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ABSTRACT

Reflecting the thought and work of many classroom English teachers, the activities presented in this booklet are a sample of ideas exchanged at the 1980 convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) held in Cincinnati, Ohio. The suggested activities are grouped into four categories: (1) a miscellany of writing assignments that reflects the importance of writing for audiences outside the classroom and other than the teacher; (2) assignments for using words with precision and fluency, and for fun; (3) activities for teaching literary genres, focusing on particular authors, and matching students and texts; and (4) evaluation and review activities that capitalize on the heightened motivation of the pretest situation. (RL)

# A Sampler from the NCTE Idea Exchange



Writing for Fun and Profit: An Assignment Miscellany

Words at Work—and Play

Teaching Literature: Genre and Genre Aside

Taking a Second—and a Third—Look: Evaluation and Review



National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

In its mission to improve the teaching of English, one of the most important services the National Council of Teachers of English provides is the staging of professional meetings. Maybe the quintessential expression of this service is the Idea Exchange at our annual convention. Traditionally, our members have come together and traded practical ideas for better teaching.

This booklet is a handful of those ideas, in this case a sampling of those exchanged at our 1980 Cincinnati convention. Not an official NCTE publication, the booklet is more nearly a reminder of what the Council does. We are giving it to you at no cost in the hope that you will continue in our professional family.

And in the hope that you will share this sampler with a colleague who has not yet joined the world's largest subject matter organization.

Mark Anderson
Director of Membership Development

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# Writing for Fun and Profit: An Assignment Miscellany

Miscellaneous, yes—from personal narrative to the writing of instructions, from significant issues like runaways and sex stereotypes to the fun of scary sharing and the challenge of interviewing adults. Yet at least two common threads run through this section. The first is an emphasis on bringing interesting materials into the composition classroom—cameras, tapes, records, even fortune cookies; the second, on taking students out of the classroom—back to kindergarten, around the block, into the community, and off to schools in other states via correspondence. The importance of writing for audiences outside the classroom and other than the teacher is endorsed by this collection.

## Back to Kindergarten

Arrange for the class to visit a kindergarten, preferably in small groups. Ask students to observe and record the behavior of the children. favorite toys and activities, characteristics of leaders and followers, bases for friendships.

On a second visit, pair each student from your class with a kindergartner, instructing the student to talk with the youngster about his or her favorite pets, toys, friends, games, and the like and to jot down this information.

Back in the classroom the student uses this information to write a short story that he or she thinks will appeal to the kindergartner. The kindergartner may be a character in the story and illustrations for the story may be part of the assignment.

On a third visit to the kindergarten, students read their stories to their kindergarten partners. The kindergartners may then ask to have their stories read aloud to the others.

Anonymous contributor

## The Wig Stand

Place at the front of the room a faceless styrofoam wig stand. Suggest an age and condition for this "character" by adding hat, wig, scarf, jewelry—a child's ribbed knit cap on the head and a knit scarf around the neck, an army hat (officer's or enlisted man's), a long, flowing wig and a heavy necklace, an Indian

headband complete with feather, an astronaut's helmet borrowed or purchased at a discount store, a ragged scarf over a wispy wig, a silk scarf tied fashionably at the back of the head and dangling earrings affixed with straight pins, work hats and hard hats.

Wig-stand personalities can be used in a number of composition assignments, and especially in creative writing classes. A brief introduction to one of these faceless characters indicates something about personality, economic circumstances, and emotional state. Conflict and point of view may be added. The stylish silk scarf and earrings, for example, triggered this scene.

> Julia sat in front of the mirror in her dressing room, the garish bulbs surrounding the mirror seemed to carve even deeper the lines in her face. Yes, her chin was sagging a bit, but so what? She wasn't over the hill yet, and if that new young actress Salina thought she was going to wiggle onto the stage and steal all her scenes, dear Salina had another thought coming. Julia hadn't been in the theater all these years for nothing. Slowly a smile spread across her face as a plan formed in her mind. She'd take care of Salina.

In addition to characterization, the wig stand can be used in vocabulary exercises and thesaurus practice. Descriptions of place may also be included by asking students to describe the setting in which the wig character is found.

Sharon M. Stone, Granville High School, Granville, Ohio

## The Essay Question

Our school, like many others, is looking for ways for students to use their composition skills in classes other than English, but too often the non-English teacher does not feel comfortable or competent about correcting student writing. Our school also recognizes the need to prepare college-oriented students to answer essay questions in all fields since success in higher education so often depends upon expressing in writing what has been learned.

We've found a way to address both concerns. We ask one or more teachers from each department to submit an essay question appropriate to current course content. Each student in English class then writes an answer to a question submitted for one of the courses in which he or she is enrolled. The answer is graded by the English teacher and by the content teacher. No single non-English teacher is burdened by more than one or two papers to read; students learn how to apply skills learned in English class in other subject areas; and our entire faculty gains insight into the importance of combining subject-matter knowledge with composition skills.

Mary K. Essig, Red Land High School, Lewisberry, Pennsylvania

## Visually Speaking

While other students continue their regular work, one student at a time is given a camera (a simple one—nothing to do but push a button) loaded with color slide film. The student leaves the room, takes two pictures outdoors (no people unless he or she spots something super-special), records his or her name beside the exposure number on a master list, and returns promptly. I urge students to be creative and warn them to tell no one what their pictures were.

Later, when the slides have been developed, students are allowed time in class to prepare a showing of any five slides they select, in the order they choose, to fit a theme, idea, concept, musical selection, etc. These showings are presented before the class. Later, in groups of four or five randomly selected students, they use the slides taken by the members of that group (no other slides may be added and all of the group's slides must be used) to illustrate a theme as above.

If you don't want to take the time and trouble to produce slides for each class, you can substitute slides from your own collection, but the exercise may not be as effective. If you supply the slides, be sure to include some losers and some that came out totally black. One of the most creative presentations I have seen was done with all-black slides—the ones we usually throw away!

Philip F. Buley, Middlebury Union High School, Middlebury, Vermont

## A Sound Idea

Everyone knows about using music to establish a mood or to evoke memories. But have you tried combining music with visual composition? Let small groups of students select songs from a list prepared by you. (The songs need to be rather slow, with plenty of images.) Each group then plans a slide show, using a single shot to illustrate each thought in the song. Completed presentations with pictures and music synchronized are very effective. Among the songs that lend themselves to this activity are several by Barry Manilow and John Denver. I've seen excellent presentations of "The Long and Winding Road," "Forever in Blue Jeans," and "Morning Has Broken."

Jane K. Mattaliano, Philip Barbour High School, Philippi, West Virginia

## Trifocal

This assignment has produced some excellent creative writing from my students.

1. Select a setting (an event or place) where a crowd might gather.
2. Think of three or four character types who might be there.

3. Write a descriptive verse (or paragraph) about each one. Focus on specific actions that reveal each character's inner feelings and thoughts
4. Examples: three people at a rock concert, a pep rally, a supermarket, the scene of an accident:

Sylvia Rostedt, Hudtloff Junior High School, Tacoma, Washington

## First-Person News Story

Divide the class into groups of four or five and assign a story from a newspaper to each group. One member of each group reads the story aloud. Then, working individually, each student rewrites the story as if he or she had been an eyewitness or one of the principals. Members of the group then share their stories with one another.

Prepare the class for this activity by reading a news story and discussing its tone and point of view. Suggestions can then be made about rewriting the story as a personal narrative. I find this exercise useful in introducing point of view, objectivity and subjectivity, and tone.

Vary the activity by asking the entire class to use the same news story or by asking each student to select a different story. Reverse the activity by reading a fictional selection or a poem and asking students to recast the piece as a news story.

Jeanne E. Gerlach, West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia

## Runaway Hotline

Divide the class into small groups, each group is to assume that it works for the national runaway hotline. Devise as many problems as you have groups, and type a summary statement about each one on a slip of paper. Each group then draws one slip. Two examples follow.

> *Example one.* You receive a call from a nine-year-old who has been kidnapped by a couple who always wanted a child. He had to go to the bathroom and found a pay phone in the men's room of a restaurant. The couple does not let him go anywhere without them. They tell him if he tells anyone he is not their little boy they will hurt his real mother. He doesn't know what to do, but he saw the hotline number on the television and tried this call.
>
> *Example two.* You receive a call from a girl who ran away with a guy she didn't know very well. She now thinks she has VD and might be pregnant. She doesn't know what to do. The man has left her and she is all alone. She can't come home.

Each group then makes decisions concerning the problems of its runaway and writes up a report. I require three paragraphs, one for each of these areas.

*Background* Where is the runaway? How old is the runaway? What is the runaway's biggest concern? Does he or she want relatives notified? If so, find out why he or she ran away. How long has the runaway been gone?

*Present.* What immediate help can you offer the runaway? What should the runaway do immediately? Be very specific in your suggestions.

*Future.* What long-term help can you offer? A month from now how can you find out if the runaway is okay? How can you help parents or relatives cope with what has happened?

I have used this writing assignment with different levels, but I usually get the most realistic answers from my nonacademic students.

Jan M. Lauer, Marion High School, Marion, Indiana

## Trust Walk

I use this activity as part of a unit on sensory experience in relation to writing. You will need one blindfold for every two students in the class. Decide in advance on two safe routes that are as varied as possible. Plan to walk down halls, on gravel, through sand, close to buildings, in open spaces, through grass, under trees, in shade and in sun, through fences, up stairs. Include a number of obstacles. Ropes tied at knee level and at shoulder level between two trees simulate a fence. Concrete blocks make steps. A piece of styrofoam on the ground provides sound and texture variations. If possible, ask another teacher or the principal—to help.

On the day of the trust walk, divide students into pairs. Impress upon them that after the blindfold is in place, the sighted partner is totally responsible for the blindfolded partner's safety. After one member of each pair is blindfolded, no talking is allowed. The only communication between partners is touch.

Walk the first route with an adult leading the way. Go slowly and insist upon absolute silence. At the end of the route, ask students to remove blindfolds to see where they have been. Partners then exchange roles and walk the second route.

When students have returned to the classroom, they will want to talk about the sensations they experienced. You might want to develop this discussion by asking questions like these. How did you communicate without words? Did you feel safe (unsafe) with your partner? What sensations did you become aware of through senses other than sight? Did the world seem larger or smaller from behind a blindfold? How did you feel when you set off on the walk? At the end of the walk? What problems did sighted partners face? How did they solve them?

After this discussion, usually an animated one, students write for fifteen minutes on the experience. Collect the papers.

On the following day, students in groups of three discuss, proofread, and revise their papers. Each group then chooses one paper to read to the class. Generally, students produce sensitive and creative writing based on this activity. They enjoy the walk, the give-and-take of classroom discussion afterwards, and the challenge of trying to get down on paper exactly how they felt—because, for a change, they know exactly how they did feel!

Ellen Diem, Pryor High School, Pryor, Oklahoma

## Scary Sharing

One of my most successful writing activities for sixth- and seventh-graders is the sharing of scary stories. Divide the class into groups of four or five students and ask each student to tell the others in the group about the scariest moment in his or her life. I caution that though some exaggeration is allowed, most of the experience should rest in truth. Students, of course, enjoy this part of the assignment because it is highly social and not much like work.

Next, ask the members of each group to decide on one of the stories they heard to share with the rest of the class in writing. Each group then writes, edits, and rewrites one story.

When the stories are completed, I type them and make transparencies for the overhead projector. Each group then presents and discusses its story. Most students are thrilled at seeing their words on the screen, and I find this activity a fine vehicle for discussing strengths and weaknesses of writing since no one person has had complete responsibility for either.

Joanne Curtis, Stevens Point Area Senior High, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

## Carnivore's Creations

I like the way this assignment uses listening and organizing skills as a springboard for creative writing.

Obtain the film *Carnivorous Plants* (12 minutes, National Geographic, 1975). It examines in detail the Venus flytrap, the sundew, the bladderwort, and the Sarracenia pitcher plant. Show the film first for enjoyment—students will be fascinated! Show it again and ask students to take notes.

After the second showing, help students formulate questions that would elicit the information given in the film. List these at the chalkboard. For example. What is the name of the carnivorous plant? Describe the plant. When was it discovered? Where? What does it eat? What is the trapping mechanism of the plant? How does the plant digest what it eats? Can the plant live without insect food? If so, how?

When questions are listed, help students to group those that seem to go together. Later, point out that the answers to questions grouped together will probably be included in the same paragraph.

And here is the writing assignment. "Think up your own carnivorous plant. After you've thought up such a plant, write about it using the questions we gathered to give you ideas of what to include. Use your best writing skills."

Results have ranged from fairly scientific descriptions to teacher-eating and homework-eating and little-brother-eating plants. I often ask students to represent their plants in some visual way drawing, sculpture, magazine-picture composite.

Linda Brown, Morton Junior High School, Vandalia-Butler City Schools, Vandalia, Ohio

## Cookie Composition

I use this activity as an in-class journal entry or as a short writing assignment. The only item needed is a fortune cookie for each student. These can usually be purchased for about a dollar a dozen.

Begin with a discussion of fate, luck - destiny. Relate these ideas to literature the class has read, John Steinbeck's *The Pearl,* for example. Conclude by asking, "If Kino [or another character] had a fortune cookie, what would it say?" Encourage several one-liners, write them on the board, and discuss them.

Now ask students to write a one-line fortune for themselves in their journals. Then distribute the fortune cookies and have students write a ten-to-fifteen minute response to their fortunes. To conclude, students may read their entries aloud or pass. Eating the fortune cookie during class is part of the good luck!

Beth Griffith, Granville High School, Granville, Ohio

## Life in the Funny Papers

One of the objectives of my Women in Literature course is to help students become aware of the role casting that is most often unconsciously done for males and females in our society. We examine movies, television programs, magazine advertising, and cartoons to detect how these male-female roles are reflected and reinforced and to analyze how we respond to them. The writing assignment reproduced below has proved highly successful and could, I believe, be used in other courses.

> Select a cartoon that appeals to you. It may be aimed at men as well as at women. Decide what point it makes about the nature of women (men), about the relationships between men and women, or about the place for women (men) in society. Does it reinforce a stereotype (men can't sew

on buttons, women can't balance their checkbooks), or does it give a fresh interpretation?

Write an essay in which you analyze the cartoon to show how its components contribute to the total effect. Consider some of the following questions. What is the setting (bedroom, kitchen, dungeon, hovel, castle)? What is the time (contemporary, historical, fanciful)? Is the drawing realistic or exaggerated? Are the male and female characters drawn in the same style? What is the social status of the characters? How do their postures reveal their relationships? Which one is speaking? What do their clothes reveal about them? How does the punch line or dialogue contribute? What is the dominant emotion (fear, anger, annoyance, affection, joy)?

When I receive the papers, I share the cartoons with the class and we discuss what is reflected in each. I grade these essays for all of the traditional reasons we grade papers in addition to looking for skills of analyzation and interpretation. Finally, I make a bulletin board display of this work, which the women's literature class, as well as my other classes, finds interesting.

Ruth Garrett, Field Kindley High School, Coffeyville, Kansas

## Captionless Cartoons

For those of you who have had a terrible weekend and need a Monday assignment that isn't mere busywork, may I recommend this activity. Select a cartoon, cut off the caption, and reproduce as many copies as you need for your classes. On Blue Monday, distribute the captionless cartoon and ask students to pretend they are reporters and to write the story of what happened in the picture. You will be surprised by the interest generated by this assignment and the imagination and humor demonstrated in the writing.

Extend the assignment by having students read their stories aloud or by asking one class to choose the top three stories written by another class.

Mary Tricarico, Pine Crest School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

## Noteworthy

My idea is simple but rewarding. I write notes to my students every day, and they write back. I make no corrections in their notes (although I may include words frequently misspelled in weekly spelling tests), responding only to their ideas and questions.

At first, students made booklets for their notes. These had the advantage of original design, but the pages often fell out and students were disappointed at losing "memories." Now I include an order for small notebooks in my yearly

supply request. I emphasize *small* because students are less likely to be intimidated by a small blank page in front of them.

I ask students for permission to show their notes to parents during open house. Parents sit and read their kids' thoughts and are amused, amazed, and touched. At the end of the year, students have a record of their year in my class.

I should add that my students are the poorest readers in the middle school. Seventh- and eighth-graders, their reading abilities range from preprimer to third grade, their writing abilities are nil—at the beginning of the year. I do not use a carefully controlled vocabulary, and I write about whatever strikes my fancy that day—my cats, the way I feel about snow, sailing. Students respond in kind. To help them get started, I ask a question in each note. Answering the question gives them something to write. This tactic becomes less and less necessary as we continue.

If you can't manage daily notes to each of your students, perhaps you could correspond with one or two classes for six weeks and then turn to another class.

Susan Ohanian, W. K. Doyle Middle School, Troy, New York

## Five-Year Letters

At some point in the semester I assign a five-year letter to be written by students in my English classes. They have been taught the correct form for friendly letters and are told that they are going to write to themselves. The assignment is to write about what they're seeing, feeling, and experiencing in their lives right now—and then to speculate on what they will be seeing, feeling, and experiencing five years from now.

I do not read these letters and they are not discussed in class. Instead, I put that year's stack of letters in my basement at home. Each spring something will trigger my memory and I mail out the appropriate stack—the letters written five years ago.

Even though I ask students to stamp their letters, additional postage is sometimes required. But the time and expense are forgotten when I hear from some of my ex-students each year. I have had replies from jails and hospitals and from parents of deceased students.

Carolyn Hustead, North Marion High School, Farmington, West Virginia

## Resumé Round Robin

I involve four classes, two of sophomores and two of freshmen, in this activity that provides practice in writing business letters and preparing a resumé for

employment. I ask the sophomores, in groups of two or three, to form partnerships or corporations, to name their companies, and to write job descriptions. These descriptions are then displayed for the freshmen, each of whom chooses a job and writes a resumé for that job along with a letter of application to the company offering the position. The sophomores then review the applications, choose one or more applicants, and write letters of acceptance or rejection. Then the whole process is reversed, with freshmen initiating the job descriptions and sophomores responding.

Students are enthusiastic about this project and look forward to the responses to their letters. They take pride in "getting hired," are disappointed at being "rejected," and see the beginning stages of the employer-employee relationship from both perspectives.

Donna Truax, Haines High School, Haines, Alaska

## Anywhere Letters

I have had success with this letter-writing project at the junior and senior high school level. By way of introduction, I read two letters from students who attend other schools. I now have a collection of these letters from previous years, but I initially obtained them by writing and asking students to respond. I choose letters with a friendly tone, ones that reveal interesting qualities about the writers.

Students then write to students in high schools in other states, telling about themselves and asking for a letter in return. Students choose states by closing their eyes and sticking a pin in a map that I attach to my bulletin board. Letters are addressed as follows:

Any High School English Class
c/o The Board of Education
City, State Zip

I encourage students to base their letters on this simple outline.

1. Introduce yourself and tell why you are writing.
2. Describe yourself–appearance, family, hobbies, interests, pets, friends, job.
3. Describe your school–architecture, age, size, curriculum, special programs (music, drama, sports), mascot, school colors.
4. Describe your town–size, what makes it special, what you like and dislike about it.
5. Ask for a return letter.
6. Closing.
7. You may include pictures or clippings from school or community newspapers.

In addition, I use overhead transparencies to review letter form, to demonstrate how to reveal oneself in a letter, and to suggest vocabulary that creates a friendly impression.

The project usually takes a week. I require a draft to be turned in, and I go over these to offer suggestions. I make overheads of the best drafts to encourage students whose letters are too short or might not elicit a response for other reasons. I also make an overhead of errors to be avoided and bring in the zip code directory from the library. Finally, I provide plain white stationery and envelopes. Students bring in stamps. Letters are mailed from school, but each contains the home address of its writer.

When answering letters come, students bring them to share. We read and discuss them in class. New friendships are sometimes formed, and many students have come a long way to acquiring a skill that can bring them lifelong satisfaction.

Shirley J. Wiseman, Marion High School, Marion, Indiana

## Viewer Profile

Here is a writing assignment I use as part of a tenth-grade media unit. It can, however, be adapted to younger or older students.

> Watch television commercials for a week as if you were from another country and had not been in the states very long. Based on these commercials, describe the single American male, the married male, the single woman, the married woman, teenagers, and children. What do they like to do in their spare time? What do they spend their money on? What do they value? Are they people you would want for friends? Discuss any aspect of their personalities you feel is important.

Cheryl Ann Leshnock, Columbus Academy, Gahanna, Ohio

## *Foxfire* Spreads

Emulating the principles of *Foxfire*, my eighth-grade communications class produces an oral history magazine about people in our school community. Although the project has been scaled down to three weeks, the process and product are as worthwhile as those of the more ambitious original.

Our goal is to create a journal that shows the talents, skills, and accomplishments of people whose abilities might otherwise go unrecorded. In the case of rural Georgia, these may be sounding the presence of water or calling hogs, but in suburban Baltimore we discovered an alumna who is pioneering in the field of electronic music, a thirteen-year-old and his mother who are concert

pianists, and a soon-to-be retired mathematics teacher who is a former naval commander. Their stories are of genuine interest to our community of parents, teachers, students, and alumni. But as a teacher, I find the process even more interesting.

First, the class was visited by the school's development officer and volunteer archivist, who suggested a number of subjects. We then considered a balance of age, fields of interest, and relation to our school and settled on eight names. Students, working in pairs, decided whom they wished to interview.

Finding out how to contact these people and placing the calls are challenging tasks for eighth-graders—to whom the telephone generally poses no threat. They must introduce themselves, state their purpose, and arrange to meet. Since they do not drive, they must juggle the subject's availability and their own ability to meet the appointment. They spend one period practicing for the phone call, taking turns as reporter and subject. Collectively, we write general questions each reporter will ask and then devise specific questions geared to individual subjects. Again, we practice the interview, taking turns in the two roles. The actual interviews may take place during class time, at lunch, or on the weekend.

One class session was devoted to choosing a title for the magazine and planning its focus or theme. An editor was chosen to help each pair of reporters prepare for their interview and to decide what artwork might accompany articles. Several students submitted designs for the cover, and an artist-student set to work drawing the cover and determining the size and shape of the magazine. The editor and I read all first drafts. Working in a typing room, students typed all work—even when their typing technique was painfully slow. The editor decided on the final layout, the order of the articles, and the artwork. The entire copy was retyped by a school secretary—our only professional staff member—and reproduced for distribution to our student body, to parents, and to teachers.

In the course of the year a great deal of writing is done by my students, but they find this project—perhaps because it is written for publication—the most exciting and satisfying. As a teacher, I am satisfied because they have had an experience that develops the oral skills of interviewing, the written skills of organizing and interpreting ideas, and the important social skills of planning and executing a project as a group.

Judith B. Rosenfeld, The Park School, Brooklandville, Maryland

## Developing a Thesis Statement

I'd like to share a method for inductively arriving at a thesis statement that I learned from Richard Western at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Teacher and students as a group

1. consider a question about a given topic
2. state observations in answer to the question
3. record these observations on the chalkboard
4. note items that belong together by placing 1, 2, 3, etc. beside related ideas
5. name each group
6. develop an appropriate topic sentence for each group
7. develop a thesis statement to encompass the topic sentences

Students working independently

1. copy down thesis statement, topic sentences, and ideas generated as a group
2. eliminate irrelevant ideas
3. consider rewording thesis statement and topic sentences to fit the information to be used
4. use this material to create a rough draft
5. revise, revise, revise

Sally E. Tusken, Shattuck Junior High School, Neenah, Wisconsin

## Script for the Writing Lab

Writing competency certified by examination as a requirement for graduation in New York State has led to a proliferation of remedial writing classes. In most cases, these have been conveniently labeled "writing labs." It's difficult for the lab teacher, however, to be available for individual sessions, even though these students typically respond very well in one-on-one situations. A second problem is, of course, motivating lab students to write. I have begun a system for solving both problems: Self-Instruct Writing Tapes.

First, I listed the writing assignments I wanted to make—short reports, personal narratives, letters of complaint and application, persuasive essays, and so on. I tried to build a list to cover the full year's work.

Next, I devised a dramatic situation within which each writing assignment could be set, for example, a domestic squabble between teenager and parent over spending money. In another example I tried to interest students in describing a favorite place by describing one of my favorite places. In all, I devised ten situations.

The next step, which I must admit was fun, was to write a brief script to accompany each situation and to find a way to incorporate specific writing instructions. I recorded several of these scripts, interrupting from time to time with directions to the listener. For example, having presented the argument between teenager and parent, I interrupted with questions about the argument,

directing the student to stop the recorder and jot down his or her ideas before returning to the tape. Sometimes I directed students to remove the instruction tape and insert a blank tape on which to record their responses after they had made some notes. The challenge is to take an interesting script and use it to help a student get a writing assignment to the rough draft stage with as little help from you as possible.

After I field-tested my first few tapes, I recruited students from the drama club to assist me. Using student actors made the tapes more polished. The actors loved the opportunity, and I must admit they sounded better than I.

This program is still in its experimental stage, but it has worked well so far. I find that I can sit down with a student and help with revision without having to worry about what other students are doing. I also have been able to avoid a "worksheet" approach in the writing lab. Four recorders with eight students allow us to function at about eighty percent efficiency, but at least this situation is better than trying to play "octopus" with a ten percent success rate.

Although launching this program is a lot of work, carrying it out is rather simple. It is worth the initial effort as far as I'm concerned. And there is a fringe benefit—I get to do some creative writing—an opportunity English teachers seldom have.

Francis A. Simonetti, Bronxville High School, Bronxville, New York

## Everything Must Change

Each assignment in the following sequence builds upon the previous one and increases the student's understanding of the initial experience. I use this three-part assignment to introduce narrative and descriptive modes, but students also seem to become more aware of the elements of time and perspective.

> *Assignment one.* Isolate an emotion that you have experienced (anger, happiness, sadness) and write about a particular incident that happened to you involving this emotion. Make sure the incident you describe is one that you are willing to share with the class later on. Try to involve your reader in the sights, sounds, and attitude of your encounter. Use a vocabulary that describes, clarifies, and illuminates. Make the episode come alive.
>
> *Assignment two.* Time has a way of filtering experience. Look again at the incident that you described in the first assignment. Now that you are considering it again, you may have mixed emotions about your initial response. If your first reaction was happiness, you may now want to look for the "fly in the ointment." If your initial response was anger, you may now want to assess the more positive aspects of the experience. Do not, however, allow my suggestions to steer you in any specific direction. Nevertheless, you should remember that everything must change.

*Assignment three.* In the first assignment you described an incident that elicited a particular emotion; in the second you talked about how your attitude changed. In this assignment, take the perspective of a person other than yourself who may have been present when the incident took place. This person may be a parent, a sister or brother, even an invisible observer whom you imagine to have witnessed the episode. Certainly it will be necessary for you to make some assumptions about what this individual may have been thinking since you are not that person, but that is what this assignment is all about.

Kenneth J. Brown, Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana

## Notes on Quotes

The purpose of this exercise is to improve the student's ability to handle quoted material and to use quotation marks with other marks of punctuation. It also introduces the idea of synonyms.

Obtain or create a comic strip with blank balloons. Creating one is probably easier than troubling with the small cutouts and balloons of syndicated cartoons. Yet, either can be used with success. Mimeograph the comic strip you have drawn or collect a different one for each student in the class.

Distribute the cartoons and ask students to provide words for the blank balloons. Stress the importance of spelling the words correctly and encourage students to use a dictionary. After students have completed this step, ask them to go back and provide each character in the cartoon with a name—preferably a proper noun.

Now, ask students to report the cartoon conversation in writing on a separate sheet of paper. If, for example, a student had written in the first balloon, "Hey, John, let's go pick some apples!", that student would now write: Mary said, "Hey, John, let's go pick some apples!" At this step, many students will lose the fervor demonstrated earlier in this exercise. The game, they may decide, has transformed itself into a chore. Ignorance of the mechanics related to reporting conversation will perpetuate this attitude, so encourage students to ask questions concerning particular problems. In answering their questions, offer examples, encourage other students to help, and consult a grammar text, a novel, or a magazine or newspaper article that uses quotations. It is important, however, that students do not guess at the mechanics involved in using quotation marks and other marks of punctuation.

Finally, ask students to go back through what they have written and strike the word *said.* Instead of relying on this standard word, they are to find an appropriate synonym: shouted, jeered, remarked, and so on.

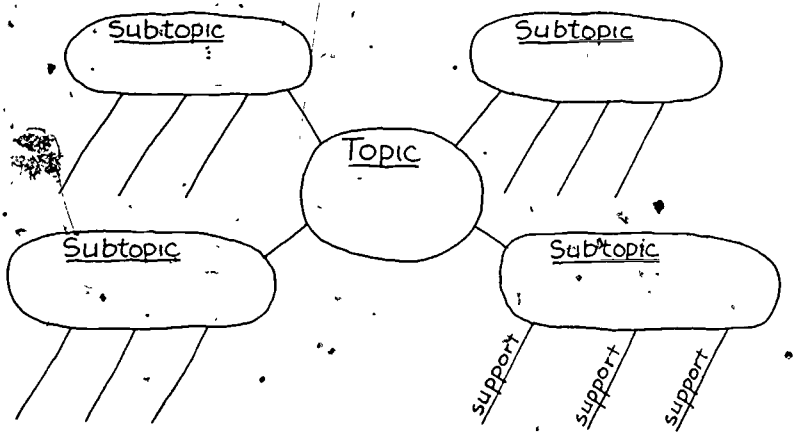
As for assessment, students may critique one another's papers, or they may hand them in to you for evaluation.

David J. Thomas, Glenville State College, Glenville, West Virginia

## Visually-based Planning

I like outlines because they are linear and logical–and because they work for me. But an outline works only if you know exactly what you want to say and if you know the final order for those ideas.

The visually-based plan shown below lets students play around with their ideas. The main topic is located in the center of the page with supporting ideas randomly placed like satellites around it. Students can determine the order for those ideas after they finish brainstorming. I ditto off a copy of this form for each student to use as a worksheet. When students get the hang of it, they'll demand one every time they write. It's amazing how this simple little idea helps students plan a paragraph or a theme. It works particularly well with the more visually oriented remedial writer.




Nancy Mack, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

## Double-Duty Drills

During the first week of school, teachers in our building are required to teach the procedures for fire and tornado drills and to have proof that they have done so. We are also required to collect one sample of student writing each week. I meet both of these district requirements at the same time.

On the second day of school I explain both emergency procedures, asking students to take notes. Their assignment is to write a set of instructions to be used by someone who sits at their desk. Students are to emphasize the need for silence and to be highly specific when they write these "emergency cards."

When I have collected the cards, I redistribute them at random. The reader sits where the writer sat. Then I ask students to read the instructions and to

do only and exactly what the instructions say. Since silence is a part of the instructions, this is not a noisy occasion. I request that they stop one classroom door away from our room instead of leaving the building. Readers sign their names to the instructions and evaluate them for clarity and correctness.

As a result of this assignment, students thoroughly understand the procedure for fire and tornado drills and have written an exercise that requires precise and accurate language. Since students have evaluated each other's work, I grade this assignment on a limited basis. And I have proof that I have taught these procedures, which pleases my liability-conscious administration.

Ruth Ann Vukovich, Hubbard High School, Hubbard, Ohio

## Peddling Pedalling

Language structures our thought and behavior. We are, so I suggest to my students, auto-oriented because we are deluged with auto-centric propaganda! Decrying the ecological blight that the auto has brought us will persuade only a few to forego that vehicle for a simpler, less conspicuous form of locomotion. However, if we publicize the many advantages of the bicycle for short trips, we will help people to *think bicycle*, that in turn may lead them to use one.

I encourage students to work cooperatively on the following activities.

1. Develop promotional material for a "bike to school" program.
2. Publicize, particularly in the school newspaper, the health benefits of riding a bicycle.
3. Organize bike clubs.
4. Prepare daily announcements that plug cycling.
5. Prepare bike-riding promotional material for radio and television.
6. Research auto emissions to prepare data on the ecological benefits of riding a bicycle to school.
7. Prepare proposals that will persuade city and state agencies to provide bicycle paths and that will guide them in their design.
8. Approach businesses with ideas to promote cycling: bike racks, promotional items such as bike seat covers instead of windshield scrapers.
9. Prepare statistics to show how much money each student will save by riding a bicycle instead of driving a car.
10. Publicize time trials that show how much time a student saves by biking from one designated spot to another instead of driving.
11. Develop plans for reserving city right-of-ways for bicycle commuters.

Among the advantages of this unit of work are that students study and practice the art of persuasion—in speech and in writing—as they urge others to bike. In the process, they analyze the basic appeals of automobile advertising and learn to use statistics honestly. They develop skill in following logical

reasoning and in asking relevant questions. Finally, students clarify those of their values that are influenced by the automobile and examine their life-styles to discover when and where they might better bike than drive.

Don Stoen, East High School, Cheyenne, Wyoming

## City Sell

My students enjoy the adverstising project described in the following worksheet. The details and scope will vary depending on your city or town, but I think the activity will transfer easily to a variety of settings.

1. Your completed pamphlet will be an advertisement for Rochester, New York. Design an original pamphlet cover. Be creative.
2. It must have a title page with your name as author and a name for your publishing company. Check several books for examples of title pages.
3. Draw a map of Rochester that is large enough to include major highways, waterways, and airports.
4. Include directions for visitors by car, air, train, and bus. Write out each set of directions carefully. You will have to do some research. Which airlines serve Rochester? Where is the train station? Bus station? Include travel times to Rochester from other major cities.
5. Write a Rochester weather report for a typical day in each of the four seasons. Write it in the style used on the evening news.
6. List and describe major recreational areas in and around Rochester. You might include restaurants and highlights of their cuising.
7. Write a one-paragraph history of Rochester. Why did we change from Flour City to Flower City? Name several areas that were once prime residential areas. A call to the Landmark Society might provide information on this subject.
8. List major industries in Rochester; tell what products each makes.
9. List institutions of higher learning in Rochester. Include addresses for readers who might like information about college programs.
10. Photograph architectural landmarks around the city. Did you know that Frank Lloyd Wright designed a house on East Boulevard? Label your pictures and include them in your pamphlet.
11. Design an entertainment guide for your pamphlet: athletic teams, museums, galleries, musical organizations.
12. Illustrate with your camera any of the items discussed above. Be sure to label each picture and place it near the appropriate activity.

Nancy P. Logghe and Anne F. Foulkes, Allendale-Columbia School, Rochester, New York

# Words at Work—and Play

"Fine words butter no parsnips" goes the English proverb borrowed from the Latin, but many of our students can discover that their ability to use words with precision and fluency widens—or limits—career options and may help to put the butter *and the parsnips* on the table.

## Terse Verse—and Worse

I've taught a humor unit for the past five years as part of a modern literature class, but this activity can be adapted to other settings, especially word study units. The assignment below is one that over the years has produced some clever responses from my students—I've included some of my favorites.

*Terse verse.* The idea here is to combine two words or two brief lines into something with wit or insight.

Vampire to victim: Main, Vein.

Usher to moviegoer: Stub? Bub.

Apple-polisher trying to change his style: Peach? Teach.

Swatter to insect: Die, Fly.

Housewife to broken coffeepot: Perk, Jerk.

Assignment: Write two terse verses of your own.

*Tom Swifties.* This is one of the oldest of all word games; it seeks to relate an act with an action in a self-descriptive way.

"Cut it out," Mother said sharply.

"I just dropped my toothpaste," said John, crestfallen.

"Where are your Fruit of the Looms?" the customer asked briefly.

"Something is wrong with my heart," he murmured.

Assignment: Write two Swifties of your own.

*Occupational hazard puns.* These puns relate a job with the employee's attitude toward it.

"I'm a cabdriver and I can't hack it."

"I'm a floorwalker and I can't stand it."

"I'm a window washer and it's a real pain."

"I'm a butcher and I can't cut it."

"I'm a stripper and I can't bear it."

Assignment: Write an occupational pun of your own.

*Animal attribute puns.* Animal characteristics form the basis for these puns.

The kinkajou is a great story teller; it enjoys a long tale.

The giraffe is a great necker.

The kangaroo likes parties; he enjoys a good punch.

Birds like to get high.

Assignment: Write an animal attribute pun of your own.

Lani Tierney, Stevens Point Area Senior High School, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

## The Great American Dream Collage

Ask each student to select a magazine from which to cut pictures, words, and phrases to use in assembling a collage on the topic, "The Great American Dream As Seen by the Advertisers in [*magazine*]." Each student then interprets his or her collage and may comment on the degree to which he or she accepts the Dream as seen by those advertisers. If you encourage students to select from among a wide range of magazines, the findings will be more interesting.

Kathryn Ross, William Mason High School, Mason, Ohio

## Take a Noun Walk

Instead of bird-watching or leaf-collecting, take your youngsters on a walk to spot and collect nouns. A building tour will do when the weather is severe. Ask students to jot down the nouns they recognize along the way.

Upon returning to the classroom, encourage students to offer ideas for using their noun lists in follow-up assignments. My students came up with the following ideas:

| | |
|---|---|
| alphabetizing | board games |
| writing a story, poem, or recipe | mad libs |
| word scrambles | pictures made from words only |
| dictionary exercises | word associations |
| jigsaw puzzles | synonyms and antonyms |
| mazes | category charts |
| crossword puzzles | picture stories |

Follow-up assignments are totally individualized since each student has his or her own list of nouns to work with and may choose one or more of the suggestions given by the class. The variety in these assignments also makes grading more interesting.

Ginger Wenger, Franklin Alternative Middle School, Columbus, Ohio

## The Thesaurus in One Easy Lesson

The reference book with which my students are least familiar is the thesaurus. I have devised a method for introducing the thesaurus that teaches its use and provides a lively class period.

Each student needs a copy of the thesaurus. My junior and senior college preparatory students are required to buy their own copies, and I recommend a thesaurus in dictionary form for easy use. Early in the course I designate a day on which students are to arrive, thesaurus in hand. I distribute copies of four or five nursery rhymes with common words underlined. The instructions are simple. "Look up the underlined words in your thesaurus, find a synonym suitable for substitution for each, and write your own version of Mother Goose's favorites." "Little Jack Horner" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb" are among the rhymes I have used, but others may of course be chosen.

The results are satisfying. My students have actively used the thesaurus—learning its content and its value—and have provided a good giggle for themselves and for their teacher.

Dorothea L. Barry, Fredericktown High School, Fredericktown, Ohio

## Grammar Grid

Ask students to draw a grid with twenty-five boxes, five across and five down. Then tell them to crosshatch the top left-hand box. In the remaining boxes in the top row ask them to write in the four parts of speech you dictate—noun, verb, adjective, and preposition, for example. I then arbitrarily assign a letter to each box in the left-hand column—f, o, r, and d, for example. Students try to fill in each box with a word that begins with the letter on the left and also conforms to the part-of-speech label at the top of the column. The grid shown below gives you the general idea.

| | noun | verb | adjective | preposition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| f | fashion | failed | funny | for |
| o | | | | |
| r | rat | | | |
| d | | | different | |

Students who finish early try their hands at composing a sentence that uses each set of words—a sentence with the four "f" words, one with the four "o" words, and so on.

Betty Ford, Brecksville High School, Broadview Heights, Ohio

## Pirate Ships

Here is a team game that elementary students enjoy. I use it with words from basic vocabulary lists, but other words may be substituted, depending on your teaching objective.

Sketch or paste a silhouette of a pirate ship on the top half of an open file folder. Then place a grid similar to the one shown below on the lower half of the folder. Choose forty-nine words from a basic word list appropriate to the level you teach. Make two such folders. In addition, you will need two envelopes for each student. In two of them place fourteen squares cut to the scale of the grid; sketch a pirate ship silhouette on each square. In each of the remaining two envelopes place fifty squares cut to the scale of the grid.

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | able | knew | brought | office | alone | every | need |
| 2 | early | other | another | show | turn | them | music |
| 3 | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | |

The game proceeds as follows. Two students face each other at a table or desk, placing their grids in front of them and leaning the top halves of their folders on a tissue box placed between them to provide a screen. Students may not look at each other's grid as the game is played. Each student then covers fourteen words at random with his or her fourteen pirate ships. Students take turns calling words of their choice—"brought, 1C" or "music, 2G," for example. Both students cover each called word with a marker. When a word is called on which a ship has been placed, however, a "hit" has been made. The player whose ship was hit removes that ship from the grid. Set a time limit before the game begins. The winner is the player who has more ships left on the grid when the time limit has expired.

Patricia Foulke, Argyle School, Argyle, New York

## Who's the Liar?

I use this activity to review vocabulary words studied earlier in the course or to preview words to be studied.

Distribute 3" x 5" cards or slips of paper in sets of four to each student. Assign a vocabulary word to each student, asking the student to write that word in the upper left-hand corner of each card. The student then adds a definition to each card; however, three are bluffs and only one is correct. The card with the correct definition should be starred on the back. Collect the cards, keeping groups of four intact.

Chose a moderator and four "liars" to sit in front of the class; divide the remainder of the class into two teams. The moderator selects a word at random and gives a definition card to each of the liars. It is now the job of each liar in turn to convince the team member "at bat" that his or her definition is the correct one. After all liars have spoken, the team member chooses the definition he or she thinks is correct. If the choice is correct, the team scores a point. The turn then passes to the other team.

Commonly misspelled words may also be used as the basis for another version of "Who's the Liar?"

Ellen Wilson, Frenship High School, Wolfforth, Texas

## Automobile Advertisements

Here is a writing assignment that I use in a composition class for college freshmen, but I think it might also appeal to younger students. I bring to class four advertisements for automobiles, but you might ask students to bring in examples from which to choose. Number these ads. Here is the assignment sheet I use.

Prewriting Assignment

Look quickly at the four advertisements for automobiles. Don't analyze the ads at this step. Now jot down words that each picture suggests to you.

Look at your lists of words. Is there a pattern in the words for any one picture or among pictures? Make a note of the patterns you discover.

Which car advertised here would you buy? Jot down your reasons. Don't be afraid to put down your real reasons. They don't have to be rational and they may not be.

Now gather into groups of four with your classmates. Look at the ads again. What kind of person would buy each car? Analyze the audience to which each ad is directed. Make lists of adjectives that describe each of the four audiences.

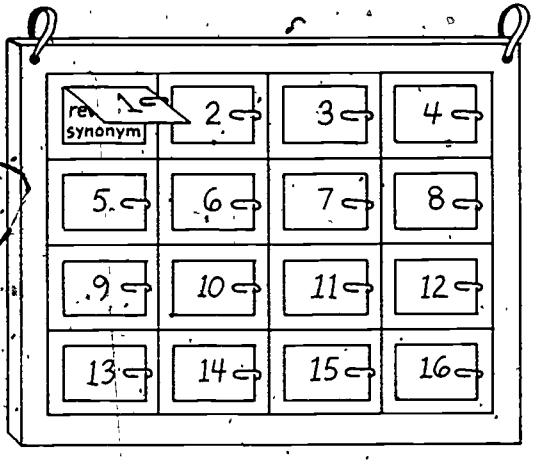
Writing Assignment

Write four paragraphs. In each paragraph, write a profile or description of the person who would buy each of the automobiles shown in the four advertisements. Consider the following points in your descriptions: economic level of the buyer, occupation of the buyer, hobbies or interests of the buyer, marital status of the buyer.

Rosemary A. Ortman, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky

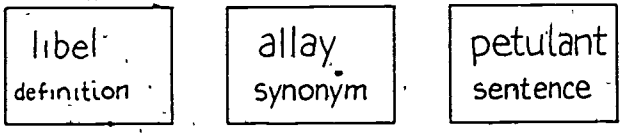
## A Flap over Vocabulary

Make a game board as follows. Draw sixteen rectangles about 4½" x 6½" on a heavy piece of cardboard about 2' x 3'. Leave margins around the edges and between the squares for stability. Cut three sides of each rectangle, leaving the cardboard attached at the top to form a flap. Number the flaps consecutively from 1 to 16. Staple this piece of cardboard to another piece of the same size. Staple around the four sides and as far as the stapler will reach between each flap. Lift each flap and place a loop of masking tape or a piece of plasti-tak on the cardboard under the flap. Clip a paper clip to the left side of each flap. The diagram below gives you the general idea.




Cut out 20 two-inch squares of construction paper of one color and twenty of another color. You might use school colors. These squares will be used later on for scoring.

On sixteen 3" x 5" index cards print the vocabulary words you want students to master. Under each word print how the students is to respond to the word. For example:




Other responses include antonym, part of speech, derivative, and root. Include several three-point cards that are more difficult. You might, for example, ask

for a synonym, an antonym, and a sentence. After these cards have been prepared, put one card under each flap, pressing it securely against the masking tape or plasti-tak.

Divide the class into two teams and assign colors. Flip a coin to see which team goes first. The first player on that team picks a number from one to sixteen, raises the flap with that number, and responds as indicated to the word on the card. If the answer is correct, clip the team's color card on the flap. If the answer is incorrect, the first player on the opposing team gets a chance to answer. Play goes back and forth until each team has had three chances. If no one has answered correctly, each team chooses an "expert" who may not be one of the people who has already tried and failed to answer. The experts flip a coin and the winner chooses whether he or she will attempt to answer or will pass the question to the other team. If the expert from the first team answers correctly, that team gets the point. If the first expert passes and the other expert answers correctly, that team gets the point. If the second expert fails to answer, the team that won the toss gets the point. Play continues, alternating players, until a color card is clipped to each flap.

The team with more color cards on the board wins. Bonus points are awarded: three for getting four correct answers in a row and three for each three-point question answered correctly. I usually put two color cards behind the clip for each bonus to simplify the final tally.

I play this game with tenth-graders and usually give a prize–a few extra points on the next vocabulary test, for example–to members of the winning team. Playing time is about a half hour.

Joan Fleischmann, Perkiomen Valley High School, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

## To Be or Not to Be

Ask students to close their eyes. Turn out the lights and be firm about all eyes being closed. Ask students what pictures come to mind when you read the following words (substitute or delete as you wish):

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| soothe | knock | whine | whisper |
| skip | litter | kiss | shuffle |
| weep | purr | slam | slash |
| vandalize | roar | hug | cough |

Ask students to open their eyes. Discuss for a moment if they were able to visualize most of these verbs. Again, have them close their eyes. Repeat the directions, but this time read forms of the verb *to be* (was, is, are, were, am, be, been, being). It is the rare student who receives much of a picture from these.

If students *see* that the choice of verb really makes the sentence, they may be more careful in their selection. I move from this little exercise to sentences with "to be" verbs, asking students to change them to more precise and forceful verbs.

Virginia Pelander, Charles F. Brush High School, Lyndhurst, Ohio

## Grammar in the News

I find that an understanding of clauses is essential to mastery of the comma, which in turn is essential in the smooth written communication of ideas. About halfway through a study of simple, compound, and complex sentence structure, I abandon the grammar book.

Assignment: "Tonight you are to find three examples each of a simple, a compound, and a complex sentence in any newspaper or magazine. Advertisements may be included. Tape these sentences to a sheet of paper. Underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb twice. If a sentence contains clauses, enclose each clause in parentheses and circle the conjunction or relative pronoun. To the side, write whether a sentence is S (simple), Cd (compound), or Cx (complex)."

The following day in class: "When your name is called, stand before the class with your sentences. Read one example of each type. Identify the sentence type, read the sentence, and then give its component parts to prove that you are right. Leave your paper on my desk."

Everyone is encouraged to follow along, verifying that each sentence does, indeed, follow the pattern for its type. When a student mislabels, I courteously point out why the sentence does not follow that pattern. Students who have made incorrect identifications are asked to listen carefully to how the sentences of others are structured and to give me a correct example of each type missed at the close of the class period.

Students are pleasantly surprised to study grammar without the grammar book. Better students take pride in being able to classify sentences for themselves, and weaker students profit from the repetition and from seeing correct classifications made by others. Bright students can express disdain for the whole proceeding by bringing properly labeled sentences with audacious content. Some use current events, some rely on advertising copy, but all seem to make an effort to succeed before their classmates.

Vivien Cummings, Vestavia Hills High School, Vestavia Hills, Alabama

## Technical Terms

Technical vocabulary is an area of word study that appeals to many students—and I am often surprised and pleased by the specialized knowledge students have to share. Here is a technical vocabulary exercise that my students enjoy and one that you might like to use in your class.

Experts use technical terms. But not all technical words are big words. Some are ordinary words, words you use every day. *Love*, for instance, is one of the best-known words in the language. But when a tennis player uses it, the term has nothing to do with romance. It means zero points for that player. The player who defeats an opponent in a love set has beaten that opponent six games to none.

How good is your vocabulary of technical words? In a few words, explain the special technical meaning of each italicized word.

1. The geologist discovered a *fault* in the earth's crust.
2. The *habits* of the nuns who teach in my sister's school are unusual.
3. The wind shifted, and we had to *trim* our sails.
4. When a halfback does not follow his *interference*, he often loses yardage.
5. For the school play, we had to paint our own *flats.*
6. Arthur usually wins his tennis matches because he *aces* his opponent so often.
7. Unfortunately, the vaccination did not *take.*
8. The director and the cast of the movie looked at the *rushes.*
9. The mechanic discovered the reason for the *miss* in the motor.
10. Steel must be *tempered* before it can be stored or shipped.
11. Hoping to cause rain, they tried to *seed* the clouds.
12. The artist decided to *mat* her picture before framing it.
13. City politicians remained in office for long periods because they built up good *machines.*
14. What *point* type are the editors going to use for the book?
15. The newspaper editor decided to *kill* the story.
16. The bridge player scored 750 points for his *slam.*
17. Which of the pool players makes the best *break?*
18. To read a road map properly, study the *legend.*
19. The weather map showed a *low* near Chicago.
20. The Captain decided to *strike* the sail.

Bonus Question: With what special field are you familiar? Explain three terms from an area like sewing, golf, jazz, sailing, astronomy, or mechanics.

Anonymous contributor

## Vocabulary Building

Normally we master a new word gradually, encountering it as we read, watch television and movies, listen to lectures, and engage in conversation. This process can, however, be speeded up by making new words the object of deliberate attention. To marshal this attention, I ask students to make a card for each new word they encounter during the term. (Five cards per week is a reasonable minimum.) While I use this assignment in a college class that is devoted entirely to vocabulary study, it can be included in any English class at any age level.

A sample word card, with instructions, is shown below. Most students emulate these models with little difficulty, although I occasionally return a card with instructions to write a definition better suited to the quoted context or with suggestions for improving the sentence using the new word. Once approved, the cards are reviewed until the words are mastered. If students write each word on the back of its card, they can use a flashcard technique to test themselves.

*Instructions.* Include the following information on each card you turn in.

1. The new word in its basic uninflected form
2. A brief definition in everyday language
3. The name of the person who used the word, with an explanation if needed
4. The newspaper, magazine, or book in which you found the word
5. The context: one or more sentences quoted exactly, with the word underlined
6. A sentence of your own using the word
7. Optional: phonetic spelling and derivation

emulate - to follow someone else's example

Author Brian Garfield claims that murders have been committed by people who saw the movie *Death Wish*, and he wants the FCC to ban it from TV (quoted by Marilyn Beck in the Orlando *Sentinel Star*, 12-2-75, p. 11-D):

"People in the business tell me we can't be blamed for the behavior of the lunatic fringe who emulate what they see on the screen. I say we must take the blame."

Though he tried hard, Bob was unable to emulate his brother's success on the tennis court.

I encourage students to look for new words in magazines that have a challenging vocabulary: *New Yorker, Harper's, Psychology Today, Newsweek,*

*Time, Saturday Review, Scientific American, National Geographic.* Other good sources of new words are newspapers, textbooks, novels, and recreational reading.

Students report that this assignment makes them more alert to new words and more habitual and efficient in dictionary use - two goals of any vocabulary building program.

Marian W. Price, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida

## Everybody Writes

"Lots of writing" is a high priority for our eighth-graders. Lots of writing means lots of grading, of course, but the worst of it is that too many students fail to turn in assigned compositions. Nevertheless, I am getting writing from almost all of my students, without a mountain of themes to grade, and it is writing done willingly, with enthusiasm and accuracy. Everyone is enjoying the activity so much that I thought the idea worth sharing.

The key is the tape recorder. The scheme began as an attempt to interest basic English students in improving their spelling scores. I give a pretest on Monday on the twenty-word list, and after students work through the exercises, I ask them to use as many of the spelling words as they can in a single well-written sentence. Each student brings that sentence to my desk, and after we edit it—censoring the bizarre—the student records it. The class then listens to the tape toward the end of the hour. This *listen, practice, write, edit, record, listen* cycle seems highly effective.

For the spelling posttest on Friday, I tape a selection of these sentences (five or six usually incorporate all twenty words), carefully crediting the authors. The students then write these sentences as dictation from the tape.

I have noticed definite improvements since we started taping:

1. Almost all students participate enthusiastically. Even the student who won't attempt a composition is willing to write and record a single sentence.
2. Each young writer gets my individual attention on the spot. It only takes a minute to correct and give advice on one sentence, yet a multitude of common writing problems crop up that can be dealt with immediately.
3. Vocabulary development is inherent. Students need the meaning of the words in order to write their sentences, so they set about discovering meaning and correct usage.
4. Listening skills are sharpened. Students want to hear who wrote what and how each author contrived a sentence, and so they listen attentively.

5. Neater papers are produced. Finding it possible to *do* eighth-grade work, students are willing to make it *look* like eighth-grade work. They write in cursive, in ink, on theme paper, with proper heading, title, and margins.
6. And, perhaps not surprising, spelling scores have improved considerably.

Joan Haynes, Urbana Junior High School, Urbana, Illinois

## Spelling Compositions

This plan is based on a weekly cycle. Monday the twenty-eight words in the spelling unit are introduced. Wednesday the spelling compositions are due. Friday students write the dictation.

The spelling compositions due on Wednesday must use at least twenty-five of the twenty-eight spelling words. I ask students to underline the spelling words so that I can quickly identify those words I will not read during the dictation on Friday. I have found that it is just as successful to specify the type of composition or the topic as it is to grant a free choice. Another option is to list certain grammatical elements to be included in the composition—quotation marks, nouns of address, items in a series, and so on. Requiring the use of spelling words from previous spelling lists is still another variation. I grade these compositions and select the one I will use for each class's dictation on Friday.

Friday is the big day. Students are keen to know whose composition has been chosen. There is no reason to fear that the author holds an unfair advantage during the dictation—the opposite is often true. Compositions that tease the teacher are sometimes useful choices because they offer students a positive way of venting aggression.

Desks are cleared of everything except the paper needed for the dictation. First, I read the entire composition, asking students to listen for the gist of it. Next I read the first sentence, but no writing should be done until the third step. That is when I break the sentence into phrases. Students can cope with three-word phrases at first, but they will manage eight or nine words later in the year. Because concentration is vital to everyone's success, students who blurt out are brought under immediate peer pressure. Those with questions raise their hands, but I answer questions only when I see that all students have stopped writing. My end-of-the-year goal is to have no questions. If a student does not remember a word, he or she leaves a blank and listens for that word carefully when I repeat the entire sentence. If a word is used that has not been presented in the classroom, a student may ask that it be written on the board. Students must ask, though. I usually volunteer punctuation marks that have not been studied. Each sentence in the dictation then is read in its entirety, read in phrases, and reread in its entirety.

Students become more accountable as the year progresses. For instance, I identify paragraphs at the beginning of the year; later, students accept responsibility for knowing where paragraphs are needed. Commas are another instance. Sometimes I provide a count of the punctuation marks and paragraphs.

After the entire composition has been read following the sentence-phrase-sentence pattern, I reread it as students proofread their own papers. Major problems are words omitted and words improperly divided.

Following this proofreading, papers are exchanged for yet another proofreading—completely without conversation between writer and proofer. Suspected errors are circled by the proofreader and the paper is returned to the writer. Since the writer bears full responsibility for the paper, only he or she may make changes. Writers may check words by using a dictionary but they may not refer to the spelling list.

Grading the dictations is not a great chore. I deduct three points for any error. Using a different spelling composition for each class helps relieve teacher boredom, too.

I return the papers on the following Monday. Those who receive a perfect paper are allowed to eat a lollipop during class since they have obviously "licked their spelling faults." Further, students with perfect papers automatically receive credit for having done a perfect rewrite. Grading for the rewrite is more severe, and I deduct ten points for each error. Since the original dictation and the rewrite carry equal weight, students who work are rewarded for improvement. Capable students can grade rewrites quite satisfactorily.

The problem of make-ups is solved with a cassette recorder that has a counter. I note the start and end numbers of each recorded make-up on the cassette. The recorder also helps those with hearing impairments and those frustrated by classroom dictation. When I record, I shut off the machine at the end of each phrase. This click signals the student to turn off the recorder until he or she is ready to proceed.

The first year of implementing this plan is the most difficult. Students bemoan the change—after all, other teachers just read lists of spelling words. I comment that telephone messages are not given in lists. When they cry cruel and unusual punishment, I respond, "You're making up your own tests, aren't you?" Recording make-ups does take time; however, these cassettes can be used in subsequent semesters. The greatest problem is finding time to grade the spelling compositions.

The rewards, however, seem to outweigh the problems. Students have returned to say that it was spelling compositions that really got them started writing. This comment has come from both reluctant and ready learners. And parents and subsequent teachers have paid high tribute to the skills students have gained through generating and transcribing spelling compositions.

Georgianna Robbins, Hillsboro High School, Hillsboro, Ohio

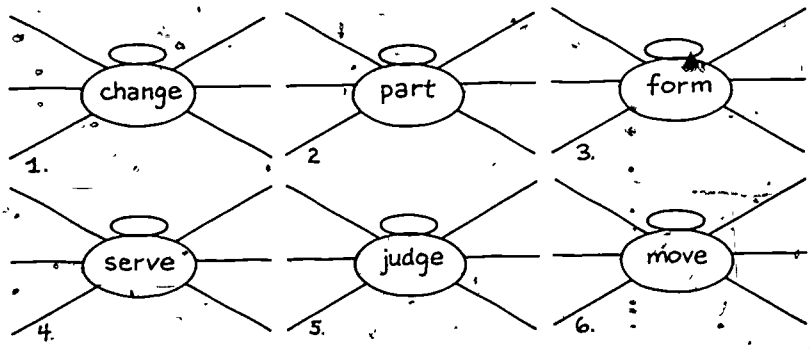
## Word Spiders

Here is a simple team task that helps students expand their vocabularies while mastering basic principles about word families. Prepare and mimeograph an activity sheet that resembles the one below.

Follow these directions carefully.

1. Underline the root of each of the six words listed below.
2. Now read the lists of prefixes and suffixes.
3. Working with a partner as quietly as you can, construct word-family spiders for each of the roots you have underlined. The roots have already been inserted as the "bodies" of the spiders; you will add only the prefix and suffix "legs."
4. Use the dictionary to check if the words you have constructed are listed *after* you have finished the spiders. You and your partner should turn in only one assignment sheet.
5. Your grade will depend on how well you work in pairs, how accurately you follow directions, and the quality of your work.

| Words | Prefixes | Suffixes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. exchange | ex re | able ing |
| 2. depart | out dis | ness er |
| 3. conform | mis | ful est |
| 4. preserve | de | less y |
| 5. misjudged | con | ly ment |
| 6. remove | pre | ed ance |




Frances L. Green, Utterback Junior High School, Tucson, Arizona

# Teaching Literature: Genre and Genre Aside

Most of the activities in this section are useful in teaching traditional genre—novels, short stories, poetry, drama—and traditional authors—Poe, Chaucer, Shakespeare—but many can be adapted across genre and some are helpful in matching student with text, especially The Cloze, which enables teachers to assess reading levels quickly and reliably. And that old workhorse the book report has engendered a sleek new line.

## Photography to Teach Point of View and Plot

I divide the class into groups of four students, making sure that there is one student in each group who can provide leadership. Each group selects a secretary, who keeps written record of the group's activities and writes, with the group's help, the final report. We then discuss identities that a group can assume—a small child, a giant, an old man, someone who is handicapped. Students will have many ideas—the most unusual suggestion I've had is to be a trashcan!

After each group has decided the identity it will assume, we talk about how these characters might see the world around them. A small child, for instance, would do a lot of looking up. After we have discussed the limitations placed on each character, each group decides what its character would be likely to see and how that view will be restricted. Each group then lists twelve to fifteen photographs to take, and I go over these suggestions. Groups are now ready to take the pictures. (We use black and white film because it is cheaper. To cover the cost, we have small bake sales.)

After the films are developed, each group mounts its set with a caption for each picture. Working through its secretary, each group then writes an analysis of its character—how did being that character affect what could or could not be seen, how did being that character alter perception—in other words, point of view. There are limitations to this assignment, of course, but students generally have a better idea of point of view when they are finished, and they have had a good time.

I also use photography to illustrate plot and chronological order with eighth-graders. We begin by discussing chronological order and elements of plot. Students then prepare to tell a story through pictures. Each group decides on a

story line and writes a brief outline for that story. Since they will have only twelve pictures to take, they must decide what pictures are most necessary to tell that story. They have a lot of fun staging the pictures and casting classmates in them. After the films are developed, the pictures are mounted on cardboard without captions. When all groups are finished, each student chooses one of the picture sets and writes a story based on the picture plot shown. We read these stories in class. It is interesting to see how closely these stories come to the original stories outlined by the groups.

Ruth Sharrer, Grover Cleveland Junior High School, Zanesville, Ohio

## Contemporary Illustrations for the Classics

About halfway through a novel—I've used this activity with *The Scarlet Letter* and *Silas Marner* but it can be applied to any novel—I ask each student to find a magazine picture that reminds him or her of one of the characters in the novel. The student writes the name of the character on the front of the picture and pastes the author's description of the character that seems most relevant on the back. Students show these pictures in class, read the author descriptions, and comment on actions, attitudes, or attributes of the character reflected in the pictures.

I usually display the most appropriate pictures for the duration of the study of the novel. The sensitivity of the students always amazes me. Many select a perfect facial expression, dress, or setting to reflect the intent of the author. I save the better pictures and occasionally introduce the study of a novel by displaying some of these for a week before mentioning the book.

Vivien Cummings, Vestavia Hills High School, Vestavia Hills, Alabama

## Dreams in Literature

Students may read a variety of literature in connection with this activity, selections ranging from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" to a Poe tale to *Crime and Punishment*. I use the latter with an advanced placement class and I begin with the following warm-up exercise.

Briefly explain the Rorschach test technique. Then ask students to create Rorschach blots using ink and a folded piece of yellow tablet paper held over the waste basket. The creator and two other students write first-person responses to the ink blot as if they were a character in the work they have just read. Students share the results within their groups of three and report on how well they were able to maintain first-person point of view. If you wish, students may revise and recopy these papers.

After this warm-up exercise, I ask students to read Raskolnikov's first two dreams and to invent a dream that he might have had after the murder. I make available "The Dream Device in Fiction," *The Writer* (February 1980) pp. 22-24. In this article Frances Shine explains how she develops dreams for her fictional characters. She also mentions Cathy's dream in *Wuthering Heights* and the Virginian's dream in Owen Wister's novel. I also issue this guideline.

1. Examine the events and symbols in the two dreams that Dostoevsky created.
2. Read the article on dreams in *The Writer*. We will discuss it in class.
3. Draft a dream that incorporates some of the details from Raskolnikov's environment and from the scene of the murder. We will share the drafts in class.
4. Revise your draft and arrange to go over it with me before making a final copy.
5. In class we will compare the dream you wrote with Dostoevsky's and with those of your classmates.

After the dream creation assignment, students go on to write an analytical essay. They begin by rereading the four dreams that Dostoevsky created for Raskolnikov. We discuss similarities and contrasts in class. (What events precede each dream? What happens in each dream? What are the symbols in each dream? What parallels relate the four dreams?) Based on this discussion and on their own insights, students draft essays in which they analyze the four dreams. I ask them to follow these steps:

1. Draft a thesis.
2. Write an introductory paragraph. Share it with a classmate and then share it with me.
3. Revise your opening paragraph.
4. Write a draft. Share it with two classmates; then confer with me.
5. Write a final draft.

Shirley S. Stevens, Quaker Valley High School, Leetsdale, Pennsylvania

## Period Papers

A project that is always greeted with enthusiasm is the period newspaper. When the class is involved with a lengthy literary work, students produce a newspaper that might have appeared in the place and at the time of the novel or play they are studying. This activity has been successful with *Romeo and Juliet, A Tale of Two Cities, Shane, Julius Caesar, Animal Farm, Martian Chronicles,* and *The Hobbit.* Each student contributes at least two feature stories and—depending on special interests—cartoons, sports items, advertisements, obituaries, horoscopes, crossword puzzles, entertainment news, or other mater-

ial typically found in a daily newspaper. Sometimes the class is divided into groups and several successive editions are produced.

Students gain valuable experience in understanding the newspaper and the types of writing found in it, and there is something for everyone to do, regardless of interest and ability. The ablest students become editors; those interested in art draw cartoons or advertisements; business students do the typing; and graphics students set up and print our paper. This project encourages creativity but students must also work within the framework of the material read – that is, all information in the newspaper must pertain to characters, incidents, places, and vocabulary in the novel.

Mary K. Essig, Red Land High School, Lewisberry, Pennsylvania, Pam Ladd, Paducah Tilghman High School, Paducah, Kentucky, and Barbara W. McGinty, Heath High School, West Paducah, Kentucky

## Poe by Candlelight

For several years I have read stories by Edgar Allan Poe to my seventh-graders by candlelight. I take the class into our auditorium behind the red velvet curtain – the darkest spot in the school. The students sit on the stage and I sit at a small desk with just one candle on it as I read "The Black Cat" or "The Tell-Tale Heart." I usually read by candlelight in October to tie in with Halloween, but middle-school students enjoy a scary setting for Poe's stories at any time of the year.

Richard Klein, Austintown Middle School, Youngstown, Ohio

## Introducing *A Separate Peace*

About ten days before we begin *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, I lecture for most of a class period, using my own memories of World War II. (If I were younger than I am, I would ask a person who was living then to give a similar lecture.) I include topics like these: rationing (food, gasoline, shoes, tires), my feelings about loved ones leaving home to serve in the armed forces, troop trains going through my hometown, college without men, war stamps and USOs, women serving in the armed forces for the first time, fifth columnists, the feeling that the world as we knew it could end abruptly.

I leave time for questions and then make this assignment: "Interview a male who was age 18-24 in 1942. Interview a female who was age 18-24 in 1942. Some of the points I mentioned in my lecture may help you to get the interview started. Make a report to the class about what you learn. It may be written, oral, or taped."

While students are interviewing and preparing their reports, I take one day to play records from World War II: "They're Either Too Young or Too Old," "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree," "When the Lights Go on Again," "A Nightingale Sang in Barclay Square," "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," "I'll Be Home for Christmas," "Rosie the Riveter." I distribute copies of the lyrics and we discuss the feelings emphasized in them.

Students make their reports. We note differences in the pressures felt by males and females as well as common tensions. Then we begin reading the novel.

Rheba Clark, Hughes High School, Cincinnati, Ohio

## Mythmakers

I use this project with academically talented ninth-graders and am generally pleased with the results. The worksheet reproduced below outlines the project.

> Your class project for the study of classical mythology is to create a system of mythology. The class will be divided into five groups, each of which will be assigned one aspect of mythology to investigate and create. Some of the questions raised in Greek and Roman myths, and in most other systems, are listed below.
>
> I. Where did we come from? How was the earth created? Is there a plan? If so, who controls the earth and all that exists? Does anything exist other than the material (physical) world? Are men and women becoming progressively better or worse? How did various natural phenomena come to be? Were men and women always the way they are now? Does human nature change?
>
> II. How do men and women differ? Which was created first, and why? How was the other created, and why? Are men and women equal? Are their natures essentially the same, except for physical differences, or is there an essentially "masculine" and "feminine" nature? Why have men dominated women in almost all cultures, despite the fact that women outnumber men? Why is there so much misunderstanding between men and women?
>
> III. What is the perfect human being? Though no one is truly perfect, what qualities should men and women value? How should people handle adversity? How should they treat others, especially those who can do nothing for them? Ideally, is the perfect human being rich or poor? Why?
>
> IV. Can men and women live together in peace? Is violence ever justified? Under what conditions? Should we avenge the wrongs done to us by others? Is war ever right? Why or why not? Do men and women ever forfeit the right to live? If so, under what conditions? Does one owe loyalty to family? Country? Friends? Are there limits to what a family, a government, a friend can expect of one? If so, what are the limits? What is more important—an individual's conscience or society's conscience as it is embodied in the law? Under what con-

ditions may one disobey the law? Under what conditions must one disobey the law?

V. Is there life after death? Is there reincarnation of human spirits, or does the "soul" or life principle assume a different sort of life after death? Is there a heaven? A hell? Who or what determines where one goes? What is heaven like? How about hell? Who is "in charge" of each? What happens right after death? Are the dead aware of the living? Do the dead communicate with the living? Do the dead ever return? Under what circumstances?

We will discuss these questions in class and formulate a philosophy of life for our mythical culture. Then each group will complete one activity from the five categories that follow. The clusters of activities are numbered to match the clusters of questions given above.

I. Creation
   A. Name and describe the function of each of the gods in your system of mythology. Decide this early and inform the rest of the class since they need this information for their assignments.
   B. Invent a creation myth for the universe.
   C. Invent a creation myth for living creatures, including man.
   D. Decide how various natural phenomena came to be, and write myths describing these processes.

II. Men and Women
   A. Write a myth showing why both men and women were made.
   B. Write a myth that deals with the issue of equality between the sexes.
   C. Write a myth that treats differences between men and women.
   D. Write a love myth.
   E. Write a myth describing an individual who refuses to accept whatever sex role you, through this mythology, have assigned him/her, and the consequences of his/her actions.

III. Heroes and Heroines: Create a hero and/or heroine. Devise a series of adventures that bring out the qualities your mythical culture admires. Be sure that he/she meets with both natural and supernatural opposition to his/her goals.

IV. Violence, Loyalty, and the Law
   A. Write a myth that shows one person taking revenge upon another.
   B. Write a myth about events that lead to a war.
   C. Write a myth about capital punishment.
   D. Write a myth that deals with the idea of loyalty.
   E. Write a myth about a person who disobeys the commands of the gods and the consequences of those actions.
   F. Write a myth about a person who disobeys an unjust law because conscience demands it and the consequences of this act.

V. Death and Afterwards
   A. Write a myth describing the world of the dead, its permanent inhabitants, and the places for the good and the bad.
   B. Write a myth that deals with reincarnation (if your culture accepts that) or about the finality of death.
   C. Write a myth about the living visiting the world of the dead and then returning.

D. Write a myth dealing with the experience of death.
E. Write a myth about the dead returning to life for a particular purpose.

Kathleen Blaine, Roxboro Junior High School, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

## A Frolic of Folklore

Too often folklore classes are limited to reading printed materials that are literary retellings and not in the strictest sense folklore at all: Instead, students can read works like *Tomfoolery*, Coffin and Cohen's *Folklore in America*, and the *Foxfire* books. They can collect proverbs in other languages, translate them, and try to find some English equivalents; they can collect superstitions or tall tales from older relatives; they can try their hands at writing elephant jokes or riddles or legends; they can listen to folk music and look at and discuss folk art.

One of my most successful projects is for each student to research and attempt a folk craft. We talk about some of the many crafts that have survived. I bring in samples; they decide on a craft. I offer the following list of crafts, for which I have directions: an egg tree from the Ozarks, rattles and masks adopted from the African, an apple doll like those made by the Iroquois, bread dough sculptures from Ecuador, an *ojo de dios* from México, an Indian totem pole, wrapped and lace eggs for Easter, *pysanki* from Russia, paper-folding from Poland, origami from Japan, sand painting from Arizona, Seminole sewing from Florida, straw Christmas ornaments from Lithuania and Scandinavia, Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs, Mexican piñatas, Indian Kachina dolls, samplers from early New England, quilts, pottery, handmade musical instruments, baskets.

Each student picks a craft and begins his or her research. In the meantime, the student and I begin to collect the materials needed to complete the project. I furnish some, the student furnishes others. Fortunately, the very nature of folk craft precludes expensive materials, and my own craft work and that of my friends often provide yarns, paints, fabrics. And a bale of straw lasts an awfully long time!

When students are ready to begin, I let them spend some class time getting started. Sometimes they are in a hurry and want to take work home to finish; sometimes they prefer to work at odd moments in class. When a student finishes, he or she does a presentation, oral or written, about the craft—materials used, problems encountered, purposes, symbolism, and so on.

Results? Students learn about something new; they acquire an appreciation of handmade items; they receive praise from peers for a job well done; they have a gift for someone or something that will decorate their rooms. And I acquire a colorful and unusual display for the classroom (they must leave projects there until the end of the term). Students show a motivation that may

previously have been lacking—especially from nonacademic students (you do not have to be a brain to succeed); nor do you have to be a girl to do craft work well. Projects require various kinds of skills, and many of these are not often valued in academic classes.

Grading turns out to be relatively easy. Each student grades his or her own work—only the student knows how much work has gone into it, the class grades it in comparison to everyone else's work; I grade it in relation to the amount and difficulty of research involved.

Marilyn Kahl, West Covina High School, West Covina, California

## Connotative Function in Poetry

Students are given a list of key words from the poem to be studied before they get a copy of the poem itself. They are asked to list ten responses, physical or emotional, that they have to each of those words. The responses are then compiled and those cited most frequently are discussed.

Consider, for example, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell. "Warmth," "security," and "love" are often listed for the word *mother;* "dream," "cozy," and some variation of "unreal" are often listed for *sleep.* Other words on my original list include *belly, fur, nightmare, the State, hunched, dream, wash, earth, black, hose, fall.* I then hand out copies of the poem. After the literal meaning of the title is explained (students haven't watched enough World War II movies to know what a ball turret is), the class discusses how Jarrell uses the emotional response of the reader to specific words, whether or not the reader is overtly conscious of that response, to convey the meaning and impact of the poem itself.

Andrew Buncis, Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Flossmoor, Illinois

## Poetry Formula

Students typically groan at poetry-writing assignments, but I have found that they take great pleasure in discovering their unrealized creativity through this exercise. I have also found that this exercise works best for me when students are not told beforehand exactly what they will be doing. Just follow the paraphrased steps below.

1. "I'd like you to think of something you either enjoy or dislike doing. Name it in just one word. Now write that word in the center of a sheet of paper."
2. "Think of two words that describe how you perform that action—just what is involved in that action. Write those two words on the next line under the first word."

3. "Now use three words to tell what happens as a result of that action. Try to think of interesting words that accurately describe that result. Write these three words on the next line."
4. "Next, find four words that describe how you feel about or react to this action. These four words go on the next line."
5. "Finally, using only one word, rename the action—the single word in line one—in a different way. This is the fifth line. You have now composed a five-line poem that expresses feeling and describes in your own unique way."

Here is an example of the poems you can expect.

running
magic motion
spirits are freed
I am made new
escape

Alter the activity by providing students with other directions to trigger other ideas. For example, ask students to name in line one a place they like or dislike, in the next three lines they might describe what they see, what goes on in that particular place, and how they feel about the place; finally, they rename the place. A typical place poem:

Memphis
indifferent skyscrapers
people rushing uselessly
crowds make me lonely
Rivertown

Robin Parrish, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky

## Peer Pilgrims

I've used this activity for the past ten years, and it has proved very successful. One or two class periods for students to work together is usually ample. Once students begin, they find writing couplets fun and not very difficult.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Give each group the names of four or five other students within the class. Following Chaucer's rhyme scheme, groups create six to ten lines about each student whose name they have been given. Each group may also create six to ten lines about a teacher if they want to—I haven't found many groups who do not want to! The writing may be humorous, but it cannot be nasty or embarrass another student. Several times groups have created some not-so-nice descriptions, but because I circulate from group to group I can catch the culprits before harm is done. I simply

cross out the unacceptable lines and ask the group to rewrite that particular description.

I read through the couplets before they are read aloud. If a group wants its verses read aloud but is too shy, I read for them. If a group doesn't want its work read aloud, I don't insist.

The name of our poem?—*Strasburg Tales.* Students enjoy this creative writing activity each year. They also remember *Canterbury Tales* because of it.

Sandra Crawford, Strasburg High School, Strasburg, Ohio

## Alter Egos

One of the problems counselors and therapists face is understanding the implications of human behavior. One of the problems students of language and literature face is understanding the implications of language. Counselor trainers, who often use role playing as a training activity, use an "alter ego" technique to help trainees get beyond the surface. Both the "counselor" and the "client" in a role play are assigned other trainees, alter egos who stand just behind them and voice the thoughts and feelings they believe were left unspoken by their respective principals. Body language, voice tone, connotation—all are clues to what was left unsaid.

Try using this technique in class when reading plays and stories aloud. In addition to the usual readers, assign an alter ego to at least each major character. The alter ego may speak "the truth" whenever it becomes apparent in some way. Stop periodically for discussion. What caused you to say that? Do the rest of you agree? What were you (the reader) feeling/thinking when you read that?

The benefits are obvious. Twice as many students get to participate. Weak readers get to use their ears and their minds. Connections among character, dialogue, structure, tone, and theme become clearer.

I have used this technique with success in grades eight through twelve, with students from remedial to college-bound classes. Be prepared for some initial confusion, even after you have modeled an alter ego because students need to learn both the norms—when to speak, how much to say—and the possibilities—the range of clues. They will learn these, and many things that neither you nor they suspected before you began.

Kenneth Bradford, Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, Virginia

## Picturing the Play

This assignment works well for almost any play, and it can be used successfully with novels and short stories. I find that it is an excellent review after we have

covered a particular act in class. I ask students to save magazines in advance so they will have a good supply and can avoid cutting up current issues and risking the ire of parents. Then I hand out the assignment—in this case for *Macbeth*—reproduced below.

1. Choose a picture from a magazine that could represent a character or scene from *Macbeth*. You are not looking for pictures of kings and queens, but for faces and settings that represent or suggest a passage you have in mind. Check pictures in ads; they often work well.
2. Using glue or transparent tape (not masking tape, staples, or paper clips), attach the picture to a sheet of loose-leaf paper.
3. Beneath the picture copy a line or a few lines from the scene that the picture represents. Include (a) the name of the speaker of each line, (b) the exact wording of the lines you choose, (c) section of the play and line number or numbers, with the page number in parentheses. Here is an example:

   *Lady Macbeth.* That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;
   What hath quenched them hath given me fire.
   Act II, Scene 2, lines 1–2 (p. 173)

4. Find a total of fifteen pictures, three for each act.

John McCollum, Brother Martin High School, New Orleans, Louisiana

## *The Elizabethan Times*

Each student chooses a topic from the list below or uses an original idea that has been approved by the class. Papers are 200–250 words in length and include a bibliography of at least two sources. Illustrations are encouraged.

Special Features for *The Elizabethan Times:*

1. Obituary for Queen Elizabeth
2. Coronation of James I written by an eyewitness
3. Interview with the new Queen Anne of Denmark
4. Black Plague Hits London—Terror in the Streets
5. England Claims Virginia, a report from an overseas voyager
6. Puritans Speak Out against the Church of England
7. John Donne Writes New Poem, written by a literary critic
8. Guy Fawkes Executed
9. William Harvey discovers the circulation of blood
10. Dear Abbey—Elizabethans write their problems
11. What the fashionable Elizabethan woman is wearing
12. Coming attractions at the Globe Theatre, including plot synopses
13. *Merchant of Venice* Wows Audience at Globe, theatre review written by a first-nighter
14. Elizabethan sports news
15. Copernicus Proves World Is Round

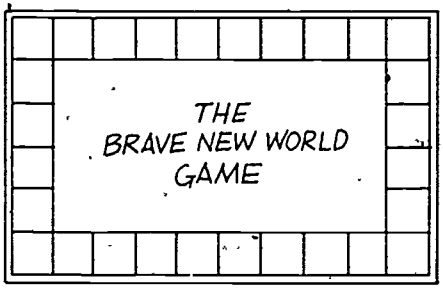
16. Political cartoon, including an explanation of the situation pictured
17. Crossword puzzle using words from the Elizabethan stage
18. English Fleet Defeats Spanish Armada
19. Shakespeare: Why Is He So Successful? An interview with Will that includes a brief biography and discusses his plays, their audience appeal, why he writes, what he wants to accomplish
20. Comic strip based on family life in Elizabethan England

After the papers have been collected and graded, they are typed on ditto masters according to newspaper format. Students help with the typing, drawing, and layout. After the dittos have been duplicated, students assemble the newspaper. It is surprising how interested students are in reading each other's reports. Even students who don't always complete work enjoy creating *The Elizabethan Times.*

Kim A. Burtis, Lexington Christian Academy, Lexington, Massachusetts

## A Novel Approach

For an in-depth exploration of plot as a sequence of deliberately chosen cause-effect events, I give my students a blank game board like the one shown below and the minimal instruction to design a game based on the novel they have just completed. The one criterion for evaluation, I tell them, is that the game be playable.




Students, working in small groups, usually begin immediately to fill in the squares with events from the novel; belatedly decide they need rules and an object for the game; usually scrap their first efforts; and finally come to the realization that to have a valid game, they must resort to a careful re-exploration of the plot. Teacher gratification comes through seeing some thirty students simultaneously paging back through the novel, skimming for and reading portions to other students, and becoming increasingly excited as they discover specifics of the plot that fit their game.

Kathleen Roberts, Greenhills High School, Cincinnati, Ohio

## Travel Posters for the World of Science Fiction and Fantasy

My seventh-graders combine observations of advertising techniques with favorite selections from a science fiction/fantasy reading list to create imaginative travel posters that attract additional readers. A hidden benefit of the project is that youngsters develop skills in organization not unlike those required for research papers and other independent study projects assigned in the upper grades. The four-step assignment is reproduced below.

> Read.
>
> In-common readings include *The White Mountains* by John Christopher and *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury. In addition, you will make three independent selections from the reading list handed out in class.
>
> Observe.
>
> Collect travel posters and travel ads from newspapers and magazines. Study these in terms of headlines, layout, use of figurative and descriptive language, schedules, coupons, logos, and overall visual appeal.
>
> Create.
>
> Select a science fiction/fantasy book on which to base a travel poster. Specific deadlines will be announced in class, but you will need to provide the following materials: company name and logo, headline, paragraph, photograph or other visual, schedule and/or coupon, full-scale draft on graph paper, final copy.
>
> Enjoy.
>
> Here are some of the headlines produced by other students: "Try Tripod," "Have the Time of Your Life in Earthsea," "Fly United Martians and Have a Blast," "Tesser Travel: Tops in Intergalactic Transportation," "See the Sights of Pern by Dragon-Express."

Mary K. Williams, Moorestown Friends School, Moorestown, New Jersey

## *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in Two Weeks

Shakespeare always swallowed up all of November in my English literature class, and because of our deer season and Thanksgiving, he sometimes gnawed his way into December. Teaching *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, depending on the text and the students, took too much time—and I still wasn't certain that students understood the plays.

Last year, when half the students had already read *Macbeth* in a class for gifted students and the rest weren't ready for *Hamlet*, I divided the class into four groups and assigned each the writing of a redaction, two groups for each play. The idea was suggested at a workshop by William French, associate professor of English, West Virginia University. The students did the work, and I moved among them—kibitzing and handling arguments over what lines con-

tributed necessary exposition or foreshadowing. In two weeks we learned more about both plays than ever before.

My definition of *redaction* was a cutting that could be read in forty-five minutes. Not a summary, a paraphrase, or an adaptation. Lines and scenes could be cut but not changed.

I assigned a leader and a recorder for each group, and then groups were on their own. They decided when to read each act, who would do the necessary research, who would type and edit the redaction. I helped line up ditto masters or facilities for photocopying so the redactions could later be distributed to all members of the class.

Before we started, I set up a resource center with everything I could lay my hands on about Shakespeare, the Elizabethan theater, and *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*—library materials, Cliff and Monarch notes, my own books, audio-visual materials, names of teachers and professors with Shakespeare expertise. This was our schedule:

*Day one.* Lecture-discussion in which I reviewed the elements of drama and tragedy and provided background on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theater. I previewed both plays and played a recording of one scene from each drama.

*Day two.* I divided students into groups and gave instructions; then each group organized itself and lined up reading assignments.

*Days three and four.* Groups worked independently. I answered questions, referred them to articles that might help them decide on the importance of a scene, and played devil's advocate.

*Day five.* I met for half the period with the *Hamlet* groups and for half the period with the *Macbeth* groups to answer questions and monitor progress.

*Days six, seven, and eight.* Groups worked independently.

*Day nine.* Redactions were distributed and we heard a report from each group on how it had resolved decisions on omitting or retaining lines/scenes.

*Day ten.* The test: I prepared ten minutes of objective questions from both plays. The second part of the test was open book—ten essay questions related to quotations from which the student chose three.

Frieda Owen, Wood County Schools, Parkersburg, West Virginia

## Dressing for the Occasion

To promote an interest in reading as well as in literature during Right to Read Week (National Library Week or Children's Book Week could be substituted), each member of our school staff (teachers, secretaries, principal, custodians, cooks) agreed to dress up as his/her favorite literary character/author. Authentic costumes were rented, made, or borrowed for the occasion.

The entire student body was involved in a contest to determine who could correctly name all the characters/authors represented by the staff. Students were allowed to ask staff members questions about their literary identities, and staff members could give clues. Some staff members even made up crossword puzzles that, when completed by students, revealed their identities.

The enthusiasm from the student body was overwhelming. Students who had never set foot in the school library before beat a path to its door (even between classes) to use reference books about authors and novels.

The project requires total staff cooperation to make it a success. If that level of involvement seems unlikely in your building, carry out the idea on a smaller scale. Perhaps the members of the Language Arts Department would agree to participate—and the idea might snowball in subsequent years. Another modification is to ask students to dress as characters/authors with awards given by student balloting.

Elizabeth Pedicord, Canton South High School, Canton, Ohio

## The Cloze

This informal diagnostic tool called the cloze quickly assesses the ability of students to read specific material capably. You can use this assessment with any material your students read—books, magazines, encyclopedias, textbooks. Follow the simple procedure outlined below.

Preparation

1. Select a passage approximately 300 words in length from the material to be tested.
2. Copy the first sentence in its entirety.
3. Beginning with the next sentence, delete every fifth word *without exception* until you have fifty blanks. Complete that sentence and add the next complete sentence.
4. Supply a blank of consistent length for each deleted word—twelve typed spaces work nicely.

Read-Aloud Directions to Students

1. Write only one word in each blank.
2. Try to fill every blank. Don't be afraid to guess.
3. Skip hard blanks and come back to them when you have finished.
4. Wrong spelling will not count against you if I can tell what words you meant.
5. Most of the blanks can be answered with ordinary words but a few may be numbers like *3,427* or *$12* or *1954;* contractions like *can't* or *weren't,* abbreviations like *Mr.* or *U.S.A.*, parts of hyphenated words like *self* in the word *self-made.*

6. Write neatly. Don't rush; there is no time limit. *This is a hard test and to get half the answers correct is to do very well.*

Scoring

Only the *exact* word is acceptable for a correct answer. Use your best judgement about spelling and handwriting. Mathematically determine the percent correct.

Interpreting Scores

| | |
|---|---|
| 57% or above (28+ correct) | – Independent Level. The student can read and understand this material without teacher assistance. |
| 44–56% (22–27 correct) | – Instructional Level. The student can read and understand this material with classroom instruction from the teacher. |
| 43% or below (21 or fewer correct) | – Frustration Level. The student cannot deal with reading material at this level. It's too difficult to use. |

Judith W. Keck, Licking County Schools, Newark, Ohio

## Your Own New World

While studying the colonial period, my students vicariously experience the excitement and frustration of setting up a new colony and recording its progress in journals, maps, poetry, and letters—all types of early American literature.

The class is divided into groups of four or five students. Each group establishes its grievances against the Old World and creates a setting for the New World. Students are encouraged to be logical as well as creative. Each group makes a booklet of its collected work and gives an oral presentation to the class. The assignment takes about a week, each day allotted to one of the numerals on the basic outline shown below.

Your group has had many grievances against the Old World. You are boarding a ship for _____ and will set up a new colony called _____ when you arrive in _____.

1. As you sail, you are excited about your future home, but you are fearful too. Problems arise on the ship. These are recorded in your *journal.* After your voyage, you will also record some of the initial problems in settling the colony.
2. Since many geographical details about your colony are of interest, a well-drawn *map* is a necessity. Other interesting details—for example, a flag—may be added.
3. A *poem* may be the best way to show the exciting experience of seeing the New World for the first time.
4. Several *letters* to be sent to the Old World relate the development of the colony: living conditions, necessities such as food and shelter, government, religion, schools, community activities.

These projects can be elaborate or simple, depending upon the teacher's guidance. I encourage each student to contribute two journal entries, one pessi-

mistic and the other optimistic. Some students have written sermons, songs, and diaries; others have designed furniture, tools, and clothing. The New World project is often a learning experience for the teacher as well as the students.

Elaine Griffin, Mesquite Independent School District, Mesquite, Texas

## Developing Oral Skills through Literature

The three activities briefly described below help students to acquire and refine oral skills but, as you will see, their purposes reach beyond that.

*Oral interpretation of literature.* Provide four or five selections appealing to teens and offering a variety of styles. Demonstrate how to read one or parts of several. Introduce and explain the evaluation form you will use. Next day, each student reads the selection he or she chose. Each class member marks and signs a copy of the evaluation form and returns it to the reader. The highest scoring readers during the week compete on Friday for Reader of the Week status. We take a photo of the winner(s) for the bulletin board. A class member designs paper frames.

*Traveling readers.* Children's literature (K-3) is ideal for oral interpretation. It's short; it demands that the reader loosen up; and poor readers have no trouble with vocabulary. Perhaps most important, students can perform a service with their new skill, and that skill will be used beyond school days. The biggest challenge is rehearsing before peers. I sometimes divide the class for this, sending half to study hall. The best oral readers of children's literature make up a team of Traveling Readers who go singly or in pairs to elementary classes where they take over the story hour for teachers who want to participate in our program. This experience is prearranged and covers about three weeks.

*Reaching out.* One of the signs of a healthy self-image is the desire to reach out to others. A volunteer field trip during school time to a convalescent home provides one such outlet. We prepare appropriate literature to share aloud, but the major part of the visit is given over to conversation with individuals. We take homemade goodies to help break the ice, and under the guidance of the home's activities director, we stay about three hours. The experience is rewarding in all directions.

Janet Carter, Western Reserve High School, Berlin Center, Ohio

## Off the Record

If you're short on audiovisual funds or if you just need something to liven up your midwinter literature classes, don't overlook popular records. Pop tunes—both oldies and more recent ones—can be used in a variety of ways.

Several old Simon and Garfunkel hits are full of poetic devices. "The Sound of Silence" contains simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, hyperbole, antithesis, oxymoron, alliteration, consonance, assonance, and apostrophe. "Windmills of Your Mind" (Ray Conniff has a good version on a Columbia label) has more than a dozen similes. (Let the kids count them!) And have you discovered a record called "Onomatopoeia" by Todd Rundgren on Bearsville Records?

After studying medieval ballads, ask students to find ballad characteristics in modern songs. "Tom Dooley" by the Kingston Trio, several Joan Baez songs (including a lovely version of "Barbara Allen"), "The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde," and some of the old Brothers Four tunes have been successful for me.

Introduce a thematic unit with a few appropriate songs. Let students discover the common theme among the songs and then lead right into stories with the same theme. Here are a few tunes for some frequently taught themes.

Aging: "When I'm Sixty-Four," "It Was a Very Good Year," "September Song"

Friendship: "You've Got a Friend," "Bridge over Troubled Water"

Alienation: "Nowhere Man," "Eleanor Rigby"

You might also try songs that illustrate literary techniques. "Seven O'Clock News" by Simon and Garfunkel is an excellent example of irony. "Alice's Restaurant" satirizes police investigation and the draft.

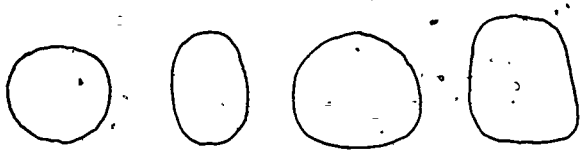
Jane K. Mattaliano, Philip Barbour High School, Philippi, West Virginia

## Doodles

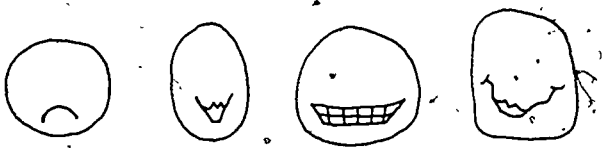
Put the doodles that follow on the chalkboard (or reproduce and distribute). You may want to add doodlish notions of your own. Books with excellent facial expressions are *The Chicken's Child* by Margaret A. Hartelius (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975) and Mercer Mayer's *Frog Goes to Dinner* (New York: Dial, 1974) and *One Frog Too Many* (New York: Dial, 1975).

Now read a character sketch to the class. It can be from a novel, a short story, or a poem or one that you have written. Reading the description aloud sharpens listening skills. Then ask students to draw a doodle of the character described in the sketch.

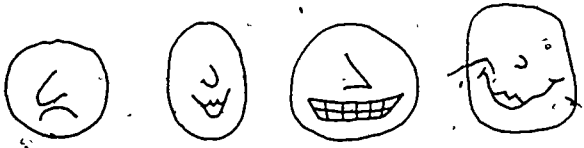
After the doodles are completed, distribute copies of the character sketch you read. Ask students to compare what they have drawn from what they heard—or thought they heard—to the written account. I usually divide the class into small groups at this time. After discussion, groups choose the doodles that most closely reflect the written description.



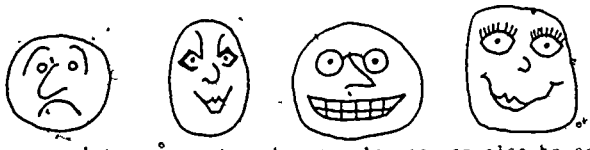
1. Draw any kind of full circle--round, oval, squarish.



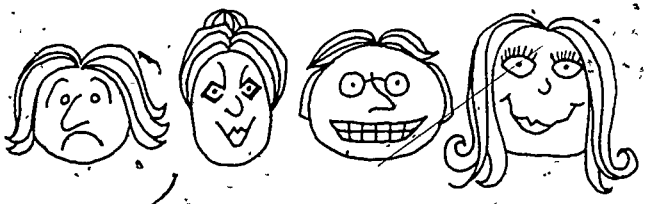
2. Draw any variety of mouth--sad, happy, frowning, toothy.



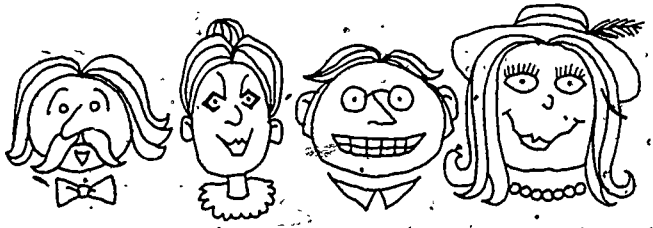
3. Next, add a version of the nose; some are rounded, some are crooked, some are pointed.



4. And now for the eyes and eyebrows--glasses can also be added.



5. Finally, the crowning glory--hair: curly, straight, long, short.



6. Other items can be added--moustaches, ears, hats, necks, collars.

Doodles can also be used when students are studying a particular novel, story, play, or poem. After doodles are drawn, students write down specific passages from the text in support of their doodles. When physical appearance is not clearly described, references to character take over. You'll be surprised and pleased by the doodles produced when student imaginations go to work.

Judy L. Vander Molen, Mona Shores High School, Muskegon, Michigan

## Biog-Feedback

A talk-show format is an effective method of discussing biographies my students have read. After students have read a biography of their choice, they appear on the NHS Johnny Carson Show. Each student assumes the identity of the person about whom he or she has read. I explain that guests on talk shows often submit questions in advance to the host about topics they wish to discuss. Each student, therefore, submits three questions for me to ask, and I write three that they must field on the spot. Their answers enable me to evaluate their understanding of the book and their grasp of its subject. I sometimes schedule persons on a show that can be compared or contrasted with each other—one group included Hitler, Martin Luther King; John Kennedy, and Helen Keller. Students generally feel at ease with role playing, and the class enjoys the discussion.

Karolyn Burkett, Newark High School, Newark, Ohio

## Bookweek Hats

I send the note reproduced below home, and the result has always been delightful. The hats may, of course, be made at school.

> November 17–23 is National Children's Book Week. In celebration of this special week we're all decorating hats to represent books. Your child should make a hat at home. A regular hat can be used. The hat can be a type that a character from the book might wear: a floppy hat for *Paddington Bear* or an engineer's hat for *The Little Engine That Could.* Small items or words can be attached to any hat to represent events or characters in a book. The title of the book should be printed on a small sign to pin to a collar or to wear as a necklace. We will share our hats during lunch on Friday, November twenty-first!

Marilyn Parker, Columbus School for Girls, Columbus, Ohio

# Taking a Second—and a Third—Look: Evaluation and Review

Teachers have always known that when students review for tests important learning goes on—synthesis and generalization as well as mastery. The activities in this section—many of them group games for the classroom—capitalize on the heightened motivation of the pretest situation. At least two of them, The Informal Quiz and "Standardized" Tests, help students to perceive that even the test is a learning situation.

## The Informal Quiz

The informal quiz is an ideal way to open a class session and is appropriate for secondary and middle school students as well as college students. The informal quiz is accomplished in ten minutes or less and is not intended to be a method of formal evaluation. It is, however, an effective instructional method. Properly used, the informal quiz reinforces and/or develops comprehension, retention, listening skills, interest and enthusiasm, questioning abilities, attention, participation, and perhaps attendance.

At the beginning of the class hour, distribute quarter- or half-sheets of paper. Ask five to ten questions that require one-word or short-phrase answers. Half of these should be based on the previous class session; the others are for more long-range review, some covering material from the earliest or earlier class sessions. These questions should require recall of details, concepts, or principles. Out of ten questions, only one or two should require a sentence-length response. Some may require a simple "yes" or "no." Later, however, when students are answering these questions orally, you may ask, "Why?" You should also model at this time the thinking and questioning behavior desired in students—asking for definition, translation, application, and transfer. To encourage careful listening, the answer to one question should normally be included in one of the other questions.

As students begin to answer the questions, announce, "If you don't know the answer, ask you neighbor." Students may need a moment to recover from the shock, but normally some begin immediately to follow the suggestion. Students may still need to be reminded periodically though.

After students complete the quiz, ask, "Who has an answer to a question?" Call first on a weak or shy student who needs reinforcement, asking which

question he or she wishes to answer. Repeat the question and praise the answer. Positive reinforcement should nearly always be given, even to wrong answers: "That is a clear answer. Perhaps it was a poor question." If someone has been inattentive and volunteers to answer a question previously answered, allow that student to proceed. An answer isn't "used up" after a single use. If questions remain unanswered, let them go unanswered, however, if a student asks for an answer to an unanswered question, provide the answer without drawing attention to it.

You may ask students if they want to count the informal quiz. If they do or only some do, the quizzes of these students should be collected and counted. I ask students to write "count" at the top of those papers.

In addition to the values mentioned earlier, the daily informal quiz reminds students of the comprehensive nature of the course. You have avoided saying, "Remember what we were talking about last class period [week]?" Further, the informal quiz actively involves students in review and test preparation. Key concepts are recalled and reinforced. Another advantage is that students come to recognize what is important. Further, these advantages have been gained with a minimum expenditure of time.

Variations for the question format include "What is a question I haven't asked?" or "I can think of only five questions. What is another one or two?" or "Here are the answers. What are the questions?"

Arlie R. Peck, Mid-America Nazarene College, Olathe, Kansas, adapted from an idea in *The Learning Center: A Comprehensive Model for Colleges and Universities* by D. Martin, M. Lorton, R. Blanc, and C. Evans. Student Learning Center, Kansas City: University of Missouri, 1978 (ERIC ED 162 294).

## Peer Evaluation in the Composition Class

I recommend this technique for teachers who feel burned out when it comes to grading student themes. I use an opaque projector to project them on a large screen for the whole class to examine. The ground rule. No criticism. It's easy to find trivial errors, it's tougher for students to discover what is *good* about a paper. Our major task is to look for what was done well according to what had been assigned: words that appeal to the senses, vivid and concrete detail, transitions, a well-taken analogy. Although we do not "correct," suggestions for improvement are allowed if they are specific.

I vary the approach. Sometimes I ask for volunteers and am usually pleasantly surprised that so many students offer their papers. Sometimes I select the best papers to project. Sometimes we revise each other's papers as they are projected.

Although students experience discomfort the first time their papers are examined, even poor writers soon ask for their papers to be read. The advantages seem to me to be improved student attitudes, an emphasized concept of

audience, reduced "threat" of a teacher-graded assignment, increased student accountability, and elevated egos. Students really do try harder when they know their peers will scrutinize their work.

Pat Abrams, Southwestern High School, Flint, Michigan

## Error Board

Below is an example of the Error Board I pass out to my students every three weeks. It is used to assess spelling and grammar and usage skills and to develop proofreading skills. Students make each correction above the error, and we discuss the corrections the next day in class. Students may use the dictionary while completing the Error Board, and to make the task more challenging I tell them how many errors are in each paragraph.

Students seem to look forward to the Error Board—probably because the tone and content are always on the light side and because I mention their names.

> Dave and his girl freind where laying on the grass in front of the dinning hall soaking up the son. Leo came over and said did you here about Mike. I seen him trying to sneak 10 girls in to the barracks last night. And they had know cloths on. Tom who had walked up to the group herd this and said let me finish Leo. Yes like Leo said Mike treid this stunt but I had the duty and told him Mike in this baracks lives 61 cadets and you know that 10 girls simply wont due. When Tom finished talking Mr. Moore hapened to apear seen what was going on and said Mike bring those girls off campus imediately. I dont no weather you noticed but they our out of uniform. More teacher's like Mr. Moore is needed to make this School more military.
>
> Later on Gary was talking to his close freind Rod and telling him what happened and Gary said gosh if it was I in charge their is know doubt what would have hapened. I wood of got piece restored right away. Martin and me would of returned the girls to the nedest colony in Howe imediately. Doesnt the comandant still run that place.
>
> Jeff herd about this the next day and wrote in his english journal boy that was won heck of a situation. Im glad I wasnt their. Id bet all the money in the world that if Steve, Roberto, and Doug where a around the girls wood have refused too leave. What girl's in there write mind could possibly lave those three handsome lovers. Of the three Im not shure whose the better. One thing I do know they all dance good.

Robert Moore, Howe Military School, Howe, Indiana

## "Standardized" Tests

Last year, toward the end of the school year, our assistant superintendent announced that students in our district would be given the SRA Achievement Test. He encouraged us to prepare students with similar tests.

After I explained standardized tests to my students, they decided to make their own. The testmakers would also be the "control group," whose scores determined the "norm" to be used when other classes took the test. Each class then formed groups based on the categories of the SRA test: spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, capitalization, and usage.

Each student within a group was assigned a certain number of test items to compose as well as a certain section of the textbook to cover. When groups finished this task, they reviewed together the other sections of the textbook. The tests were then typed up on ditto masters—complete with directions, "stop here" signs, and answer sheets with dots to darken. Exact timing for each subtest was established, with every group within a class taking each subtest in order to achieve greater reliability.

Each class was keenly interested in how well other classes had done on its test. The advantages of making our own "standardized" tests were many. Students could look at the test again and analyze items that were the downfall of many. By making their own questions "tricky," students had learned how to "read a test." Finally, we covered a large amount of text material without spending weeks filling in worksheets and writing exercises.

Kathleen Joyce, Ketchikan High School, Ketchikan, Alaska

## Home Broadcasting

I use the cassette player as a teaching aid in composition classes of fifteen juniors. Each student reads the finished composition onto the tape from his or her stitched (some suggestion of "permanence"—a notion borrowed from British schools) composition notebook. The cassette is then inserted into a homemade pocket attached to the front of the notebook. I play the tape as I read the composition through for the first time. I mark errors in editing in the notebook but speak to problems of unity, coherence, style, development, and the like on the tape. Well-handled as well as ill-handled matters of this sort provide matter for teaching via the cassette. The student then plays the tape as he or she reviews the corrected composition and "talks back" to me before recording the next composition.

This approach presumes that students have ready access to cassette players. In schools well equipped with AV hardware and work space, students may complete their tapes at school. A survey of home-owned equipment, however, suggested that this approach would work even though my school did not have the necessary equipment. For the odd student without a cassette player, I keep one in my classroom—the one I use for my part in the process.

I think this scheme has several advantages. Students listen to their compositions before they turn them in. In addition, I ask students to read their compositions to at least one responsive person while the writing is in the making.

Some do, some don't. Here—though it is a bit late—the composition gets read and heard at least once before I receive it. Then, too, more detailed remarks are possible orally than time permits a teacher to write out.

Courtesy time-saver: Ask each student to set the tape at exactly the spot where a given performance starts. For composition two, for instance, this will be where my remarks on the previous composition begin, followed by the student's "talk back" and the new composition—all this will play while I have the student's notebook before me. (I beg the indulgence of students to let me leave the tape where I conclude my remarks. The seconds saved for the teacher with many compositions to read add up to minutes.)

Sister Mary Rhodes Buckler, S.L., Presentation Academy, Louisville, Kentucky

## Show-and-Tell

I use this assignment with adults in evening expository writing classes, but it can easily be adapted for younger students. A brief review of some thorny aspect of standard English grammar or usage is a part of each class session, and I use this assignment as one way of consolidating and evaluating the previous lesson.

The assignment is optional; between fifty and seventy-five percent of the students complete it for any given class session, and all of them contribute several times during the semester. From current reading on the job or in newspapers, magazines, and books other than their grammar text, they collect sentences that illustrate points we've been discussing in class. I tell them what to hunt for—and I feel it's important to ask them to find samples of effective writing and good usage as well as faulty usage. Some examples: an opening sentence that arouses curiosity and entices the reader or one that's an instant turn-off; a squinting modifier; subject/verb disagreement (our newspapers are full of these); sentence fragments effectively or erroneously used; effective parallel structure or instances where parallelism would improve a sentence; faulty or effective subordination; illogical coordination.

Students record their finds on 3" x 5" cards, appending a bibliographic citation in proper format. (I retain these cards in my file after we've discussed them in class.) We begin class with five or ten minutes devoted to sharing these finds. A student reads a show-and-tell item. Another student volunteers what's wrong with the sentence or explains why it is particularly effective. Spirited discussion frequently ensues. If the sentence is finally declared ineffective, students suggest appropriate revisions.

You never know what students will come up with, so be prepared to find that every "rule" you've ever learned can be broken—often effectively—and that students are uneasy with effective rule-breaking. Students enjoy this exercise, however. They like looking for (and they love finding) in published

writing examples of the kinds of problems that plague their own writing. They learn that language is a growing, changing thing—that some of the rules in their text are often broken or ignored. They also learn that some of the rules can't be bent without destroying the meaning of a sentence. They develop a sharpened awareness of the writing around them (especially on-the-job writing), and of the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing.

Barbara Mayo-Wells, University of Maryland University College, College Park, Maryland

## Team Review

I usually use this game when reviewing a short story unit, but it is easily adapted for novels or plays. I begin the period by reproducing the chart shown below on the chalkboard. I have previously prepared questions—one to correspond to each square on the chart. I use more difficult questions for the squares with the higher point values. I usually need two sets of questions for a fifty-minute class period.

| Terms | Authors | Characters | Quotes | Places | Pot Luck |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |

I divide the class into two teams and keep track of team scores on the board. When I ask a question, the first person with a hand up gets to answer it. If the answer is correct, his or her team gets that point value. If the answer is incorrect, subtract half of the point value from the team's score. After a question has been used, I erase the corresponding point value from the chart.

The student who answers the first question gets to select the column and point value for the next question. To open the game I choose a square at random, usually a ten-pointer. To keep one or two students from dominating the game, I ask each student to keep track of his or her own correct answers. When a student has answered five questions correctly, that student must wait out five questions before volunteering again.

Jean Sturpe, Chippewa High School, Doylestown, Ohio

## Take 'em Out to the Ball Park

This game can be used to review many units of study, from pronouns to mythology. In this example, it is used to review a short story unit. I give students a list of the stories read in the unit and ask them to write two or three very easy questions about these stories (a single), two or three of medium difficulty (a double), two or three difficult ones (a triple), and two or three that are very difficult (a home run). They are to label these questions by category and bring them to class the next day. The questions from the students and a set of my own, including questions from the upcoming unit test, become the basis of a baseball game.

On the day of the review, the class is divided into two teams and a baseball diamond is drawn on the chalkboard. A student is selected to keep score and to move each hitter's name around the bases. I am the pitcher, but a student may assume this role. A coin is flipped, and a player from the team that wins the toss requests a single, double, triple, or homer; and a question of corresponding difficulty is asked by the pitcher. If the student answers correctly, the student's name is moved to the appropriate base. If the student misses (or takes too much time), an out is called. There are no balls, fouls, or strikes. Three outs and the opposing team comes to bat. The team with more runs at the end of the period wins.

I encourage students to take notes that may help them to study for the unit test later. Students find that this game helps them to determine how much they know about a given unit and how much they need to study.

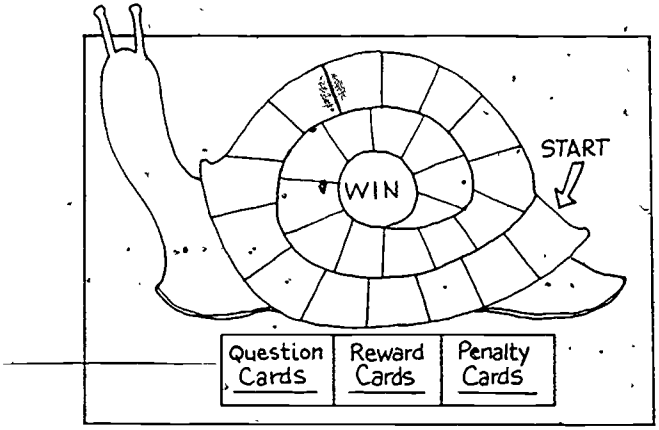
In some classes you can arrange chairs or desks to form a diamond and students can move around the bases. If the class is noisy, you can declare that only the pitcher and batter may talk. If anyone else speaks, an automatic out is recorded for his or her team. Choosing team names that relate to the unit of study (Amazons versus Athenians, for example) adds to the fun.

Elizabeth Cole, Wilson High School, Portland, Oregon, and Victoria Pasqualini, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio

## Snail Game

This game can be used to teach new material or for review. It's especially appropriate for elementary and junior high students. The questions used should be structured to reflect the content you want to emphasize and the level of thinking that you desire. I have included examples from an adjective review, but the content might come from other parts of speech, figurative language, prefixes and suffixes—or just about anything you want to ask questions about.

A game board 16" x 20" accommodates two to six players and may be laminated for more permanent use. Buttons can be used as markers. A sketch of the game board is shown below.




You need three sets of cards cut to fit the rectangles below the snail's body: reward cards, penalty cards, and question cards. Label these cards by type on the reverse side.

Reward cards allow students to move their tokens ahead or to take an extra turn. Penalty cards ask them to move back or to lose a turn. Sample reward and penalty cards are shown below.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Move forward five spaces. Take a Question Card. | Go back nine spaces. | Move ten spaces forward. | Go back five spaces and lose a turn. |

Question cards contain three kinds of information. A question card may tell the student to draw a reward card or a penalty card or it may contain a question. Below are sample question cards from the adjective game.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adjectives describe _____. For a correct answer, take a Reward Card. | Your luck has left you! Draw a Penalty Card. | Name three adjectives that end in -al. Move six spaces forward for a correct answer. | This is your lucky day! Take a Reward Card. |

The procedure for play is simple. Students draw a card from the question-stack. If it contains a question and they can answer that question, they move their token forward as indicated. If they draw a card that leads them to the reward or penalty stacks, they draw again from the appropriate stack and follow the directions. The student whose marker reaches the center of the snail first wins the game.

Patricia Whyte, John R. Williams Junior High School, Painesville, Ohio

## Stump the Experts

This game may be played with students from grades four through twelve and can be adapted to many kinds of content, including the review of a unit of work. I often use it when the class has finished a literary work—novel, play, or story. After presenting the selection to be read in the manner desired, I announce that Stump the Experts will be played tomorrow. This means each student must review carefully and then make out ten challenging but fair questions for tomorrow's game.

A panel of three (or more) class members (X, Y, and Z) sits at the front of the room. Then the students ask their questions. Student One, using his or her list, asks X a question. If X knows the answer, Student Two asks Y a question. If Y answers correctly, Student Three asks Z a question. Student Four starts over again with X. If X, Y, or Z cannot answer, the student who asked the question supplies the answer. That student then replaces the panel member who missed and becomes the new X, Y, or Z.

Keep the game moving at a lively pace. If a student demurs or is not ready, go on to the next student. If the questioning slows down toward the end of the hour, take questions from volunteers—the competitive students. This game encourages students to read carefully for details. It also helps them to evaluate material in searching for good questions. If the class is responsive, a great deal of interest is aroused by the determined effort of the panel not to be stumped and the equally determined effort of the students to stump the panel.

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