluation is an essential part of learning and a continuing process for student and teacher. When it is done cooperatively, with teacher aiding student to achieve his purposes, it can lead to satisfaction and to desire for development. This intrinsic sort of evaluation is opposed to evaluation as external comparison. The educational principle that success succeeds and

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1 Leland B. Jacobs, "Children's Experiences in Speaking." Virgil E. Herrick and Leland B. Jacobs (eds.), *Children and the Language Arts* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1955), p. 123.

repeated failure frustrates is almost axiomatic, but, incredibly, evaluations are often directed toward detection of imperfections. Destructiveness comes in many forms.

Evaluation is far more comprehensive than testing or rating or grading. It implies assessing a child's present work or achievement for further guidance. The teacher who observes, who listens, who is sensitive to a student's reactions amasses information which is usually more valid than tests--and which may eliminate the need for narrow testing. This kind of evaluation is subjective but it need not be superficial, for it can be recorded and substantiated by a student's accumulated work. The actions which a teacher takes as a result of his evaluation should vary according to the situation and the student. Sometimes his immediate overt response is slight, but he plans further learning experiences. Sometimes teacher and students work together to identify strengths or weaknesses and determine further activities. Any aspect of composing is subject to appraisal, but marks and ratings are extraneous to most composing situations.

For example, standardized test batteries treat composition as a composite of skills of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. The composing process is too individualized for this form of standardization, and such attempts as the STEP Writing Test have low reliability. One danger of accepting a skills test for evaluation in English is that children who spend their time at drill exercises may score higher than those who write freely and extensively, and teachers sometimes use this fact as justification for inferior programs. Objective proof of improvement in composition may be difficult to establish, but samples of children's work offer concrete evidence of their progress.

Unquestionably, it is a difficult task for a teacher to discern each individual's level of achievement and then to provide the guidance he needs or wants. Individuals differ; expectations and instructions must be differentiated accordingly. Concern for growth means that the writer is more important than the writing. The composing process merits more attention than the product. However, the teacher need not assume the entire responsibility; he can, if he will, enlist the help of the students, for they are the learners, the doers, and without their recognition of their needs and goals there can be only limited accomplishments.

But if a student-writer is to strive toward self-improvement in composition, certain conditions must be met. He must see enough purpose in his activities to maintain interest. He must have sufficient understanding of the process of writing to guide the evaluations which are a constant and sometimes unconscious part of composition. He must experience enough success to believe in his own ability to succeed. Students of all ages can--in fact, must--be partners in the work of composition, if they are to attain proficiency and fluency. Their participation decreases teacher autonomy in planning but it increases opportunity for dialogue and for meaningful appraisal.

Evaluations must reflect the reasons for the writing. If the prime purpose of writing is to satisfy a teacher assignment, then evaluation will be external to the process. If, however, the purpose is to satisfy a personal desire, evaluation is intrinsic; if the purpose is to affect or inform others, appraisal comes naturally with audience reaction.

Especially in the elementary school, evaluation of composition is narrow if it is confined to examining a paper for deviations from the norm of grammar

and mechanics. For the fact is that, whether ineptly or not, whenever a student writes, he involves himself in decisions that are beyond the mechanical. As he composes, he focuses on ideas and on the language which communicates these ideas. Striving to convey his thoughts and perceptions, he will sharpen and refine his language and the teacher who turns the student's attention to mechanics or to grades while he is struggling with ideas interferes with the act of composing and risks defeat. This does not relieve either a teacher or student of responsibility for observance of conventions. For children, like grownups, want to be proud of their work; they will therefore welcome and actively seek assistance in accomplishing their purposes, when doing so depends on their observing printing house conventions. When students' contributions are to be shared with others, as when they are published in a school newspaper, writers may appreciate having a teacher supply correct spelling or punctuation. But students accept such outside criticism only when they have been encouraged to develop confidence in their ability to succeed in writing. Students reject help which degrades them or distracts them from their purposes.

Especially at elementary-school levels, where teachers work with children in many areas of the curriculum, opportunities for teaching and evaluating children's knowledge and use of the conventions of standard English exist within the total school program. Unfortunately, these chances to develop and assess language skills are often missed because teachers and pupils fail to see these varied activities as providing opportunities for helping children in clarifying and communicating ideas. Teachers should remember oral interchange among children as one very important support to composition.

Personal writing is an inappropriate vehicle for teaching or testing

mechanics of writing or for comparative grading. Indeed children's imaginative or personal writing should rarely be subjected to external evaluation, although praise for a well-phrased sentence or an honest perception is a form of valuing which can lead toward future effort.

Adults normally refine their ideas through writing. Young children speak more freely, fluently, and effectively than they write. They clarify their thoughts orally and develop composition skills as they talk. Adults, also, may need to talk through hazy, half-formed ideas before they can write well. If oral language is accepted as a necessary part of the composing process, then teacher and student can focus attention on content and communication, free from concern for the written language system. Furthermore, differing composition abilities are required in different oral situations. When one considers the abilities needed for story-telling, dramatization, oral reporting, and discussion, he can identify ways in which these experiences relate to the composing process. Responses will vary according to purpose and activity.

Why does school evaluation of composition so often place excessive emphasis on conformity to standard form and mechanics? Correctness in writing is primarily related to politeness. Nevertheless, a misspelled word or omitted period strikes the proofreading adult with almost physical force, and teachers defend themselves against real or suspected criticism for lack of rigor in preserving standards of good English by red-penciling lapses in mechanics.

When a teacher understands the developmental stages through which a child passes as he learns to write and collects evidence of a pupil's progress over

a period of years, he can remove from children much pressure for mastery of mechanics. A fifth-grade teacher once remarked, "Some of these children write so poorly that I did not think they had made any progress, but when I read papers they wrote last year, I see how much they have improved." If samples of students' work are kept over a period of years, they, their teachers, and their parents have proof of their progress.

The average child enters first grade knowing much about oral language but almost nothing about our written symbol system. Within a few years, he learns most of the principles basic to writing his language. He needs more time to perfect his command of the symbol system, to extend his ability to use language effectively, and, perhaps to habituate himself to the use of certain selected items in the prestige dialect. If he seems to take these last steps very slowly, one must remember that establishing habits requires time and patience. Often, however, his improvement is only retarded by concentration on the mechanical imperfections still remaining in his work.

If a teacher's purpose is to guide student growth, if he accepts the composing process as highly individualized, he will be less concerned with uniform standards but more alert to pupil perceptions. He will find a way to meet each student, despite the fact that individual conferences are time-consuming. Long-range planning with students provides considerable flexibility in scheduling and permits students to ask for needed assistance. In some classes, each student keeps a folder of his work; periodically, he and his teacher evaluate selected samples. Obviously, the value of these conferences depends upon the quality of the relationship between student and teacher. Identification and approval of effective use of language provides more

guidance and a more potent incentive toward future effort than fault finding. Individual conferences permit, but do not guarantee differentiation in instruction and evaluation.

Evaluation, as was said before, is also a function performed by the peer-group. Students tell stories or read their written work, receiving appraisal through audience reaction. Stories, poems, or reports may be put into booklets, magazines, or newspapers; writers usually revise their work to make these compositions as presentable as possible. Students work in pairs or small groups, assisting and evaluating as they think through their problems and share their accomplishments. Care must be exercised lest peer evaluation degenerate into fault finding, but when the focus is on valuing, this destructive aspect tends to be minimized. Under the guidance of a capable teacher, class arrangements can be as varied as the needs and group-process abilities of students indicate.

Although fostering student growth is the major purpose for evaluating composition, the teacher often has another task to perform; he must assign marks and secure evidence to substantiate his judgment. All too often, destructive evaluative procedures stem from the need for comparative grading. But is this need as real as it seems to be? At the elementary-school level, it is not. Teachers must know enough about a child's abilities to show parents and administrators how he is progressing, but they can better explain current status and progress by using samples of the child's work than by marks. To the degree that ranks are required in many of our present secondary school and college classes, teachers of composition must work to eliminate the destructive consequences of comparative grading.

As I was sitting in my desk
I had a dream of my own
I was in a different world I had
a feelind that I never had before
On a Purple mountain across a
big vally ~~in to the~~ There were trees
of green and ~~sprungtime~~ show.
Grass had a green new coat
~~and~~ Bushes small and gay—,
as I sat there and stared
my dream went away.
and my world disapeared.

The Little Tree

Once there was a little tree
Just as pretty as could be
But then one day a little bee
Made a nest in that little tree.

Night

The sun was dying
The moon was slowly being born
The stars were being christened
For on was coming night.
Pure twilight now was present.
Now the light is dim
Ah! now all is darkness
Night is here again.

If the teacher accepts the composing process as highly individualized, he will be less concerned with uniform standards but will be more alert to the child's perceptions. If he accepts the process as an integral part of a child's language development, inseparable from cognitive development and from other facets of language, he will not judge the child's performance as a narrow aggregation of specific skills. If he sees language development as a gradual process, he will be more willing to withhold destructive criticism, confident that the child is progressing even though he has not yet attained mastery.

Esther Westendorf

GRADING COMPOSITIONS

Richard Lloyd-Jones, University of Iowa

Grading is the visible sign of evaluation as it is carried on in most schools. At its best it is shorthand communication between teacher and student, a way of summarizing a judgment implied by other marking, and it may help the teacher assemble his separate judgments of work by one or more students. Unfortunately, the public use of grading for determining public rewards means that grading is rarely found at its best.

Composition is an exceedingly complex act. The number of separate decisions made in composing one page of text is beyond counting; the variations in kinds of excellence and weakness are immense; the capacity of any teacher to deal with these variations is much over-taxed, especially if the students are numerous. In the best of circumstances a linear grading scale--numbers or letters--is inadequate to represent the combination of excellence and weakness in any paper. The single grade is likely to be misleading both to student and teacher, in that it oversimplifies. It may be highly destructive to the student by obscuring his virtues and emphasizing supposed faults, by denying him a vital self-confidence in his ability to communicate powerfully, and by reducing the retail value of his academic record. But because it does not seem likely that teachers will be soon freed from the necessity of assigning linear grades in composition courses, this paper is primarily concerned with suggesting methods by which the dangers and damages of grading can be reduced.

The complications which have to be faced can be grouped under three headings. Writing as self-expression, writing as communication, writing

as mastery of editorial details. Writing is first self-expressive, a form of discovery and a process for building a personal view of the world with language, a device which is socially determined. This function is especially important in early years, and it is so much related to one's view of self, to creativity, and to essential humanity that simple quantification is absurd. If we were told that John Donne rated a B- and that Samuel Johnson earned a B+, we would recognize the silliness, but we think nothing of rating mechanically the insights of the young. By such quantitative rating we evade making qualitative evaluations. This mistranslation of scales is destructive.

Writing is also communicative. In theory--the theory underlying much of the rating in experiments--one can measure the reader's whole response for the piece of writing. According to the theory, the finished product of writing produces a reaction. Implicitly in this theory all writing is socially oriented, that is, persuasive and emotion evoking. Measure the size of the response and you have a grade. Probably in large studies this is a satisfactory method; quirkiness is cancelled out by the size of the statistical sample, and odd judges are removed from the rating system. But for individuals in the classroom--where some odd teachers still remain, often to the general good--quirkish judging can be unfair and destructive. Furthermore, the rhetorical situation, which is the theoretical framework for judging communication, is in itself complicated. To say that one must adapt to circumstances and audiences sounds easy but circumstances and audiences are subject to manifold variation. The teacher himself may make many errors; consider how often teachers have been unable to explain their own positions to the general public. Whenever the teacher points the student into new social circumstances so that he can

face new problems in communication, all of the student's social awareness, previous experience, and emotional limits are challenged; as a result the student's performance may involve responses which are important but which can not really be called the business of the class. The same can be said when the student is bullied into writing about subjects which he does not understand or has experienced so recently that he hasn't made sense of them. Any faults in writing may be a result of a weakness in adjustment far removed from the stated purpose of the classroom, or to what is to be measured by the grade. Unitary judgments are product oriented, but the classroom should remain process oriented.

If these two underlying problems were not serious enough--and both in many ways are out of the control of the teacher--the problem of language and mechanics, which all concede to be the English teacher's business, is also so complicated that linear grading is misleading. The most simpleminded demonstration of the difficulty can be seen in the common practice of giving a grade for content and a separate grade for form. Although the stated line of division differs from classroom to classroom--not everyone thinks of the same essentials as minimum--the implication is that editorial neatness is different from essential composition. In practice, editorial neatness is easily observed and easily taught whenever a student decides it is worth learning. Often the grade for mechanics represents docile neatness, a result that favors the conventional mind.[1] Editorial correctness can be objectified, quantified, and defended in front of the school boards and disgruntled students. So long as

1 "Objective" tests of "composition" are usually constructed this way, so "honors" programs which admit students on the basis of such tests may be in fact honoring docility.

one does not raise the question of whether the editorial neatness of the finished product is a proper course objective, one can grade this aspect of language with a minimum commitment of intellect or spirit.

Even the crucial forms of language, the conventions of three structures, and the variations in these structures, are likely to be misrated by a linear scale. Even if transitions, logical order, and levels of abstraction are judged, the reader tends to view the complex language structure as a system in which to make errors. Grades become a record of how many things were done wrong rather than an indication of how many right and powerful choices were made. The fact of giving and defending the grade alerts the reader to the art of nit picking. He can always find enough errors to justify that "C." Although it is surely wise now and then to emphasize how misjudgment in a detail may have serious consequences in a whole communication, still it is too easy for a tired and defensive grader to catalog error. And it is hard for any writer to want to present ideas to a nit picker.

Whatever objections may be raised to current grading systems, for the time being most teachers will have to use them. Furthermore, modifications of systems of grading will not in any way change the need to express to students the evaluation of readers. A writer needs ways of finding the worth of his own work: his own reactions need objectifying, the responses of intended audiences--usually peers--are important, and the experience of a professional teacher should be helpful. The question is how to get value from the present system without causing any more damage than necessary while we are establishing more appropriate ways of communicating our evaluations.

In the first place the student must understand what the grade is intended

to represent. If he is to realize that we are interested in his gaining competence in the process of writing, he has to hear that the product, the paper he hands in, is merely a symptom of his mastery of process. A neatly done job on a simple minded problem is not better than a flawed work on a difficult problem, even though the first product may be publishable in its way. Complete success on a small task is good for morale, but that kind of success is an emotional rest period, not the goal of teaching. One can try to imitate those who score diving or ice skating contests and assign difficulty and performance scores and multiply them, but the method is probably too complicated and it can't be guaranteed to be any more accurate than simple minded scoring. It does remind the student about levels of difficulty, though. But essentially the performance score is whole reaction used for experimental purposes; the index represents the teacher's judgment about the chances of the product actually doing the job the rhetorical situation assigns to it. Not all writing should be judged in such terms, but at least it can be explicit. The student can discount for the teacher's idiosyncrasies, to the extent he can perceive them.

In order to reduce the effect of utterly subjective reactions many teachers adopt one of the many rating scales available. The more explicit and limited the scales, the greater the likelihood of agreement among several readers--or even agreement of one reader with himself on different occasions--if the readers do in fact understand clearly the limits expressed by the scales. Furthermore, the scales list qualities which the student can identify. The more specific the checklist, the greater the probability that the items are trivial and that the qualities not listed are more important than the

ones that are. The rewards of the system encourage the student to excell in minor virtues and ignore major problems in writing. If, for example, having explicit topic sentences is worth 10 out of 100 possible points, students will quickly learn to place explicit topic sentences at the openings of paragraphs. He may write odd narratives, but he'll earn 10 points.

Some teachers grade only on the features being stressed in the current assignment. Such a system avoids the problems of dealing with the total effect of writing, and encourages the instructor to think of writing in terms of masterable sub-units. It also encourages students to forget the purpose for writing at all, and it obscures excellences which may not be part of the current assignment. Although there is much to be said for concentrating on one problem at a time, writing is not a simple skill; the inter-relationships among features are always more important than single features, but at least the focus can be clearly explained when the assignment is given, and responsible teachers can compliment unassigned virtues, even when they don't give grade credit for them.

Another way of limiting the dimensions to be represented in the grading scale is to recall that not every paper need be graded even though a course grade has to be given. One may choose to grade no papers; one can keep comments about virtues and suggestions for changes in the office file for use in conference, but ask that all papers be returned for a final assessment. Such a procedure takes into account that good writers have bad days, that notable attempts may fail, and that improvements occur. It prevents the student and the teacher from getting preoccupied with minutiae. Such a procedure may encourage the heresy of averaging performances, in order to

get an average grade, but certainly no more than when one tries to average a set of grades in the grade book. In any case, uncharacteristically poor performances ought to be left out of the averages.

A related technique is to announce that certain papers are graded papers, and that the rest are for experiment and practice. In a world where commerce dominates the sytem, some students may choose to treat ungraded papers casually. Journals may be ignored. But if the atmosphere is one which encourages experiment and learning, that is probably not a great risk, and anyway the teacher can demand an honest effort on all assignments; he is most likely to get it if he gives the writing an honest reading and a human reaction instead of a batch of red-marked quibbles. The pattern of what is graded and what is sympathetically read is important. At one extreme a teacher may grade very few items, a kind of ritual examination which separates practice from performance but which puts great pressure on the occasional performance. High pressure examination favors conventionality. On the other hand, the teacher may grade almost everything, saving some kind of "creative" efforts for personal satisfaction. The journal or the short story or the poem are isolated from the main stream of the course; whether this is emphasis or down-grading depends upon the teacher. Because the papers selected for grading are likely to be the most objectified kind of communication, especially if only two or three are chosen, a teacher may also let the student submit any additional work he would like counted. This gives a creative student a chance to show off his excellences, and it may emphasize the inclusiveness of our definition of writing. Some teachers limit the graded papers to those written in class--this eliminates cheating--but it also increases the likelihood that ready

conventionality is the quality honored. Although instruction, especially for younger children, may be aided immensely by having the classroom teacher immediately available to help the student writer past blocks or puzzles, still for most people really good writing requires a period of gestation. The problem here is the same as that in any other grading from a limited part of the sample. Whether the number of graded papers or the number of graded qualities is limited, the fact of limiting is in itself instructive because it honors some skills at the expense of others. Such selection is not necessarily bad, but it ought to be explicit in reference to the students being taught and graded.

Group grading has also been tried as a way of increasing reliance on audience response. Since it ordinarily is too expensive to bring in outside trained readers--except in a lay-reader and teacher arrangement--this means having the class members rate each other. As a class exercise this procedure can be very good. It provides an audience of peers so that a writer can get the reaction of a real audience. Publication in a newspaper or in ditto form provides the same stimulus and also makes reasonable the demand for editorially clean copy. But not all writing really is public, and some writing may introduce problems quite beyond the receptive powers of the ordinary student audience. Furthermore, competitiveness for grades may be damaging to class operation even though peer reaction in itself rarely need be. The reaction is likely to be set by what norms the teacher establishes or by wholly subjective reactions. The latter kind, of course, is good for information if not for record.

Perhaps the best advice of all is to resist pressures for grading. Evaluations can be given to the student without any grade as such, and

administrators can learn to live without such misleading summaries. Even if it were not inaccurate to report on writing in this form, the combining in a single grade of an estimate of ability in writing and in reading literature is even more misleading, and yet common. If we really believe that words and sentences and paragraphs are important, maybe we should insist that our evaluations be expressed in such language.

> Instruction or practice or discipline intended to give the student competence in a prestige dialect should not be allowed to dominate the composition course and should probably not occur until the student has reached enough academic maturity to make him aware of the social or other needs for such skill.
>
> Robert Gorrell

THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS OF COMPOSITION

J.N. Hook, University of Illinois

A well-prepared teacher of composition has a strong interest in composition and the composing process and has "the ability to do," "the ability to guide," and "the ability to evaluate."

The ability to *do* implies a reasonable amount of skill in various kinds of writing: imaginative as well as expository, journalistic as well as literary or critical, and poetic as well as prosaic. It implies also a knowledge of various composing processes--the difference in process, for example, between the writing of a time-limited answer in an examination and the leisurely, thoughtful, revision-filled writing of a sonnet. And it implies an ability to write in accordance with the varying characteristics of different readers or groups of readers. A teacher of English is not expected to possess the highly developed literary skill of a professional writer, but it is essential that he have enough practice that he can write clearly and cogently and sometimes imaginatively. Since composition may be oral as well as written, the well-prepared teacher is similarly competent in speaking.

The ability to *guide* implies once more an awareness of composing processes. It requires also, though, an understanding of students and their motivations and powers, for not all students respond alike to the same kind of guidance nor follow exactly the same steps while composing. In addition, it requires knowledge of the possible goals toward which students may be guided: the various genres of composition within their reach, the discovery and selection of suitable items of content, the rhetorical principles necessary or appropriate for students' use. To guide well, the teacher should be able to prepare teaching

materials and units of instruction in composition and know how to use programmed materials, records, slides, films, or even television commercials to help him attain his goals. Guidance also implies the correlation of listening, speaking, and reading with written composition.

The ability to *evaluate* implies the teacher's recognition that "correctness" in mechanics and usage is only one component of a successful composition. Certainly no less important are substantial and relevant content, organization, clarity, appropriateness of tone, and suitability to the intended readers. The well-prepared teacher has had much practice in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of student compositions, along with practice in preparing comments that will help students to grow steadily in improving their strengths and decreasing their weaknesses.

The majority of teacher-preparation programs in English do not at the present time place sufficient emphasis upon composition. Substantially more college work is needed than is afforded by freshman English. Although parts of this work can be incorporated in an English methods course, most of it must be taken in advanced English composition and speech courses, which will provide not only much practice in writing and speaking but also considerable knowledge of rhetorical theory and elementary stylistics. The college study of literature should encompass style as well as content, and should require considerable writing. The college study of language should transcend mere anatomizing, placing even more emphasis on how a sentence is put together than on how it may be taken apart; an in-depth study of how language functions is invaluable to the teacher of composition.

A teacher's preparation does not, of course, stop on the day he receives

his diploma. He continues to learn about composition by (1) doing considerable writing (for instance, he may write the same kind of composition he asks his students to write); (2) doing much reading in professional journals and other professional publications; (3) pausing sometimes in his own reading of literature to observe how an author achieves his effects; (4) attending professional conferences, workshops, etc., in which the focus is on composition; (5) taking additional courses in advanced composition, in speech, and in related subjects. He who will gladly learn may most happily teach.

> Studies of the training acquired by teachers of English suggest that few have had any experience in writing other than that implied by the study of literature. Training in English should be reconstituted to suggest awareness of the arts of composing. Different programs can accomplish the purpose, but probably additional work in psychology, sociology, semantics, linguistics, non-verbal art forms, and writing should be expected. In particular, any prospective teachers with middle-class backgrounds must have both the theoretical learning and the practical experience which will enable them to cope with assumptions of students not like themselves.
>
> Richard Lloyd-Jones

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Composition: The State of the Art

1. Should someone be concerned with helping children develop protection against the "practicers of rhetoric"? Who, if not the English teacher? Should writing have a part in this process?
2. Can work in writing help youngsters discover "structure in the world"?
3. Although classes and categories may not represent "the highest reaches of human thought," have they some part in these reaches?
4. In your experience, how much does the teaching of writing ignore what Douglas terms "the seven knowable facts about people who make compositions in writing"?
5. Even though writers tend to specialize, does all writing have a general basis with which teachers of composition ought to concern themselves?
6. Do students compose under conditions as different from those of professional writers as the article suggests? Should they? Consider at least the following: (a) ways students and writers get assignments; (b) the teacher as a skillful and sympathetic editor.
7. The article says that one of our main tasks may be to try to find out whether any differences exist between the social values which accompany composing in writing and other kinds of composing. What may be meant by "social values"? May not composing in words have some unique values?
8. Describe some situations in which students of yours seem to have found pleasure and satisfaction in writing. Describe the basis of the pleasure and satisfaction.
9. How do you determine that one of your students is developing or growing in his use of language?
10. How do you help students improve their writing?

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Creativity

1. Shouldn't every bit of student writing, even a list or an outline, be regarded as "creative," since the student has created something that did not previously exist?
2. At what state should emphasis be shifted from the writing of poems, stories, etc., to the writing of exposition?
3. "As a practical matter, teachers at various levels must decide how to encourage creativity without, at the same time, neglecting their obligation to extend the student's experience of the conventions of the language." Does this statement contradict the ideas in the first article, "Composition: The State of the Art," which seems to imply that students are best left to learn the conventions by themselves? How is the teacher to decide between these attitudes?
4. Since society appears to place higher value on adherence to the conventions of writing than upon creativity, would it not be prudent for the schools to reflect this value system?
5. In what ways can individuality, as implied by "creative," be encouraged in the classroom despite the needs for social responsibility, as implied by "conventional"?

Motivation in the Teaching of Composition

1. Why, really, should students be expected to write at all? As the "McLuhan Age" becomes a reality, they may never have to write anything.
2. This is an age of exposition, of facts. Most best-sellers today are non-fiction. The market for poems and short stories has almost dried up, and Broadway produces few new plays. Why, then, does this statement place so much emphasis on imaginative writing? If today's students write anything at all as adults, they probably won't write stories, poems, or plays.
3. Isn't it an undesirable kind of motivation to encourage children to "show off" in front of their peers? And isn't this showing off actually a form of competition such as the statement deplores?
4. We do live, however, in a competitive world. Why shouldn't this fact be clearly illustrated in classroom activities?.
5. From your observation, what writing experiences have most genuinely engaged the energies of children and young people? How did these writing occasions tap the basic motivations of self-realization or social response?
6. Do modern means of verbal recording, such as tape-recording and video-taping, further the same basic motivations? How do these media affect written composition?
7. What kinds of satisfactions heighten pupils' motivation for further writing and hence for further possibilities for growth?
8. In what ways do you agree or disagree with the distinction between stimulus and motivation?
9. What teaching-learning activities for young adults intensify the desire to write with clarity and grace? If some of these motivations are economic how do they relate to more general needs?

Composition in Vanguard British Schools

1. The implication of this paper is that American schools should imitate the British practices described. But teachers in many of our more outstanding American schools insist that similar emphasis on individual creativity, personal writing, creative dramatics, etc. has characterized their programs for a long time. How popular are such practices in schools with which you are associated? If you have not already done so, would you be willing to experiment along these lines? Do you have any misgivings about entering upon such an experiment?
2. The writings of Kohl, Kozol, Herndon and others seem to indicate that such practices as Priscilla Tyler alludes to in this article might be especially effective in inner city or ghetto schools. What does your experience in such schools lead you to conclude? If you have used such methods in inner city schools, what has been the response?
3. The de-emphasis on grading in British writing programs described here seems consonant with practices recommended in Richard Lloyd-Jones's and Esther Westendorf's articles. Do you see ways of dealing with the papers of your students that by-pass letter or number grades, yet keep students writing to the top level of their present ability?

Usage

1. If usage is effective, won't society have to learn to accept such usage as "they be" and "I seen"? Does anything really matter but effectiveness?
2. James Sledd (*English Journal*, December 1969) argues that it is racist to try to get black students to use white middle-class language. Is this accusation fair? Aren't all students and adults (not just blacks) likely to be penalized in some situations if their language does not conform to the modern prestige dialect? Hasn't this always been true, and not just in this country?
3. Isn't it especially important to help students learn to adjust their language according to the age, level of education, and social characteristics of their audience; for example, to use "I ain't saw it" in familiar situations, but "I haven't seen it" when talking to a prospective employer? Or is such learning impossible to master?

Composition and the English Language

1. Is it wise to emphasize "play" with language? The use of language is such a serious thing that stress upon play may not be at all appropriate.
2. Is there time in a crowded curriculum to bring in all the language elements suggested in the position paper? Granted that all of these elements may be important, don't we have to be very selective and include only the most important, such as grammar and usage?
3. Are the language elements that are listed all really very important? What good does it do a student, for instance, to know about language families of the world or about the Indo-European language? After all, he is a student in an *English* class.
4. Are teachers really knowledgeable enough to give meaningful instruction in all the language elements listed? Can they become so without a huge amount of added preparation?
5. What evidence is there that the proposed rich knowledge of language will indeed improve students' writing?

Rhetoric and the Teaching of Composition

1. Assuming that principles of rhetoric are worth teaching, at what age or grade level should the instruction begin? What kinds of indirect instruction are possible before direct instruction?
2. How much attention, if any, should be given to set formulas for arrangement and presentation? Are such formulas more successful with younger or older students? If little or no attention is given to such formulas, what rhetorical matters should be taught?
3. Might the teaching of rhetoric be an aid to creativity rather than a hindrance--an important help to mastering convention so that one can rise above it?
4. How useful are proscriptive rules as methods of teaching rhetoric? For example, is it useful pedagogically to discourage students from using certain types of sentences--those beginning with "and" or "but" or the first-person pronoun or those beginning with "this"?.
5. What are the implications for teaching in the statement that rhetoric as a study of choice requires the writer to "anticipate results or effects"? What does the student need to know in order to "anticipate" intelligently?

Evaluation: By Whom? What? How?

1. Why is it so bad to mark errors? A piano teacher gets results by telling his pupil that the fingering is wrong. Shouldn't a young writer be given similar help?
2. What aspects of composition can a teacher evaluate? How can he record and communicate his evaluations?
3. Schools, parents, colleges, and society in general demand and expect comparative grading. They are not satisfied to know that Johnny is doing better this month or this year than last: they want to know how Johnny's work compares with that of other students. Isn't comparative grading essential, then?
4. How can evaluation be prevented from becoming inhibiting?

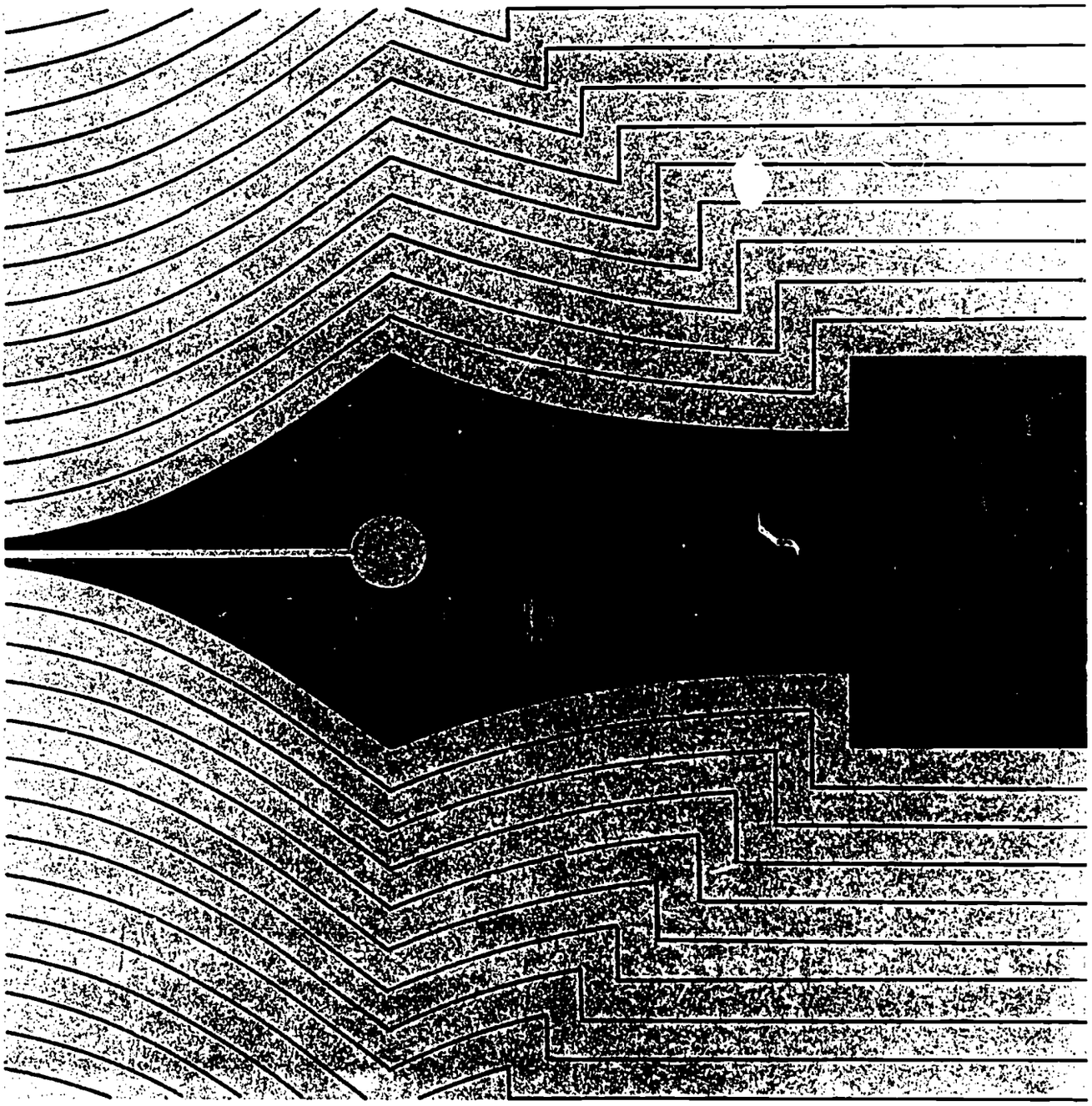
Grading Compositions

1. Detailed course evaluations would obviously give more information than simple grades. But wouldn't the vast majority of people who have to use such evaluations, students included, merely translate them into simple grades? Would their value therefore justify the amount of time it would take to write and read them?
2. If a teacher of writing and his students have communicated adequately with each other, using the methods suggested by this article, wouldn't a detailed evaluation be redundant? Couldn't a simple grade represent an accurate summary of the communication that had taken place?
3. If present grading systems are too simple in responding to categories, how can the scale be made more responsive or how can the elements to be measured be restricted?
4. How can a balance be achieved among elaboration of comment, speed of marking, agreement in rating among several readers, and the need for administrative abbreviation?

1. Since composing is not really taught but must be learned, isn't it futile to prepare people who will "teach" composition?
2. Many excellent athletic coaches were not themselves very good players. Can't a composition teacher be excellent as a teacher even though he himself is a poor writer?
3. Although the position statement refers to preparation in speech, does it emphasize it enough? Given the current stress on speaking as a preliminary to writing, isn't a knowledge of speech even more important for a teacher than a knowledge of writing?
4. Granted that existing teacher-preparation programs pay little attention to composition, how can study be added in this area without deleting something equally important, such as courses in literature or language?
5. In inservice study, isn't it more important for a teacher to learn more about language and literature instead of trying to improve his own skills in composition?
6. The 'study of how a sentence is put together' has not been a major part of the education of all writers: the idea of 'putting a sentence together' falsifies the nature of the composing act. Is there, then, any justification for such study?
7. "One law for the ox and the lion is oppression" (Blake). Is it time that we gave a warmer welcome to diversity of composing rather than to uniformity?
8. We should attend more to the process than to the product. The product, however, deserves a response from an audience. Should the teacher be the only audience?
9. Mark Twain used only five percent of the content of his notebooks in his subsequent writings: should we therefore encourage a similar prodigality and wastefulness in our students?

Composition Opinionnaire

The Student's Right to Write



A PUBLICATION PREPARED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON COMPOSITION
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COMPOSITION OPINIONNAIRE

PART I

Please respond to the following questions:

1. NAME (Optional) SEX: M F AGE

2. In what state(s) have you done most of your teaching?

3. In what state(s) did you do your college work?

4. What is the highest college degree which you hold?

5. What is your college major? Minor?

6. How many college credit hours beyond that degree have you earned?

7. How many college credit hours have you earned in composition? (semester hours)

8. How many college credit hours have you earned in courses on the teaching of composition? (semester hours)

9. How many college credit hours have you earned in courses on grammar? (semester hours)

10. How many years of teaching experience have you had?

11. How many, if any, composition courses as such do you usually teach each semester?

12. What portion of a typical year of work is devoted to the teaching of composition?

13. With what educational level have you had most experience?

Lower Elementary	Senior High
Upper Elementary	College
Junior High	Other

14. At what educational level do you now work?

Lower Elementary	Senior High
Upper Elementary	College
Junior High	Other

15. Do you have assistance in evaluating compositions?
Type of assistance:

16. What type of professional experiences in methods of teaching of composition have you had?
Institute:
Place Date

Inservice:
Type Place Date

COMPOSITION OPINIONNAIRE
PART II

Directions

Check the column that most nearly represents your response to each of the statements that follow.

Strongly Agree means complete, definite agreement.
Agree means definite agreement (nearly so).
Disagree means definite disagreement (nearly so).
Strongly Disagree means complete, definite disagreement.
No opinion means just that (no opinion either way and the response might be described as neutral).

Be sure to check in only one of the spaces for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. Writing assignments should be more extensive than the specification of a topic or list of topics.					
2. The major obligation of instruction in composition is to help students learn and practice the conventions of standard, educated English.					
3. Grades are the most effective way of evaluating compositions.					
4. In order to insure fairness, specific penalties in grades should be assigned for mechanical errors in compositions—for example, one point off for each spelling error.					
5. Composition programs in the elementary grades should be directed primarily at encouraging students to self-expression.					
6. There is little research evidence that knowledge of grammar and usage will produce improvement in student writing.					
7. By the time they leave high school all students should be able to distinguish clearly among the four forms of discourse: narration, description, exposition, and argumentation.					
8. Grades are the most effective way of motivating students to improve their writing.					
9. Correct English is established by the logical grammatical relationships within the language.					
10. Rhetoric as it is pertinent to the composition course concerns only the manner of writing or speaking, not the matter.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
11. Successful writing is achieved only if all themes are carefully corrected by the teacher.					
12. The techniques of writing and documenting a formal research paper should be taught in high school to all college-bound students.					
13. Assignments during the last two years of high school should require primarily expository writing.					
14. Film-making is a useful activity for the writing course for teaching the basic principles of composition.					
15. Since composition is part of the traditional English course, writing assignments should require the student to write exclusively about literature.					
16. High school students who are able to consistently write correct English should not be required to do further work in composition.					
17. Composition courses should include instruction in viewing film and television and reading newspapers and magazines.					
18. High school students should be discouraged from using figurative language because their efforts at metaphor so often produce only cliches.					
19. In order to avoid errors in sentence structure, weak students should be encouraged to write only short, simple sentences.					
20. Students should be required to prepare written outlines before they begin writing expository papers.					
21. Students can improve their writing by learning devices for strengthening the continuity of thought from one sentence to the next.					
22. Students should not be allowed to begin sentences with *and, or, for,* or *but.*					
23. Students should be discouraged from using the first person pronoun in their compositions.					
24. Every good paragraph should have a concluding sentence or "clincher."					
25. The English course for junior high school should include a research paper so that students can learn how to use the library and source materials for papers in their other courses.					
26. Growth in writing in the elementary school is enhanced by a broad and rich program of literature.					
27. Grading a paper or a course with a single letter grade informs no one as to the values sought whether those of style, content, mechanical accuracy or a combination of these elements.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
28. The experience of composing can and should nurture the pupil's quest for self-realization and his need to relate constructively to his peers.					
29. Children and young adults, like other writers, compose largely for an audience, and the response of this audience is strategic in their growth toward more mature literacy.					
30. The teacher-pupil conference can and should aid the learner in finding his strengths and encourage him in correcting some of his weaknesses.					
31. Class and teacher comment on expository writing and other forms of factual composing should emphasize content.					
32. Growth in writing throughout a year's span and over still longer periods is marked by spurts rather than by equal or nearly equal increments.					
33. Teachers should write all the compositions that they assign to students.					
34. Students who speak freely, fluently, and effectively are generally good writers.					
35. Students should often "talk out" their compositions prior to the writing.					
36. Composition programs in the elementary grades should be designed primarily to help students learn to discipline their writing and develop awareness of accepted standards of good prose.					
37. Evaluation should be individualized; standards set for one student may be inappropriate for other students in the same class.					
38. Teachers should correct errors on students' papers.					
39. Students should rewrite each paper regardless of the number or kind of errors.					
40. Every error on a student's composition should be indicated.					
41. Able pupils tend to explore different forms and styles of expression and show more variation in quality from one written product to another than do less able pupils.					
42. Students should be asked to evaluate and grade their own papers as well as those of other students.					
43. Students should have freedom in selecting the topics for their compositions.					
44. Differing teaching approaches must be used for teaching factual writing or objectively oriented writing and for teaching subjectively-oriented imaginative material.					
45. School and community expectations in control of mechanics can be reasonably well learned in pupil-and-teacher editing of materials written for public readership.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
46. If a majority of pupils in elementary and high school classes do not produce voluntary writing, the composition program obviously has too many features threatening and destructive to a positive self-image and to potential for writing.					
47. Students' oral language should be corrected so that the correct forms will appear in their writing.					
48. The major purpose of evaluating compositions is to guide individual student growth and development.					
49. Compositions written in class should never be given letter grades.					
50. Students should be required to write at least one paper each week.					
51. Growth in written self-expression depends in part upon a wide range of first-hand experiences.					
52. Instruction in composition should give students a clear idea of their ways of composing. That is, students should be aware of what they go through to produce writing.					
53. Correct English should be required of all students in the high school.					
54. Creative dramatization, role playing, and pantomime are interesting forms of release but have little effect on written composition.					
55. If students are given freedom in composing, they will discover various types of writing for themselves.					